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Learn and Unlearn: Drama as an Effective Tool in Teaching English Language and Communication

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Abstract
It is argued that learning the importance of positive reinforcement and unlearning the demotivating and unfruitful experiences of one’s life can help students cope up with the existing inhibition about learning a foreign language and, in turn, can motivate them to do something productive and creative. In this respect, the role of drama, in EFL classroom, has been debated and recommended for achieving the intended effects. However, it has also been suggested that the motive of teaching a foreign language like English, through drama, is not to make the young learners professionals in acting but to provide an aid to learn and rehearse the language in its given framework. Exploring such arguments in support of the use of drama in EFL classroom, the present paper highlights the benefits of using drama as a teaching methodology so as to help the students in speaking in English and help them think ‘out of the box’. The practical application of the language in real-life situations is also suggested and recommended based upon the findings of the study. As the use of drama, in EFL classroom, has many benefits for EFL learners, attempt has also been made to investigate, discuss and explore different techniques and methods through which drama can be successfully introduced and incorporated in the foreign language classrooms for effective, motivating and interesting teaching and learning.

Keywords: EFL classroom, communication skills, practicing speaking, benefits of drama, Teaching methodology

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1. Introduction

Language teachers have to often resort to new ways to make their classes involving, interactive and, at the same time, interesting. They need to develop a repertoire of concrete activities which appeal to students, engage them and, at the same time, avoid chaos and boredom. For this purpose, one of the most effective tools that can be used in teaching of a foreign language like English can be drama. As it is suggested that an effective way to speak in English is to think in English. However, the non-native speakers of English often think in L1 (mother tongue) and translate it into the foreign language. In this regard, the use of drama, as a teaching tool, can not only make the classes interesting but also help the language learners to start thinking in English.

With the use of drama in EFL classroom, when the students start working on plot development, script writing and finally enacting the play, they get absorbed in the activities and language learning becomes quite a fun. In due course of time, as and when they are subjected to different tasks of drama classes, chances are bright that they may start thinking in English and give their performances using English. Incorporating drama in the language classrooms helps and eases teaching and learning the language skills- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing in more effective way. These skills play a very important role in a foreign language teaching and learning as they constitute Language Learning Pedagogy. A well-known Chinese proverb- “tell me and I will forget; teach me and I will remember; involve me and I will learn” summarizes this gist of any foreign language teaching and learning pedagogy. And. The use of drama, as a teaching model, acts as a gush of fresh air for the students in this connection. As Asher (1988) notes, drama activities are more like play, and less like work. The students get an opportunity to give wings to their creativity, nurture their talent and bring out something substantial. With such supportive arguments, the present paper aims at exploring the benefits of the use of drama in EFL classroom for teaching and learning language. It also discusses possible ways, techniques and methods for incorporating drama in language classroom for effective, involving and motivating teaching and learning process.

2. Why Drama?

Drama transfers one to a land of hopes, aspirations and the positive beings that we have all longed to be. Drama is a special communication situation which makes considerable demands on the flexibility and skills of the teacher (Kao, 1998). Wessels (1987: 07) author of Drama: Resource Book for Teachers begins her book by stating that drama is doing something or an action. The author opines that if drama is taught as a practical learning experience, it can give amazing results. For example, according to her, “If a learner of English asked you ‘What is a blind person?’ you might simply reply, ‘A blind person cannot see’, and this probably may satisfy him intellectually. But if you replied, ‘Shut your eyes and try to find your pen on the desk in front of you’, you would be involving him in the actual experience of being blind, and would thus satisfy him not only intellectually, but emotionally as well, and possibly inspire feeling of empathy with all blind people. He would be more likely to remember the meaning of the word as a result of this moment of direct experience. Such potential in drama can be of immense help while teaching and learning a foreign language like English in meaningful way. There are various important aspects of drama which make one to think of incorporating it in EFL classrooms.

2.1 Drama and Expression

Drama provides a platform for students to express themselves and explore the world of expectations that they have from themselves and others. Most of us do not actually know our true worth and one needs some motivation or some external body to make them know about it. In drama classes, the teacher can act as a motivator and help the student bring out their
innate talents. Till now, the students have been learning through a structured syllabus and within the definite regimes of course completion on time and writing the examination as per the demands of the syllabus and question paper pattern. With the introduction of dramatics, as a paper, the first thing that happens is that they are able to break away with the structured pattern of the syllabus and give a way to their ideas. White (1984, PP: 595-99) also advocates the use of drama to promote student motivation and to create non-threatening situations for language production by exploring the experiences that precede it, such as sensing and analyzing. Derrida’s Theory of Deconstruction (1966) and ‘free play’, plays a major role here. In this, he suggests that the changes for growth increase when one is able to deconstruct the existing ones and give a way to non-structured existence. In other words, once the students get the freedom to voice out their ideas, they start thinking afresh. The purpose of the language teacher is, thus, fulfilled as he/she has been able to trigger them towards initiating the thinking process. The next challenge that lies ahead is to motivate them and help them in coming out of their inhibition and start speaking in English.

2.2 Drama and Fear Eradication

Drama can create entertainment, fun and motivation and can provide different opportunities for the use of language in context and is also useful in teaching and learning cross-curricular content, etc. (Phillips, 2003; Hillyard, 2010). Through the drama activities the students learn to develop practical “hands-on” skills for applying meaning into real-life situations. Thus, we can say that drama is a learner-centered approach that allows learners to become active participants in the teaching-learning process. When the learners are engrossed in an activity, they are involved and they keep aside the misconception that learning English language is a tough nut to crack. The intimidation and fear of speaking in English very often blocks learning. Resultantly, they are not able to perform better. But, when drama will be used as a learning tool, they would be more open to new concepts and hence will be able to learn the language in a better way. Learning through drama is a more practical approach. As when the learners are enjoying, they let their fear of speaking in second language set off and become less inhibited. The students tend to relax and stop blocking out the new language. They forget how hard it is and start absorbing in the ideas presented. Thus, drama, like other forms of literature, can ‘help in stimulating the the language acquisition process’ (Pathan, 2013, P. 22). Changing the students’ perception of language learning, from negative to positive, is very important for the learning process. And in this respect, different studies have also verified the effectiveness of the use of literature in transforming the negative attitudes of EFL learners, towards foreign language skills, into positive ones and in easy fostering of major foreign language skills (Pathan, 2013, P.39). Therefore, it can be suggested that drama can be a tool for transforming students negative attitudes towards foreign language into the positive.

Drama, in EFL classroom, can also provide an opportunity to develop the imagination of the students. McCaslin (1996) very rightly opines that when the students are given a platform to perform, they can think beyond the classroom and subject themselves to free learning. In this way, drama can also help them in being independent thinkers which is considered to be the real aim of any teaching and learning process.

2.3 Drama and Recreation

Heldenbrand (2003, pp 27-37) highlights several advantages of teaching language by using drama. He considers drama as a recreational means of learning English that helps the learners grow as individuals and enjoy the process of learning English in more interactive and friendly manner. Moreover, he states that drama helps in learning new vocabulary and proper pronunciation and intonation, builds confidence among for the learners to converse in English. The language learners are motivated, as their attention is diverted from the
traditional English textbooks, and are given an opportunity to do something new. It involves the whole person in a total physical, mental and emotional activity. The improvisation aspect of drama gives students opportunities for developing their communicative skills in authentic and dynamic situations. The language can be used in context and make it come to life. Drama makes the learning of English language an exciting experience for the students and it is even memorable because it is interactive and visual. Drama is an excellent method for studying human nature and dealing with each other. The enacting of the play acts as a healthy release of emotions of the learners in a safe setting which can work to relieve the tension of learning in a second language.

2.4 Drama and Personality Development

Each individual is born with different capabilities. And as is well said that not all the five fingers are equal in the same manner, each individual is endowed with different set of talents. American psychologist Howard Gardner Gardener (1993) too stresses the same point through the theory of multiple intelligences (p 15). More recently, CIMERMANOVÁ’s (2013) study has also highlighted the role of multiple intelligence in language teaching. In this regard, apart from the obvious development of communication skills, drama encourages leadership, team work, listening skills and practice with real life situations. Stirk (1982, pp 52-68) suggests that students need training in pooling information together before they can successfully bridge an information gap. However, the ongoing process of learning does not end here. Drama helps the students to empathize with each other, makes them learn the importance of time, the need for practice and taking a pride in one’s work.

Here, the researcher would like to share a very interesting thing which came the way while she was teaching in the drama classes. During enacting of one of the plays, a student, who was very timid and not very outspoken, was given a lead role by the members of the group. The other good performers took a back seat so that he could perform without comparisons. He was able to justify the role fairly well and, in the interpretation round, the researcher appreciated the group for empathizing and understanding the need to give importance to everyone. There is no second thought that drama also fosters creativity and imagination. The young learners express their creativity and learn from their mistakes. Over a period of time, they develop mutual trust and understand the meaning of team work. The mistakes, they commit while staging a play, are no longer looked down or criticized rather taken as a learning experience. Drama subjects the learners to handle real-life situations that are quite challenging. When they are able to solve them and give a concrete shape to their drama they feel happy and excited. The confidence that they develop while writing, enacting and directing the scripts helps them to face the greater challenges that lie ahead in life.

2.5 Drama makes Learning Focused

Introducing drama in the classes provides the right approach and insight for the language learners. In order to be successful, one must be productive and focused. Learning is also more purposeful when classroom goals are specific (e.g. describing the number of problems to be completed), proximal (e.g. having deadlines of tomorrow or next week), and attainable. The positive psychology premise is to foster a ‘WE-ME’ viewpoint. A useful visual means of helping students to think beyond their own viewpoints (ME) is to have them consider the mirror-like views of others (WE) (Snyder C. R. Lopez and Pedrotti, 2010, p 395)

2.6 Drama and Classroom Interaction

Harmer suggests that a rich classroom environment should not only expose the students to language, but also give them opportunities to activate their language knowledge (…) and learn it in its natural and applied manner. (2007, p 48) It is absolutely true that the when the classroom environment is encouraging, the students feel more comfortable and less hesitant
to speak in English. An important thing to bear in mind is that teachers should create the classroom atmosphere in which language errors are considered a natural part of the process of learning a foreign language (Dornyei, 2001, p 42). Drama also provides an excellent platform for exploring theoretical and practical aspects of the English language (Whiteson, 1996). Wessels is of the opinion that drama in education works on the same tools as are being used by the actors who perform on stage. They make use of mime and improvise the play so as to suit the purpose. The only difference that lies is that in theatre the performance is aimed at the needs and demands of the audience while in classroom drama the focus is more on the learners learning of the language (Wessels, 1987).

2.7 Drama promotes the Natural Use of English Language

Drama bridges the gap between course-book dialogues and natural use of the English language. It also bridges a similar gap between the classroom and real-life situations by providing insights into how to handle tricky situations (Davies, 1990). It strengthens the bond between thought and expression in language. Drama helps the students to focus on their natural abilities of imitating and expressing themselves. It fosters the interest of the students in speaking in English in a natural way. While the students are engrossed in their respective roles they become oblivious of themselves and language is no more a barrier in expressing themselves. One of the very positive influences of introducing drama in the teaching model is that the student is able to identify himself/herself with the role he/she is playing. This identifying with the role acts as a booster to justify the role in the best possible way to the audience. Hence the students try to put up their best as they get an immediate recognition and appreciation in the form of feedback from the audience. If drama is considered as a teaching methodology in the sense of being part of the eclectic approach to language teaching, then it can help in developing the communicative competence of the young learners in a natural manner. Drama is a way of bringing the issues above naturally into the language class room (Via, 1976, p 115). And as Smith (1984) rightly points out, it also allows for making linguistic and natural analyses of characters where participants use English in meaningful contexts.

2.8 Drama Increases Self-Esteem of an individual

Drama increases the self-esteem of a person, a quality that is very much essential in building one’s personality. Research findings suggest that the development of self-esteem—which is defined as “a person’s appraisal of his or her value” (Leary and Baumeister, 2000, p 2) may have significant consequences for life outcomes.

Self-esteem comprises of self-assessed competencies that contribute to a generalized sense of self-worth (Harter, 1999). Harper(1970, pp 133-140) listed esteem among the basic needs of all human beings and suggested that the need for esteem must be satisfied before the individual can move comfortably towards gratifying his need to actualize a common, unique potential for learning and growth. A healthy self-esteem has been shown to produce a positive self-concept and self-confidence in social and academic setting (King, 2002, pp 21-25). Self-worth and self-belief flourish when children feel competent and effective; when adults make them feel significant, likeable, respected and valued not just for whom they are but also as a source of authority about themselves. Positive self-esteem helps them develop their identity and courage to face the world. They also feel confident when they are able to appraise their strengths and weaknesses realistically without engaging in distortion or pretence. They develop an underlying belief that they can meet challenges and influence what happens to them. In other words, they have a well-founded sense of agency, internal locus of control, or perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, pp 191-215).

When a student is able to communicate in English, his/her self-esteem boosts and he/she is able to perform better with due course of time. It is often seen that a student who is
not able to communicate in English feels socially withdrawn and becomes anxious among his peer group. But when they are able to speak even one or two dialogues in English they feel confident and the appreciation of the peers make them feel important. They start believing that they are good, capable individuals and can do great in future. Drama fosters their belief and trust in themselves and helps them to assert themselves. Isani (2006, pp 26-38) illustrates the importance of awareness as a preliminary step leading to introspection and in analyzing one’s behavior. It is important for teachers of English to encourage the development of this process of “awareness” and “introspection” with their students to better prepare them for their future careers.

2.9 Importance of Feedback

Feedback plays a very important role in the drama classes. Feedback helps the students know about their shortcomings and perform better the next time. The focus of a teacher’s feedback should be more on their developing of communicative competence and leaving aside their inhibition. Reflective learning encourages ‘critical reflection in order to precipitate or facilitate transformative learning in adults’. (Mezirow, 1990, p 366). According to Bough, Keogh and Walker(1985), describing their classroom experiences is the best way to promote students’ reflection. “Choices about which conventions are used and which content is explored should respect the teacher’s purpose need to ensure that the work is controlled, purposeful and effective” (Neelands and Goode, 2000, p 98).

Drama must have a clear purpose. As Price (1980) rightly says, the teacher-director should never lose sight of the metamorphic and highly personal nature of improvising and thus there should not be any winner or loser rather the teacher should focus more on the spirit of participation (p 6). Words of encouragement and appreciation act as miracle for young learners. Students do respond to the areas of improvement as well. The marked progress, that they have made in coming this way long as to stand in front of the audience and perform, is certainly an accomplishment. Students too feel happy and motivated after their performance and feedback being given on it. The ringing of loud applause, cheers and the satisfaction that they receive after their performance further motivates them to do better next time.

2.10 Drama Develops Problem-Solving Skills

Life is all about the choices we make. Drama helps us to explore the possibilities of making the effective choices. One of the very common tasks given by the interviewers is to solve a problem. Through this, they are looking for a candidate who has logical and appropriate solutions to the problem or situation given. Drama helps in developing the problem solving abilities. The student of the drama classes would be a step ahead of the other candidates as he/she has a ‘hands-on’ experience in solving the problem as they have been doing this in their drama classes. The practical knowledge that he/she has gained about problem solving would be at par with those of experienced candidates.

2.11 Time-Management

Learning is in fact partnership between teachers and students. However, Harmer (1998, p 9) stresses that good learners are always willing to learn. In this respect, the practical experience needs to be mentioned. One of the teams from the drama classes approached me about one hour prior to their class with a request to perform first. When asked the reason for it, they said that after their drama is over, they would change their costume, make-up etc. and that would require time. So if they are given the first turn to perform, they can clear their make-up and change their costumes during the time the other performances are going on and in this way they will be able to attend the next class on time, as they didn’t want to give any excuse for coming late to the next class. We keep advocating of time management, but here was it in its actual face. The young graduates were not only conscious but also responsible. A
change that had come over them was through the drama classes in which they were self-motivated.

2.12 Development of Soft Skills

Drama acts as a podium to enhance the soft skills of language learners. Muir (2004: 95-101) is of the opinion that soft skills are “attitudes and behaviours displayed in interactions among individuals that affect the outcomes of various interpersonal encounters”. Similarly defining ‘soft skills’, Perreault (2004, pp 23-24) states that these are personal qualities, attributes, or level of commitment of a person that set him or her apart from other individuals who may have similar skills and experience. Through drama students can learn and explore what is lacking in them. And as drama deals with the real-life situations, and by solving them, they are achieving their goal as well as learning the important constituents necessary for using the language. The development of soft skills will help them in securing a better place for them in the work place.

3. Guidelines for Introducing Drama in the Classroom

Drama activities facilitate the type of language behaviour that should lead to fluency, and if it is inculcated, the learners will be eager to learn. Introducing drama in the language classroom requires a strategic approach and a willingness at the part of the instructor to implement things in a slightly different way. The teaching-learning sessions would be student-centered rather than teacher-centered. The role of the teacher is quite challenging as he/she has to impart the knowledge about theatre and connect it to drama in real life. The objective of the course should be to make the learners comfortable with the speaking of English through this platform. Discussed below are few ways through which drama can be introduced in the English language classrooms so as to get desired result.

3.1 Initiate through Different Plots/Stories/Fables

One of the very interesting ways of preparing the students for drama is to give them real-life situations such as handling a conflict with your best friend, the dilemma of confessing a guilt, love or career- the wise choice etc. Another simple way to initiate the thinking process could be asking them to take the famous fables as the thirsty crow, rabbit and the tortoise, clever fox as the plot and weave a play on these lines. The students should be encouraged to use the minimal props and make use of physical theatre. In this, the students can play the role of inanimate objects and can even make it more interesting. Students should be encouraged to introduce physical theatre in their acts wherein they can play the role of inanimate objects and evoke human feelings of sympathy, pain, endurance etc. through their dialogues. A very simple and common theme can also be presented in a different way through drama. Students feel motivated by the ideas and can really bring out something very innovative and interesting. Providing the right kind of motivation is necessary to have the desired result.

Drama cannot be done alone. Students need to talk about it, discuss the plot, write scripts, dialogues and so on. In doing this, they use their active learning and listening skills. Silberman (1996, p 6) considers collaboration to be central to contemporary theories of learning. He asserts that in providing students with the tasks in which they depend on each other, teachers capitalize the social need of the students and encourage and motivate them to bring out their feelings by sharing and discussing their viewpoints. The young learners learn the importance of working in and with the team. As they proceed further, they come to know the positives and drawbacks of each other and accordingly decide on the roles to be played, knowing the potential of each other. As drama gives the direct experience of human reality, students first get to know themselves and then the others. So, we can say that through drama, they are not only learning to empathize with one another, but also at the same time evolving as better human beings.
3.2 Introducing Mime

Body Language plays a very important role in drama and to initiate the process of expressing through the use of appropriate gestures, Mime can be used as a teaching tool. According to Dougill (1987), mime is a non-verbal representation of a concept, an idea or a story by using the body, its moves and various gestures and expressions (p. 13). Mime emphasizes the paralinguistic features of communication. It helps the learners gain confidence as through mime they are getting a chance to get up and do things in front of others. Even the students who are not so well versed with language can exceptionally do well in mime as it does not involve dialogues. As discussed by Hayes, mime helps develop students’ powers of imagination and observation, and can also be quite simply “a source of great enjoyment” (1984, p. 28).

Mimed activities emphasize movement, actions and physical responses rather than dialogues or thoughts. In one of my classes students presented their mimed act in which they had tried to bring out social problems that are often ignored by the society. Among such presentations was the story of a joker who entertains others whilst on the other hand his child faces the humiliation in the class for mentioning that her father is a joker. The agony and humiliation of the child and the effect of it on her psyche was presented in a very realistic manner through this act. In another act students took the theme of corruption and its effect on society through a mime act in which they had brought to light the learning strategies, attitude towards life and the interpersonal dealings of an honest and dishonest person right from childhood. What was new in their act was the formation of different shapes as that of a cycle, motor-bike etc. wherein they made use of physical theater. Through such activities the class was absolutely involved and was able to interpret things in a broader perspective.

3.3 Guidelines for Teachers while Selecting and Using Plays in ESL/EFL Classroom

Teachers should select the play assignments as per the level of the students. The beginners can be given a story and asked to develop it into a play by writing the dialogues. As this would be something new for them they should be encouraged and helped at writing as well as enacting of the play. The time duration for them should also be kept at a minimal level, around 3-4 minutes and increase it gradually as they become use to it. For the advanced learners the assignment should be more challenging. They can be given just the themes and asked to write, direct and enact the play on it. The teacher should take a note on the use of language in the appropriate context, performance of an individual, proper use of gestures, voice modulation, body language and finally the overall performance. At times, they can also be given problem statements, open-ended plots and universal themes as abolition of child labour, challenges for the youth etc. and asked to perform on it. The plays should adhere to the timeline given and must have the three essential parts of drama i.e. exposition, climax and resolution. Students should be encouraged to use simple and jargon free language in the play as it develops their ability to speak in English naturally.

4. Researcher’s Experience

The present study is based on the researcher’s experience of using drama in language classroom for teaching and learning language and communication skills. The researcher works as assistant professor with the Department of English, Sir Padampat Singhania University, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India. She had been experimenting the use of drama for developing language and communication skills of her students for quite a long time. This use of drama in her classes produced encouraging results as students’ language skills as well as their communication ability improved dramatically. This transformation in the language abilities of her students formed the basis of this research which she decided to share in the form of present paper. After using drama in the classroom, with various interactive, motivating and involving activities which made learning not only meaningful but also a fun,
the students were given questionnaires to answer. The aim was to understand their perceptions about the use of drama in their EFL classrooms and the benefits they experienced. The participants were the students of the researcher’s drama classes. They were total 31 in number.

They were asked whether they benefitted by the classes with the use of drama, to which all of them replied positively. They were also asked to specify the benefit they experienced with the use of drama in their English language class. They were given five options: the classes improved their self-confidence, it reduced their stage fear, it developed their communication skills, it increased their self-esteem, and it enhanced team spirit. 27 replied that the use of drama increased their self-confidence, 21 students responded that the drama classes had reduced their stage fear and helped them develop their communication skills. 15 students believed that the classes enhanced the spirit of working in a team while 9 students were of the opinion that the drama classes helped them develop their self-esteem. These responses of the students are summarized in the following chart

*Figure: 1 Students responses, with percentage, regarding benefits of drama*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It enhances self-confidence</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It improves communication skills</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It reduces stage fear</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It increases self-esteem</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It enhances team spirit</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to understand the effectiveness of the methodology of the use of drama in their EFL classes, the students were asked to rank the same on a scale of average, good, excellent and poor. To this, 17 students asserted the use of drama as a teaching tool to be an excellent one. 13 students ranked it good and 1 student as an average one. These percentages are shown in the following chart.

*Figure: 2 Percentage of students’ responses on the effectiveness of drama as a teaching technique in EFL classrooms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>% of Students Response</th>
<th>Student Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students were also asked to state how the classes with the use of drama were different from the other regular English Language classes. To this, 19(61%) students opined that the drama classes were more interactive and 12(39%) students believed it to be a creative
one. None of respondents marked the drama classes to be boring and all of them agreed that these classes were different from the regular English Language Classes.

Figure:3 Students responses depicting features of classes with the use of drama

Apart from these responses, one of the students also mentioned that “normally, students are made to sit in a room to learn existing, or may be new concepts. But in these classes, students think in their own way to enact something new”. The results clearly indicate that apart from learning the language and gaining confidence, the use of drama in EFL classroom has many benefits. It increases self-esteem, boosts the morale of the students, teaches them the value of time, team-spirit and team-building. These all things in totality help them in learning the important lessons of life. Thus by taking a step, we are helping the students in gaining so much. If drama is introduced in the language classrooms, it will help the students to practice living in the target language, as a creative means of perceiving and understanding ourselves and the world, and as something inherent to our very human condition (Way B, 1967). The drama classes will enhance the communication skills of the students as they will learn to communicate in English in a natural manner and as Tannen suggests:

Communication is a system. Everything that is said is simultaneously instigation and a reaction, a reaction and instigation. Most of us…. See ourselves as reacting to what others say and do, without realizing that their actions or words are in part reactions to ours, and that our reactions to them won’t be the end of the process but rather will trigger more reactions, in a continuous stream. (1986, p 124)

The true goal of teaching and learning a foreign language like English is to make the learners competent in using four language skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing. In this respect, the knowledge of vocabulary plays a very crucial role. As Al-Dersi, (2013) reports, mastery over required knowledge of vocabulary can make a foreign language learner an effective speaker, good listener, reader and writer. On the other hand, lack of vocabulary significantly affects these four language skills. Therefore, the teaching and learning of vocabulary needs special attention both from teachers and learners (P.53). In this respect, a deliberate and structured approach needs to be taken for enriching vocabulary of EFL learners and the use of drama can be that apt option as learners not only learn the essential new words through drama; but also learn their appropriate usage through dialogues which can help them in retaining these words for very long time.

5. Conclusion

Teaching a foreign language like English through drama can be a very beneficial tool provided it is taught in the right spirit. The results could be better if the course is taught in smaller groups consisting about 30-35 students as in small groups the teacher is able to give
personalized attention. Through drama the students learn the art of meaningful communication with proper voice modulations and appropriate gestures. The use of drama helps them in fostering not only the required language skills but also other important aspects of life. Through the use of drama, the students not only feel important but also responsible while performing in classes. It provides them a platform to put across their viewpoint. Drama promotes a healthy and interactive environment for the learning of a foreign language like English. Drama acts as a stimulus and gives way to make use of the different talents possessed by an individual. To sum up, along with the regular English Language and Communication classes, if drama is introduced in the classroom teaching, its multi-faced benefits will help develop the personality of the students and will help in being more focused and oriented. Learning a foreign language can really be great fun if it is channelized towards the best utilization of the resources available. A practical, innovative and involving approach towards teaching the language can act as wonders and give results beyond imagination and in this respect, the use of drama can be that required approach.

**About the Author:**

Shibani Banerjee holds Ph.D in English and works as Assistant Professor with the Department of English of Sir Padampat Singhania University, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India. The topic of her Ph. D. thesis was *Rebels in the Household: Female Rebellion in Some Indian Novels in English (1965-2000)* on which she has written extensively. She has been teaching English as a second as well as foreign language for the past 10 years and her major areas of research interest include - English Language and Communication, Gender Studies, Indian Writing in English.
Learn and Unlearn: Drama as an Effective Tool in Teaching English

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**Appendix:** Questionnaire offered to the students undertaking the drama course offered by the University

Dear Student,
The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data about the benefits received by the English Language Learners from the drama classes. Answer the questions sincerely and please return this questionnaire by answering all the questions in it. Thank you for your cooperation.

Q1. Has the use of Drama in English classes benefitted you?
Yes
No

Q2. What, according to you, are the benefits of the drama classes? (Mark any three)
It improves self-confidence
It reduces stage fear
It improves communication skills
It increases self-esteem
It enhances team spirit

Q3. How would you rank teaching through drama as an effective teaching tool?
Average
Good
Excellent
Poor

Q4. How are the drama classes different from regular English Language Classes?
Drama classes are creative
Drama classes are interactive
Drama classes are boring
There is no difference between the drama classes and regular English Language Classes

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