



## CINEMA AND THEATRE IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES

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### ABSTRACT

*In this article, the role and influence of movies and theaters in learning foreign languages are expressed. Movies are an extremely useful teaching tool for foreign languages. According to our research and observations, watching films in a foreign language classroom provides students with an opportunity to acquire new vocabulary, terminologies, phraseology, and usage patterns that they would not be able to acquire in a traditional language classroom. Even at the advanced level, movies can provide a forum for students to practice speaking the language in class discussions. This is the reason that a lot of language-learning establishments have multi-media rooms equipped with TVs, VHS players, CD players, and DVD players.*

### Introduction.

The use of drama in the teaching of foreign languages is not a new approach its beginning can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century . Since the late 1970s, with the increasing prevalence of the Communicative Approach, the method has been an integral part of foreign language teaching – for the area of English as a foreign language see for example Via's *English in Three Acts* (1976). The author draws on his teaching experiences in Japan with his theatre company Model Productions and the related Model Language Studios. Other exemplary books from this time are Holden's *Drama in Language Teaching* (1981) and Maley & Duff's *Drama Techniques in Language Learning* . A large and continuously updated online research bibliography attests to on-going scholarly interest in the topic<sup>1</sup>. However, most academic publications on drama in language teaching focus on its use in primary or secondary school and/or on general language learning. Not many publications look at using drama in the teaching of languages for special purposes to university level learners, which is to be the focus of this article.

**Methods and Materials.** The article is divided into two parts: First, an overview of the field of drama in language teaching in general, with reference to selected publications, will be given with a summary of the arguments commonly listed in favour of using drama techniques in the foreign language classroom. Secondly, the topic of drama in teaching languages for



special/vocational purposes will be looked at in more detail in combination with a report on a teaching experience, i.e. a full-scale theatre production with a focus on business English.

### **Positive aspects for teaching languages.**

The 1980s and 1990s recognized the completion of the earliest studies. Stern (1983) looked at psycholinguistic elements, and Gaudart (1990) concentrated on the usefulness of various formats in multiple types of schools. More recently, O'Gara (2008) investigated how well drama taught verb tenses in a secondary school context, and Kao & O'Neill (1998) evaluated how effectively process drama helped adult English language learners communicate orally. Furthermore, Gill (2013) lists the following studies as "international studies which show the extent to which drama works": Miccoli (2003), Stinson (2007), Stinson & Freebody (2006a; 2006b), and Ulas (2008). The following sections provide a summary of the advantages of using drama in language instruction.

### **Putting words in context and creating a secure atmosphere**

Drama activities give language structures context by allowing students to use the language in real-world contexts. For instance, during a vocabulary test, students are required to role-play a meeting instead of just being given a list of common meeting phrases to memorize. This allows them to learn challenging phrases in context. While there are clear similarities between this and communicative language instruction, Fleming (2006) explains how drama can go further:

For instance, the instructor could create a more complex scenario where the two participants were fierce rivals and knew each other from school, rather than just having them purchase an item in a store.

In the safe atmosphere of the classroom, students can practice using language and behavior appropriate for potentially complex situations. To expand on Fleming's example, in a classroom setting, the situation can be analyzed after it has been acted out and/or frozen, slowed down, or repeated with a different result. In a real-life scenario, using the incorrect register might cause a dispute between the customer and the shopkeeper. Furthermore, students frequently perceive playing a fictional character as a form of protection, and they appear to feel less ashamed of their errors.

**Discussion. Experience instructing: business Projects for English theater .** This section will provide a detailed account of a teaching experience using a long-term drama format that is product-oriented. In this instance, a semester-long full-scale theater production involves students at a university of applied sciences. In this optional course, students can perform in plays written especially for the group, most of which focus on business and industry-related themes. Examples include the finance industry in a reimagining of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, or the globalized textile industry in a series of short plays about fashion. The scripts present business-related scenarios, such as scheduling meetings, going on job interviews, or addressing foreign business partners. Depending on the time allotted, the director/teacher may write the entire script in some semesters, while in others, the students contribute to the script-writing process by improvising scenarios that are filmed, transcribed, and edited into a dramatic script.

In 2012, a semester project focused on the topic of globalization, specifically the globalization of the textile industry and the supply and manufacturing chain of jeans. A group



of ten students developed, practiced, and presented an evening of short plays in a campus show in about ten weeks. Students created mind maps, discussed plays about jeans, and read background material during the first three meetings. Ultimately, the director/teacher wrote drafts of seven brief plays (five to fifteen minutes each).

Students practiced in small groups during three to four rehearsals each week. Selling "quick fashion" and sustainability were among the themes covered, along with historical details (blue jeans in the American West in the 19th century) and a dystopian piece centered on the wordplay "genes" and genetic engineering. Pupils came across a variety of specialized vocabulary (vocabulary) from the business and textile production fields. Additionally, they worked with a variety of genres, including Shakespearean monologues, Westerns, and fairy tales (cultural learning). They worked on their oral expression, presentation skills, and articulation and pronunciation, particularly in one abstract piece that involved choral speaking and heavily depended on expressive line delivery to keep the play engaging for the audience. An American native speaker served as a pronunciation coach for the project's participating students from Belgium, Vietnam, Russia, Malaysia, and Germany, who occasionally had trouble with pronunciation and intonation.

Since a large-scale theater production requires the collaboration of several specialized groups, students can pursue careers as costume designers, marketing managers, and organizers in addition to being actors (actors, production managers for stage, costumes, lights and sound, marketing team, etc.). In addition to allowing students with varying skill sets to contribute to the final product, this also gives them the chance to build social competencies through teamwork, which may inspire diverse learning groups and/or create opportunities for collaboration across faculty. Interdisciplinary teamwork is demonstrated in the example by the collaboration of students from the school of technology, business studies, and textile technology. One common comment made in assessments of the theater project has been the benefits of working in a mixed group.

**Results.** As part of the scheduling is done via email and students must communicate with the director in English, students can also practice basic (work-related) writing skills in addition to honing their spoken English, as English is the working language for the entire project. Students are also encouraged to submit texts for the program brochure and marketing, which gives them the chance to practice writing in a variety of genres.

Having the students provide feedback to other participants during the rehearsal process is another way to increase their sense of accountability for the result. As a result, students will learn to assume accountability for both the group's overall learning process and their own. Peer learning is encouraged because students with acting experience can serve as role models for less experienced students by modeling successful behaviors and strategies (e.g., memorizing lines, controlling voice and volume, etc.). This is because the group's experience levels are typically varied.

**Conclusion.** Language learners may accept drama as a way to gain linguistic and non-linguistic competencies for their future field of work, as this article has explained. Grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, intercultural understanding, and so-called soft skills like self-management, teamwork, and presentation competency can all be taught with it. It can produce engaging and practice-focused learning opportunities that enhance students'



employability, language proficiency, and personal growth. It should therefore be viewed as a teaching strategy in and of itself rather than just a "fun activity" to pass the final five minutes of class after the "real" learning has already been completed.

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