DOES USING DRAMA IN EFL CLASSES MEET THE NEEDS OF THE LEARNERS?

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ABSTRACT

In recent years the language learner has been seen as an active learner who has a unique learning profile with different individual strengths and skills. One reflection of this understanding can be seen in Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory. According to Gardner, who is an educational psychologist at Harvard University, intelligence is not just one form of cognition but a multi-faceted aspect of thinking. As one of the most attractive theories used in the educational field for the last three decades, multiple intelligences theory comprises of eight intelligences which are the linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist intelligences. Meeting the learners' needs emerging from the above mentioned family of intelligences is one of the main objectives of today's education. This study aims at analyzing whether the use of drama in language teaching can help nurturing eight intelligences of the students and meet their needs.

Keywords: Drama, multiple intelligences theory, learner needs

ÖZET

Son yıllarda öğrenci, bireysel özellikleri ve becerileriyle kendine özgü öğrenme profili olan aktif öğrenen birey olarak kabul edilmektedir. Howard Gardner'ın bilim dünyasına kazandırdığı Çoklu Zeka Kuramı, bu anlayışın bir yansımasıdır. Harvard Üniversitesinde eğitim psikologu olan Gardner'a göre zeka bilişin bir türü olmaktan çok düşünmenin çok katmanlı bir boyutudur. Son otuz yıldır eğitim alanında en sık kullanılan kuramlardan birisi olan çoklu zeka kuramı dilsel, mantıksal-matematiksel, görsel (uzamsal), müziksel, kinestetik, kişilerarası, içsel ve doğa zekalarından oluşmaktadır. Günümüz eğitim anlayışının temel amaçlarından birisi öğrencilerin yukarıda geçen zeka alanlarından doğan gereksinimlerinin karşılanmasıdır. Bu bağlamda çalışmada yabancı dil derslerinde drama kullanımının sekiz zeka türünün beslenmesinde ve öğrenci gereksinimlerinin karşılanmasında katkı sağlayıp sağlayamayacağı incelenecektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Drama, çoklu zeka kuramı, öğrenci gereksinimleri

USING DRAMA IN LANGUAGE CLASSES

Susan Holden (in Sam, 1990) defines drama as any activity which asks the participant to portray himself in an imaginary situation; or to portray another person in an imaginary situation. The focus of drama is related to the world of 'let's pretend'. Through drama a person can express himself through verbal expressions and gestures using his imagination and memory. In this paper drama activities will refer to classroom activities and the participants will be language learners not the actors. Sam (summarizes the values of drama in education as given by educators and researchers in linguistics as follows:

- Drama releases imagination and energy and this could be considered as an educational objective. Drama also encourages students to exercise their sensitivity and imagination and thus makes learning more realistic and meaningful.

- As an educational tool, the use of drama fosters the social, intellectual and the linguistic development of the child. It centers around language development, personal awareness, group co-operation, sensory awareness, and imaginative growth.

- Drama increases motivation and provides the incentive to work hard. The activities using drama tend to be purposeful. The student sees the need to communicate and concentrates on how to go about a task since drama provides him with a meaningful context.

- Drama fosters a sense of responsibility and co-operation among the students. Drama activities normally take the form of group work and students cannot afford to stay passive for too long. There is a need to belong to the group and to complete the task. The students develop

a sense of selfworth of themselves as they work together.

- Drama has a therapeutic effect. It can help solve emotional and behavourial problems.

- Drama encourages students to exercise their sensitivity and imagination. Temporary suspension of the ego occurs when students participate in dramatic activities.

- It motivates the teacher to meet the needs of the student. The drama activities provide opportunities to understand the thoughts and feelings of the students as they express themselves in the drama activities. From the constant feedback provided by the activities, the teacher can plan better strategies for more effective learning and teaching.

- Drama can lead pupils to an appreciation of drama as an art form.

As Chauhan (2004) points out, using drama in teaching English as a foreign language classes gives a context for listening and meaningful language production, forcing the learners to use their language resources and, thus, enhancing their linguistic abilities. It provides situations for reading and writing. What makes drama activities and/or techniques valuable in foreign language classes is that they make learners experience language in operation and provide motivation to use language embedded in a context and a situation. The "acting- out" process makes the learners adopt a new position and this helps them being creatively involved (ibid).

Role-play has a significance role in developing communicative competence and drama in EFL classes enables the use of role-play. Boudreault (2010) lists the positive aspects of role-play and says that it is important because it teaches cooperation, empathy for others, decision

making skills, encourages an exchange of knowledge between students and with the teacher and students. It also encourages leadership, team work, compromise, authentic listening skills and practice with real life savior-faire.

Zafeiriadou (2009:4) defines drama as a challenge for creative thought and a means that contributes to "education for being,". He gives drama a unique value as a pedagogic technique because it brings about students' creative thought and asserts language education as a creative process. "Moreover, for the reason it points out that creative expression depends not on talent alone, but also on motivation, interest, effort, and opportunity. That creative process, contrary to popular opinion, is socially supported, culturally influenced, and collaboratively achieved through instruction" (ibid. :6).

In addition to the benefits mentioned above, drama should also take place in EFL classes for the reason that it meets the needs of the learners. In this study the needs of the learners will refer to different intelligence profiles of the learners which are proposed by Gardner's multiple intelligences thory.

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THEORY IN EDUCATION

Multiple intelligences theory of Howard Gardner (1983), co-director of Project Zero and professor of education at Harvard University, is a result of the research on the development of human cognitive capacities. What makes this theory unique is its difference from the common tradition of intelligence. The traditional understanding adheres to two basic assumptions: that cognition is unitary and that individuals can be adequately described as having a single, quantifiable intelligence (Campbell et al, 1999: XV). However, Gardner (cited in Christison, 1998:6) proposes a pluralistic view of the mind recognizing many different and discrete facets of cognition and acknowledging that people have different cognitive strengths and contrasting cognitive styles. He defines intelligence as (Campbell, ibid.)

- The ability to solve problems that one encounters in real life.
- The ability to generate new problems to solve.
- The ability to make something or offer a service that is valued within one's culture.

According to Gardner (1983), some of the signs of an intelligence are potential isolation by brain damage, susceptibility to encoding in a symbol system, the existence of idiots, savants, prodigies and other exceptional individuals, an identifiable core operation or set of operations, support from experimental psychological tasks, support from psychometric findings. These signs show that it is not possible to name all the skills and talents as intelligences and it is necessary for each intelligence to meet these criteria to be considered intelligence.

After understanding what intelligence is in terms of multiple intelligences theory, the questions coming to mind are

- What are the intelligence types according to this theory and what are their characteristics?
- What are the key points that educators find attractive about the theory?
- How can English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers apply this theory in their teaching?

The eight intelligences can be briefly defined as follows (Christison, 1998; Lazear, 1994):

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence: This intelligence is related to the ability to use the body to express ideas and feelings and to solve problems.

Intrapersonal intelligence: This intelligence can be summarized as the ability to understand yourself -your strengths, weaknesses, moods, desires, and intentions.

Interpersonal intelligence: This intelligence can be summarized as the ability to understand another person's moods, feelings, motivations, and intentions.

Linguistic intelligence: It is the ability to use words effectively both orally and in writing.

Logical-mathematical intelligence: This intelligence can be summarized as the ability to use numbers effectively and reason well.

Musical intelligence: It is the ability to sense rhythm, pitch, and melody. This includes such skills as the ability to recognize simple songs and to vary speed, tempo, and rhythm in simple melodies.

Spatial intelligence: It is the ability to sense form, space, color, line, and shape. It includes the ability to graphically represent visual or spatial ideas.

Naturalist intelligence: This intelligence can be summarized as the ability to recognize and classify plants, minerals, and animals, including rocks and grass, and all variety of flora and fauna.

Generally, traditional educational programs focus on a preponderance of linguistic and mathematical intelligences and the other six intelligences are neglected. We can observe the reflection of this understanding in the exams given in Turkey such as the university entrance exam named YGS (http://www.osym.gov.tr). The questions in this and similar tests are built up around these two intelligences. There should be a balance between the intelligences. Berman (2002: 3) points out that unless we teach multi-modally and cater for all the intelligence types in each of our lessons, we will fail to reach all the learners in the group, whichever approach to teaching we adopt.

In terms of teaching a language Garndner (2003: 206) claims that "sensitivity to multiple intelligences may help a teacher not only determine which modalities are most effective for the presentation of a new language but also how to make sure that linguistic intelligence is interacting in optimal fashion with all the intelligences that may participate in the communicative process. Christison & Kennedy point out that "a curriculum informed by MI theory provides a way of handling differing language skill levels within one class-a very common situation in adult ESL classes (Costanzo & Paxton, 1999). When multiple activities are available, more students can find ways to participate and take advantage of language acquisition opportunities."

Palmberg (2002) proposes an eight-step activity plan for teachers who are familiar with Gardner's MI Theory in general but do not know exactly how and where to start. These steps are identifying teacher's own intelligence profile, identifying the learners' intelligence profiles, studying the list of activities (methods of work, types of practice, classroom techniques)and trying to categorize them according to the intelligence they cater for, studying the language-skills activities chart, examining some foreign-language teaching workbooks for identifying a number of typical exercises or activities for each of the eight intelligences, reflecting on the teacher's most recent foreign-language lesson, selecting a teaching topic for a specific learner group, writing down the topic on a large sheet of paper and putting all tasks, texts, exercises, methods of work, aids, activities, songs etc. that relate to the given topic. Arranging teacher's ideas according to the intelligence they cater for the best and then answering the following questions and making adjustments into the lesson plan wherever necessary:

- Have you provided the learners with opportunities to speak, listen, read and write?

- Have you included numbers, calculations and/or activities requiring critical thinking?

- Have you included pictures, graphs and/or art?

- Have you included activities involving movement?

- Have you included music and/or rhythms?

- Have you included pair work and/or group work?

- Have you provided the learners with private learning time and/or time for reflection?

- Have you included categorization tasks and/or arranging exercises?

Have you helped the learners consider the topic/theme/grammar point(s) of today's lesson in relation to a larger context?

Christison (1998) claims that "few theories have been embraced more enthusiastically by EFL teachers in the past few years than Gardner's theory of The Multiple Intelligences." MIT has been favored by the teachers because it comports with their intuitions that students are smart in different ways and more students can be reached more effectively. As a result of an enquiry of possible ways of reaching students more effectively in language classes, the use of drama in language education attracts the attention.

Drama games, activities, and productions develop all of Gardner's intelligences, but are particularly strong in Spatial, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Linguistic, and Intrapersonal Intelligences. Using drama as a teaching tool activates many of the innate human intelligences often neglected by traditional methods of teaching (http://www.dramaed.net/whydramagames.htm).

Providing some examples of drama activities to be used in language education and analysing them in terms of MIT will make it easier to understand the benefits of using drama in ELT classes.

Activity 1.

Lost Person Roleplay (Past simple / Continous)
(http://www.eslflow.com/Lostpersroleplay.html)

Context: You lost a friend 10 years ago. Now you want to find him /her again for some reason money or love,etc. You go to a private detective to find your friend.

Stage 1. Model: Draw a stick figure on the board, choose a student to be the customer and the teacher plays detective. Mix up past simple/continuous questions.

Stage 2. Roleplay: Put the students in groups of 2 or 3 to carry out the activity.

Figure 1. Activity on Past Simple and Continous

PRIVATE DETECTIVE	CUSTOMER
- May I help you ?	- Yes, I lost my best friend 10 years ago. I'm trying to find him.
- Ok. Where/lose....?	- I lost......................
What happened?	Well...................
What did.....?	....
What	....
When	....
How	....
Why	....
Where	....
.... work?	....
.....................wear?	....
.....................live?	....
...................looklike?	....
...................name?	....
Did he.......................?	By the way, how much do you charge......?
Was he...............?	
Were you............?	

In this activity it is possible to notice basically the linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal intelligences without any adaptations. If the teacher wants to put some extra focus on a specific intelligence or the missing ones s/he can adapt the material.

Activity 2.

Superhero, household object, and location (Wilson,2008: 52-53).

Level: Intermediate

Time: 15 Minutes

Aims: To create an improvised narrative story

Preparation

You need either four or five volunteers. No other preparation is needed fort his activity.

Procedure

1. Choose four or five volunteers, who will be a team of three or four, plus a director. Tell them that hey are going to ell a story.

2. The three or four members of the team sit in a line in front of the class. The director sits facing them.

3. You then ask the rest of the class to give you the three items which must appear in the story: a superhero, a household object, and a location, e.g. Superman, a vacuum cleaner, and Central Park, New York.

4. Tell the director to point at one member of the team. That person must start a story which will eventually involve Superman, a vacuum cleaner, and Central Park. If and when he/she slows down or hesitates, the director points the finger at another team member, who continues the story. In fact, he director can point at another member of the team at any point, and the new member must take up the story from that point. In this way, no one is exposed or embarrassed, and the rest of the class watch with interest as the story unfolds.

This activity addresses specifically to the linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal intelligences. With putting a real life like atmosphere by providing a need to communicate this activity nurtures different intelligences of the students which makes the lesson more funny and interesting for the learners as well.

CONCLUSION

As can be seen from the activities above, using drama in EFL classes has the potential to meet the needs of the learners by providing the teacher with a framework to address different intelligences of the students. The key points given above are all useful to the English language teaching profession. They help us understand the diversity we observe in our students and provide a framework for addressing these differences in our teaching. Susan Stern (in Sam 1990), who looks into drama in second language learning from a psycholinguistic point of view, emphasizes that drama heightens self-esteem, motivation, spontaneity, increases capacity for empathy, and lowers sensitivity to rejection. These tremendous benefits of drama facilitate communication and provide an appropriate psycholinguistic climate for language learning by addressing multiple intelligences of the students.

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