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DEVELOPING KEY COMPETENCES THROUGH DRAMA

DKCD

DRAMA ACTIVITIES IN THE **CLASSROOM**

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D. DEBUT

DRAMA ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSROOM BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Teaching Key Competences through drama and educational theatre is a topic that has been tackled numerous times already. It has already been proved beyond any doubt that drama activities aid the teaching of at least 5 of the initial eight Lisbon Key Competences, namely „Communication”, „Learning to learn”, „Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences”, „Civic competence” , „Entrepreneurship” and „Cultural expression”. Beyond these afore-mentioned Key Competences, there is the distinct possibility of using drama for the development of others, and with younger pupils, Basic literacy will only benefit from the introduction of such elements in the teaching-learning process. Starting from this already commonly agreed reality, this book aims to provide educators of teens mainly, yet not only, with hands-on materials, ideas and resources that will enable the use of drama techniques and activities in a number of disciplines commonly taught in secondary schools, yet with a clear view upon enabling students to use the so impared knowledge in real-life situations in future.

Using drama and educational theatre in class is no new idea, yet educators quite often view it with reluctance, due to the fact that it may be time-consuming and pose difficulty in assessment, it might turn hard to manage, or could simply divert the students’ attention from the main goal itself. In many schools Drama

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courses are frequently part of the curriculum, yet their aim is to teach exactly what the title says. Therefore, taking various drama techniques into consideration while teaching ordinary subjects such as History, Geography, Psychology, Economy and others alike may seem laughable matter unless we view the endeavour with an open mind. Role-play is probably the one aspect closely linked to drama in education that many educators are familiar with; nevertheless, the limitations of this technique are well-known. This is exactly why drama in the classroom, if wisely applied, will involve creativity, first on behalf of the teacher, and only then on behalf of the students, while the entire process will enhance learning motivation, skill and sub-skill development and will eventually contribute to making school a far more exciting and a much more memorable experience altogether.

D1 – Drama and the Key Competence of Communication

One of the most important aims of teaching is training students for communicative efficiency. The idea of effectiveness includes consideration for, and understanding of the other person or people involved in the communicative process. It means that any of the communication skills involves more than the mere mechanical ability to use the basic means of the communication concerned and implies a sum of sub-skills that will each contribute to honing the competence and allow communicators to express themselves in more than one ways and in many more than one register. Be this the case of mother tongue or any foreign language, such skills and sub-skills are easily

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transferrable, therefore, once gained, they will become life requisites that will enable users to master communication at excellent levels.

During the learning process the emphasis on communicative activities that are intended to improve the student's ability to communicate should be blended with the controlled use of finely-tuned input and with semi-controlled language practice.

When students are working on an input stage with an emphasis on communication, they are supposed to have a desire to communicate. Drama activities enhance the students' desire to express themselves. Having recognised a need to express oneself, the next step is identifying aims and purposes to fulfil those needs through communicating with other students.

All in all, teaching communication through drama may turn into a multi-fold endeavour, covering both oral and written communication, and blending them beautifully, not to mention the addition of supra-segmental sequences according to proficiency levels, as intonation, pronunciation and emphasis may turn into powerful communication tools. Once these are fully mastered, the sky is the limit in what concerns communication as a Key Competence, and from here on, our students will gladly and willingly research other forms of enhancing and improving their own ways of expressing themselves. This, in turn, will open the doors widely to the "Learning to learn" Key Competence.

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D2 – Drama and Key Competences of Interpersonal, Intercultural and Social Competences

Openness, solidarity and responsibility are the key words that conjure the image of teaching the competence above; therefore, these all as Key Competences, clearly supported by minutely developed sub-skills will make our students better citizens of tomorrow's world. Empowering our students to understand, apply and internalize the values of democracy, of joint ventures towards the welfare of the community is an educational priority nowadays.

“Interpersonal, intercultural and Social Competences” are all very closely related to one fundamental aspect of everyday teaching, that of Group work. Irrespective of the subject taught, all educators should be fully aware of the benefits that Group work brings both at personal and at social levels. Moreover, the Key Competence, as it appears, is complementary to many scholastic disciplines, such as all of those sheltered under the umbrella of Social Sciences, History, Arts and Communication again.

Moreover, topics of great interest, such as empathy, problem solving and conflict management, strategies for conflict resolution, the issue of otherness, the broader environment, discrimination, bullying or xenophobia will become both easier to tackle and to manage if drama techniques are applied.

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Assuming a role, thinking about it, internalizing it, sometimes even creating it is what puts things into a whole new perspective for young minds, and this is precisely why drama has to be invited to participate in class. Theoretical input in all these matters of such huge importance to our society today must be kept to a minimum, while the practical application should take the floor. And there is no better way yet proven than the use of drama techniques.

D3 – Drama and the Civic Competence Versus Media Literacy

The “Civic Competence” , otherwise closely linked to the one above, is meant to take things further and teach our students to take a stand whenever necessary and find a voice that will resonate with the local community in order to amend or prompt decisions, solve issues, forward proposal and find audiences for their back-up. Social media becomes today the main conveyor of such endeavours, but to get teens to take such upright stands is no easy feat. On top of this, as press manipulation seems to have reached its best nowadays, media literacy is also needed in order to enable the citizens of the near future to promote sane ideas, militate for progressive changes and sustain revolutionary ideas within a given community.

There is, undoubtedly, no better way to hone such skill than by using drama activities and techniques. Also this is the area where Forum Theatre will find its best application, both as a

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means of cascading any drama activity and as the source of finding multiple answers and viewpoints to a generally simple question.

Tackled either directly or indirectly in many secondary schools, this subject is of foremost importance in the development of young minds, and should therefore be given the necessary consistency alongside the teaching of Human Rights, Democratic Education, or Civic Engagement, to give just a few examples of the most frequent subjects that should uphold the importance of the matter in hand.

D4 – Drama and Entrepreneurship

The Key Competence of Entrepreneurship can easily be developed using RPT or Role Play Teaching, as it is by assuming various roles in real life while still in school the best method that will develop several entrepreneurial sub-skills that work hand in glove with business oriented situations such as , job interviews, business negotiations, direct customer addressing, customer complaints, marketing products, teamwork, conflict management and resolution, and the list is almost endless.

In teaching this particular competence simulations of potential real situations that students might encounter once hired to occupy certain positions is a must, as they will gain many insights while doing so. Posture and voice pitch are important, outfit and register too, just to mention a minimal number of

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aspects that accompany any communication situation linked to the topic in hand. Theoretical input can be made available at the beginning of the teaching sequence, but also as the simulation carries on, as students may require themselves more thorough lecturing on topics they might find difficult to handle. Motivation generally is at its peak, student interaction is excellent, and team-work is fantastic, while sharing knowledge is coupled with constructive peer criticism, all of which make the experience really worthwhile for all people involved. And if you are still wondering about assessment, this is also easy to do, being based on personal commitment, quality and quantity of output, quality of role performance, and proven creativity.

D5 – Drama and Cultural Expression

This particular competence is closely linked to the use of drama techniques, mainly due to the fact that any expression of culture tends to be off-showing, therefore close to drama. Yet the ability to culturally express oneself goes far beyond the simple simulation or dramatization of any given situation or text as it implies deeper understanding of the intricate meaning of the various facets of cultural aspects to be exposed, as well as an insight concerning the moral values, history or traits that conjure up the culture and traditions of a certain population, area or ethnic group.

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K. KEY COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANTAGES OF USING DRAMA TECHNIQUES IN CLASS

Students should have a real purpose in communicating something, so that their attention would be centred on the content of what is being said and not so much on the language form used. According to Dimbleby and Burton (1998:10) these needs and purposes can be seen as “mirror images and when a need is felt from within, a purpose recognizes the outcome we want”. Therefore the following advantages are paramount in using the strategy:

Increased motivation makes students become personally involved in class activities, as their performance depends to a large extent on the interest and enjoyment generated by the activity in which they participate.

Promoting students’ positive self-image comes through the challenge of performing the task itself, as students find it important to succeed in order to maintain and improve the way they are perceived by their peers.

Task adjustment to the learner’s abilities and possibilities is in fact a must for the teacher as the level of the task needs special attention. If the task is too difficult the students might be discouraged from the very beginning. On the contrary, if the

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task is too easy, the students get easily bored „The task must be hard enough to demand an effort on the part of the members, but easy enough to be clear that success is within their grasp” (Ur: 1991) as students have a need to achieve and overcome difficulties, to succeed in what they set out to do.

Goal orientation as using drama techniques in the class makes students become aware of their learning purposes, and consequently, they may direct their efforts towards achieving them. However much or little is produced, whatever responses are given, they all constitute a performance of our students and they will hardly be discouraged by setbacks, or by apparent lack of progress. Instead, if well guided, they will go on and be perseverant.

Flexibility is another major positive aspect, as content and methodology can be decided by the learners and the teacher together, and within the groups themselves, so the approach is almost entirely learner centred unless students themselves require it differently.

Keeping the students’ interest alive is possible by offering interesting and imaginative topics and tasks, some closer to their own circumstances, others less explored hence challenging, and a good balance of the known and new will also promote motivation.

A dynamic and funny way of learning, it gives educators the chance to help students develop their key competences, skills

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and sub-skills, and experiment with specific roles they will meet further on in their personal or career life.

Enhancing fluency in communication in any domain, as the teacher does not interfere while students have to deal with a variety of registers, terminology and language during such activities.

Building-up self-confidence in teens is also essential for their development, especially for the shy or introverts, who may encounter difficulties in participating in activities based on sharing their own ideas and experiences. They may find drama-based activities as ‘masks’ that give them the necessary freedom to find their own voice, and the feeling that their own personality is still safe while reaching out.

Drama-based activities improve vocabulary growth and the overall levels of communication, activating the passive vocabulary that has been learned already and putting it in real-life like situations and simulations.

Using IT, audio, and visual props to enhance the quality of their performance, which are also eye-catching and relevant to the task, is important for the students, and allows their creativity and ingenuity to manifest openly.

Extensive use of drama learning outcomes means that the sketches, monologues, or whatever the final products are, may

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be filmed and later used as reinforcing material with the same groups or as introductory material with other groups of students.

Interpersonal relationships are developed through working as a group or in a team. Task accomplishment and structure activation usually triggers general knowledge, personal and interpersonal experiences as it is generally agreed that relatively quick progress has to do more with exposure, than with the aptitudes of the students. Ordinary classroom exposure cannot compete with natural settings or with simulations of these in supplying the necessary amount of learning input as well as in controlling the quality of learning outcomes.

Parents' acknowledgement of students' work is a good way to involve the parents more in their child's learning, especially if the performance is displayed or presented to the public, so that parents can see it either live at school, or on stage, or filmed in the comfort of their homes.

A welcome break from routine and the chance to do something different, for both students and teacher is another major advantage that using drama in class poses. Traditional or modern, teaching tends to fall in a routine at a certain time, so drama techniques will always offer a way out.

Learning for pleasure is also what makes the use of drama more effective, as long as the requirement for such activities is accurate and the students clearly understand what is expected of

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them. Moreover, they usually enjoy letting their imagination go wild, and have loads of fun while acting. Therefore, such kind of enjoyment might ensure a better, solid and long-lasting learning for most of our students, through a wide range of techniques which develop Key Competences and increase motivation during class interaction.

All in all, acting is a source of tension; it is also challenging and “fun”. Using drama-based activities in class produces enjoyment and enhances motivation. Such activities involve students' imagination and creativity. This way, even the inhibited students, who may find these activities intimidating at first, have good chances to appreciate them in time.

C. CONSTRUCTION AND COORDINATION OF DRAMA TECHNIQUES IN CLASS

The following lines will show how the use of drama techniques can become integral part of any lesson project, by tackling the main areas to be considered while organizing and planning any teaching sequence or class.

Aim

By blending elements of creative drama, improvisation, pantomime, creative movement, and story-telling students will develop abilities and skills that have positive effects on their

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development of Key Competences, on their academic success, and on their social interaction. Drama techniques can be integrated with content from school subjects offering a powerful teaching tool that reaches multiple learning styles and content areas.

Lead in stage

In the introductory stage learners will be given a general idea of what the topic and the task are and what they should be aiming to produce.

Organising the development of the activity

Using drama techniques in the class allows different approaches, depending on the teaching purpose, topic, age and level of students for any given scholastic discipline. There are just a few rules and steps that both the teacher and the students have to follow:

- Teacher has to explain the idea of the project clearly and let some freedom of choice to the students involved;
- Teacher and students have to reach a consensus for the scheme of work, the role and involvement of each member of the group or team, what form it will take, the materials, resources and/or props needed and the moment of final presentation;
- Teacher should be involved in all or most of the stages of the drama activity, helping students and checking if they have

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understood the task properly, use the best approaches, function well as a team, will be able to meet the deadline, or other similar.

Time allocation

Educators need to allocate a mutually agreed amount of time for preparing the task, as well as for the length of the actual performance of students. Set each team intermediate time limits for certain stages during the process, if necessary. Some drama activities such as warm-ups would not require a long time to work on, yet others that involve writing the script, establishing roles, rehearsing and preparing costumes, masks or other materials for the setting, need more time to accomplish.

Setting materials and resources

Students need to know the exact location for their performance, in order to wisely decide what materials and props they need to conceive. If necessary, rehearsal sessions may be organized with the necessary props.

Evaluation

In order to acknowledge and evaluate the students' work and performance, it is important to make use of various types of assessment, from task achievement to peer assessment, and to be

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for the assessment to be effective, students need to be made aware in due time, if possible from the very outset of the activity, of the criteria used to evaluate their outcomes, such as creativity and originality, relevance for the given task, the style of presentation, accuracy and fluency while performing and the general impression left by the performance as a whole. It may also be a good idea to mutually decide upon penalties for misdemeanours, such as non-compliance with the time allocated for the performance, use of inappropriate vocabulary, or promoting bad manners or attitudes.

D. DRAMA ACTIVITIES IN CLASS

There are many definitions and types of drama activities to be applied in class, yet the ones we consider most useful in terms of preparation and design of a lesson are the warmers, the bonders and the movers. To these we can add the fillers and the initiators, although, according to the present literature, some of these may be overlapping. Their importance in the economy of a lesson may be topic of debate, yet their time constraints and efficiency will actually reverse the order. Moreover, if the triad of the 3 Ps is put in action (the already traditional Presentation-Practice-Production lesson development pattern), it will become clear that warmers or initiators belong to Presentation (P1) stage, bonders and/or fillers to the (P) Practice (P2) stage and movers to the (P3) Production stage.

There is also the category which aims at instilling drama as the technique to be used for revision purposes or better fixation of

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educational input, which are also far more motivational, more elaborate, more real life oriented, and subsequently more educational and helpful.

In the following lines we shall try to cover each and every one of these, at the same time trying to tackle subjects that can make good use of the ideas presented below, while also offering methodological input to help educators use the activities presented. We shall mainly leave to the reader's intake which is which, as the ideas below can be used in many ways, for different purposes, and with various groups. They are, above all, versatile, therefore adaptable to class needs and to teacher's creativity.

D1.IDIOM-BASED DRAMA ACTIVITY: GETTING TO SUCCESS/HAPPINESS

D.1.A: Developing the Key Competence of Communication, both in the native language and in foreign languages



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Appropriate for the study of languages, be these native or foreign, this activity can be used with any level of learners from pre-intermediate upwards, yet with teens mainly, in order to either teach or re-enforce the meanings, usage and context characteristic for the chosen idioms.

DEVELOPMENT

Aim

Students will practice several idioms linked to the idea of success or happiness in a creative way in order to perform the realised outcome in front of the class.

Lead-in

Teacher uses images and a given text to begin a discussion about what success or happiness means for different people. Teacher asks students to find a connection between the pictures and the idea of success/happiness and agree or disagree with the reasons appearing in the text. Teacher prompts students to use their own experiences when expressing their views.

Organising the development of drama activity

Stage 1: The teacher turns the discussion toward idiom practice and students are asked to match the halves of several pre-chosen idioms that deal with success or happiness, to discriminate literal use from idiomatic use, and/or to supply the right idiom

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for a certain new context. Below there are some random examples of idioms to be used in the class:

Have the world at one's feet

Be in the seventh heaven

Be a feather in one's cap

Have one's head in the clouds

Keep up with the Joneses

Rub somebody up the wrong way

Steal the show

Work one's fingers to the bone

Work one's way up to the top

Stage 2: Starting from the idioms above, students have to find, in pairs or small groups, a context to play in front of the class a small scene, thus illustrating the meaning of two, three or maximum four of the idioms taught altogether. Choice of idioms should depend on main idea or goal of the lesson, on students' levels or interdisciplinary needs, while groups or pairs might also be given sets of idioms to work on and use these as a starting point for their creative work on developing minimal scripts in the target language.

Time allocation

Students are allocated enough time for conceiving their minimal scripts, the length of which should be mutually agreed upon, for rehearsal and also for their presentations, all according to how much emphasis educators want to place on the topic.

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Setting, materials and resources

Students are encouraged to be as creative as possible, using original, simple prompts, costumes or masks if they consider these necessary for a bettered performance. They have to write the final drafts of their work by hand or type them. As the activity implies short dialogues, they may use the board to also draw meaningful sketches on it, or arrange objects in the class so as to re-create the classroom space and prepare a proper setting for their act. Resources available are the best option, or very cheap materials that are easy to find, as creativity is at its best when the simplest solution is figured out.

Performance

Students present their contextual dialogues in front of the class. Students may come up with different contexts for the task in hand such as:

- Acquaintances meeting by chance on the street;
- The excitement of the first show;
- Passing a stressful exam;
- Exchanging opinions about a show/performance/concert;
- Making an excuse for being forgetful;
- Boasting about meeting a star/VIP;
- Empathizing with a friend/fellow student;
- Having won a trip to an exotic destination;
- Having got one's dream job;

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- Giving advice to a friend;
- Speaking about winning a lottery.

Evaluation

In order to acknowledge and evaluate the students' work there will be used pre-established and presented evaluation sheets with clear criteria, with clear rubrics that award points for creativity and originality, relevance to the given task, the style of presentation, accuracy and fluency while performing, as well as the impression left by the performance as a whole. Peer assessment is essential to be applied before the final evaluation is carried out for this is a student focused activity, so students need to have a say in this matter.

D.1.B: Developing the Key Competences of Basic Literacy and Cultural Expression

There are many explanations for the existence of idioms that historians, linguists and etymologists have come up with; therefore, these may become the starting point of various drama activities meant to enable the development of other key competences, such as the ones enlisted above. Let us give a few examples only, typical for the English language (yet there is a lot more to be investigated beyond any idiom in any language):

"Fly off the handle:" Handmade axes in the United States' pioneer days weren't always the crowning achievements of technology and craftsmanship. Occasionally, a particularly poor design would result in the head unexpectedly zooming off its

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handle. Many people found this an apt metaphor for passionate bursts of rage, eventually birthing the phrase still in use centuries later.

"Selling like hot cakes:" Around 1839, this tasty term likened anything that sold out quickly to one of America's most popular foodstuffs. Hotcakes and pancakes have always enjoyed a beloved spot in the nation's culinary heart, and serve as some of the best metaphors for anything that flies off the shelves.

"To turn a blind eye:" It is said it originates with Admiral Horatio Nelson, who allegedly looked through his telescope using his blind eye to avoid signals from his superior telling him to withdraw from battle.

"Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater:" This idiom allegedly comes from a time when the household bathed in the same water; first, the lord would bathe, then the men, the lady, the women, the children, and the babies last. The bath water is said to have been so dirty that there was a risk of throwing the baby out with the water once everyone was done bathing!

"To cost an arm and a leg:" The story goes that this phrase originated from 18th-century paintings, when famous people like George Washington would have their portraits done without certain limbs showing. Having limbs showing is said to have cost more.

"Let the cat out of the bag:" Dating back to around 1530, cats often served as sneaky substitutes for their porcine peers when shady business-people tricked their customers. Clever

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consumers who exposed their deception eventually spawned the familiar idiom, which retains a similar, albeit broader, meaning today.

All these examples convey the roots of drama activities that can be offered to students in order to better their intake of either historical or cultural knowledge, by means of the simplest enactments of the events depicted in the descriptions of the idioms' origins or history. And the deeper the research, the more rewarding the results, which means that the starting point of the dramatization might actually turn into an indepth research in the history and appearance of given idioms.

D.2. COLLOCATIONS BASED DRAMA **SOMETHING DIFFERENT**

**Developing the Key Competence of Communication,
both in the native language and in foreign languages**



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DEVELOPMENT

Aim

Students will use certain collocations in a follow-up activity so as to create their own script and act it in front of the class.

Lead-in

The teacher will choose a certain topic to work on, in accordance with students' age, levels of knowledge and interests. For example, students are given a gapped text about unusual ways of celebrating important events. Students fill in the text with several given collocations such as: *range of options, outrageously expensive, anything goes, reaching the milestone, looming on the horizon, I can but dream, there is always...*, and then they are asked to express their views on the topic.

Organising the development of the drama activity

Students, organised in groups of four, will be asked to devise a script in which to use several collocations found in the text, in different contexts and finally present it to the rest of the class. Students discuss their proposals and views in teams, and decide on the steps they have to follow.

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Time allocation

Students are allocated 2-3 hours to work on the project. It may also be set as homework, though the class option seems better as it allows more control and definitely implies more genuine input. Each group will have to put together enough material for a 3-4 minute performance.

Space

Students may organize the classroom space to suit the purpose of their activity. They may rearrange the desks and chairs. They may even think to involve the rest of the class as part of their act, or not. It is important for students to be imaginative and discuss their views with the teacher.

Setting, materials and resources

Some students may choose to use characters from different literary works, others will extract them from real life; with no apparent connection between these characters, students will have to manage a context to point out their starting idea and bring all the chosen characters together. It is also the group's decision what materials would best support their purpose during their final performance.

Performance

Every group begins with a presentation of their characters. Each member of the group has to have something to present. They

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will try to surprise their classmates with their choice of characters, with the way they have designed the links between them and with the acting.

Evaluation

Students' work will be evaluated taking into account their presentation quality, involvement in conceiving the material, the individual character presentation and portrayal, as well as the group communication level.

Exemplification - “*Different Times*” script:

Characters:

Eminescu, a 19th century Romanian poet;

Roberta, a 20th century poetry lover;

Camil, a 21st century young man;

Bianca, a 31st century young lady;

(Eminescu walks in a park. He wants to get inspired to write a new poem. He looks at nature around him fascinated. Roberta walks in and she sits on a bench. At that moment, trying to find inspiration, Eminescu looks at her. He is a little shocked by her outfit. Being curious, he approaches her.)

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Eminescu: Excuse me, what are you reading?

Roberta: I'm reading a poem by Mihai Eminescu.

Eminescu: It can't be! It's impossible.

Roberta: Excuse me? (Confused and irritated)

Eminescu: Well...It's impossible, because I am Mihai Eminescu, miss...

Roberta: Roberta. But...How could you be him? He is long dead...It is 1950!

Eminescu: What?! Dead! Are you making fun of me, young lady?

(From somewhere far away, a young strange boy appears and draws the attention of the two upon him.)

Roberta: Listen, I'm going to ask that guy over there what year it is.

Eminescu: I'm coming with you.

Roberta: Excuse me, could you tell us, please what year are we in?

Camil: Halloween ended. Why are you still dressed like your grandparents? It is 2017(and he takes his smart phone out of his pocket)

Eminescu: What is this? This is nothing like I've ever seen before. It is out of the ordinary.

Camil: You're kind of giving me a stomach-churning fright.

Roberta: You're a far cry from all I have ever seen before.

Something really strange is happening.

Camil: I don't get any of you two...Wait a minute, you look familiar ...what are you, Eminescu's twin?

Eminescu: I am Eminescu!

Camil: No way, man! You're kidding me, right?

Roberta: No, he is the real Eminescu. Look, I'm reading his poetry.

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Camil: It can't be. In school we're studying about him and his work.

Eminescu: Look at the sky!

(Everybody is amazed. They look at the sky frightened.)

Camil: Guys, let's take a selfie with that beautiful light.

Bianca (appearing out of nowhere): A selfie? Ha-ha... Why don't you take a holographic picture?

Roberta: OK. Now this is really odd. In 1950 we can but dream at such technology. I have never imagined something like this.

How could all of these happen? (Pointing the finger at the new girl). What year are you from?

Bianca: I'm from 3000, the years of the cruellest war between people and robots.

Eminescu: Now, let's enjoy the milestone of this strange encounter, because I don't believe an opportunity like this comes twice in a lifetime. Shall we celebrate it or what?

Camil: Tell us more about the future. What is it like?

Bianca: Well, the future is a place, where "simple" doesn't exist anymore. We've thought that the world is our oyster, but we failed our beautiful planet. I really enjoy walking and admiring the beauty of life. Look at all this green around you, how fresh! In the future, all natural colours fade away, leaving space only for grey. I would have given everything to be just like you, but this is the only reality I've known and it's sad.

Camil: I can see where you're coming from; nowadays people are starting to disregard the beauty of nature in their rush for being well-heeled. In our time, the people are greedy, selfish and corrupted when it's about gaining financial benefits.

Eminescu: Since I was young, I have been taught that money does not bring happiness to the soul; the soul is a nation that must be populated with love, kindness, manners and lots of

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poetry. This is what kept me alive. The pillow that held my thoughtful head at night, the wind only wiped my fears before they hit ground and give birth to sadness. This is how I'm going to die: knowing that what I created was above my bare self. My heart only shall light the way for my hand and words. The only thing looming on the horizon should be love.

Bianca: Everything sounds magnificent. It is like a dream for me, a dream I'm not allowed to taste.

Roberta: My sore eyes have seen the war and all of the damages left behind it and after this, we focus on humankind... unfortunately its appearance won over its essence. The only thing that matters in my time is to have elegant and impressive clothes and accessories. The saddest fact is that we can't change anything no matter how hard we try, because we don't understand what happened to us.

Bianca: And now what? (Everybody looks at each other without answer).

(Offered by courtesy of High School “Traian Vuia” Resita, Romania)

D.3. STRUCTURE BASED DRAMA

**Developing the Key Competence of Communication,
both in the native language and in foreign languages**



DEVELOPING KEY COMPETENCES THROUGH DRAMA

DEVELOPMENT

Aim

Students are invited to use newly taught grammar structures in a short follow-up activity so as to create a quick role-play and act it in front of the class.

Lead-in

In order to reinforce the use of given or selected grammar area (for instance the use of Present Tenses in English), the teacher invites students to imagine a usual situation in which some friends meet and spend time together.

Organising the development of the drama activity

Students, organised in groups of four, will be asked to devise a dialogue in which to use only the present simple, the present continuous and the present perfect, in different situations and finally role-play it for the rest of the class. Students negotiate the topic and development in groups, and decide on the steps they have to follow.

Time allocation

Students are allocated a few minutes for the activity. Each group will have to prepare material for a maximum 2-minutes role play per each group. This will basically involve 12-15 lines of

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dialogue which will necessitate no more than 10-15 minutes to produce.

Space, setting, materials and resources

Taking into account that this activity may develop during 1 or 2 hours, it does not require a previous organisation of space. Students are invited to improvise if they consider they need some special settings, additional materials and resources or any particular layout.

Performance

The teacher should ensure that the dialogue are somehow balanced so that each member of the group has something to say while acting, as this requirement will make it easier to assess students at the ending of the activity.

Evaluation

Students' work will be evaluated following criteria such as task accomplishment, interpersonal communication, and structure, also language appropriateness, and the overall effect on audiences. Peer evaluation may come in place here, as having a similar task and being aware of the language input to be considered at all times, this evaluation technique becomes usable and worthy. The final decision though should belong to the teacher, as subjective approaches might appear and fairness has to be observed.

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D.4. DRAMATIZING TEXTS

D.4.A. Developing the Key Competences of Communication, both in the native language and in foreign languages, the Key Competence of Cultural Awareness, as well as the Key Competence of Basic Literacy



DEVELOPMENT

Aim

Students will internalise the multiple layer meanings of a given literary excerpt via the process of dramatization of it, which generally involves various transfer types, such as indirect into direct speech, diachronic intake of target language or a simpler way of teaching content via a more dynamic and a more meaningful approach offered by drama.

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Lead-in

Once the text has been read and all other necessary input has been solved (depending on subject, this activity can tackle theme, era, traditions, mentalities and so on), the teacher deems the dramatization process is open by inviting students to imagine how basic role-play of the text will look like. Exchange of ideas will be closely monitored as the following stages depend on it extensively.

Organising the development of the drama activity

The class is divided into groups, whose numbers have to match the number of characters in the text or at least be very close to this. A student whose performances are better than the average can undertake a double role if numbers do not match the intended distribution. In the same way, one or two groups can have more members if their performance levels are lower than expected, yet extra tasks will have to be given to these groups in order to fully capacitate all members to get involved. Students then negotiate roles and create the dramatized version of the given text, taking into account the fact that each member has to have a role, while the product as a whole has to follow the major guidelines offered by the original text.

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Time allocation

Students are given the time needed to transform the given text into a script. According to the type of text, this stage can take between 10 and 30 minutes, therefore initial planning will take into consideration the length of the text, the levels of the students, the dynamics of the group as a whole, as well as the degree of difficulty which clearly will vary by involved discipline or subject that will apply this technique. Again, from the very beginning of the activity, there must be a clear time limit that the performances will have to meet, as time constraints are also a good indicator of proficiency, and therefore a potential powerful assessment tool.

Space, setting, materials and resources

For the actual performance the classroom is the best option, yet the space can be re-arranged according to type of text to be dramatized, to every group's needs, or there might be other options available, such as an auditorium, studio or conference room, all depending on the available areas of the school. Also the hallways might become good options. Any other props will fall in the direct responsibility of each group; therefore creativity here will have its say.

Performance

Every group will present their final product, the performance based on their dramatization of the given text. Time constraints

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should be observed by each group. Each group member will have to play a role or contribute somehow to the group's performance.

Evaluation

Students' performances will be evaluated per group, following criteria such as task accomplishment, interpersonal communication, relevance, creativity, accuracy and fidelity in dramatizing the given text.

D.4.B. Developing the Key Competence of Cultural Awareness, the Key Competence of Basic Literacy, as well as Learning to Learn and Self-Expression

There are many variants that can be derived from the ideas of dramatizing a text, yet the one below will hopefully help students deal easier with the study of canonical writers, so very frequently met while dealing with works of famous national authors that are the norm for national exams.

In order to apply this activity, which looks more like a game, the teacher needs to divide the group in 2 large groups, basically split the class in two. Each large group will have their chance to perform, role-play or embody a certain character, yet from the very beginning they are somehow kept in the dark about the exact role each will assume. Each group will sit in a semi-circle around the acting area, or the area spotted or created to be large

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enough to accommodate all students seated in 2 semicircles that oppose each other.

An exact order of play will have to be established, as in a board game, so that everyone knows from the very beginning whose turn it will be next. The text is sliced in fairly equal parts so as to match the number of students of each semicircle.

Student no.1 takes its place in the acting area, in the middle of the semicircles. Student no.2 begins to tell the story. Student no.1 must act out the story narrated as fully as possible, also adding personal input wherever possible. This can even involve playing more than one single character, or using props that come handy in the given context, and doing what he/she thinks will work best to transmit the core ideas plus the possible implications of the given excerpt.

This may go on for about one minute after which the teacher rings a bell and the next 2 students take over, student no. 3 being the story teller while student no.4 is the actor. Rotations will continue until the story is over for both groups, these allowing students to present a double perspective on the given text, while at the same time, re-exploring the text with new tools, mainly emotional ones that are offered by personal interpretations.

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D.5. ENACTMENTS

Developing the Key Competences of Communication, both in the native language and in foreign languages, the Key Competence of Cultural Awareness, as well as the Key Competence of Basic Literacy in History



DEVELOPMENT

Aim

Students will internalise the multiple layer implications of historical events that have shaped either their nation's history or world history at a given time.

Lead-in

The students will be presented the historic context characteristic for the given period and will be provided insight in the most meaningful areas, such as economic development, state affairs, hegemony and cultural development.

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Organising the development of the drama activity

These activities will, most likely, take students out of their comfort zone in all respects. Although the classroom might be proper enough, the best venue for this activity is the local museum for the simple reason that any change of venue will trigger more personalized responses from the students. Role-play will again be the means via which the activity will be realised, and students will be asked to work in groups. Cross-group membership might be used, as enactments mostly imply greater numbers of people, all devoting their energy to the topic in hand.

Time allocation

Depending on the activity type, time will be set accordingly. Nevertheless, enough time must be granted for the preparation and rehearsal of the outcome, as enactments are pretty difficult to manage due to costume and layout requirements.

Space, setting, materials and resources

It will be beneficial to give participating students full credit in terms of choice of space, settings and props. This way, the activity will enhance creativity, team-work and competitive spirit, while, at the same time, emphasizing upon truthfulness and evidence-based approaches. As this activity works best with History lessons, any input that will help recreate the atmosphere of the enacted event is more than welcome.

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Performance

Every group will present their final product, this being the performance based on their dramatization of the given event. Time constraints should be observed by each group. Each group member will have to play a role or contribute somehow to the group's performance.

Evaluation

Students' performances will be evaluated per group, following criteria such as task accomplishment, interpersonal communication, relevance, creativity, accuracy and fidelity in dramatizing the given text.

(Activity offered by courtesy of Rocha Peixoto Secondary School in Póvoa de Varzim, Portugal).

D.6. ARTEFACTS TECHNIQUE-BASED DRAMA

**Developing the Key Competence of Basic Literacy in
Philosophy, and the Key Competence of Communication**



DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPING KEY COMPETENCES THROUGH DRAMA

Aim

The activity will help students better explain and internalize the philosophical concepts they deal with while learning Philosophy, such as Time, Existence, Space and Relativity, as well as others. These can be tackled one by one or at the same time, depending on the type of lesson the teacher will plan, or on the teaching sequence the activity needs to support.

Lead-in

Before the activity is launched, the students will already have been presented the various philosophical theories connected to the theme or themes, as required by the curriculum, and will have been offered plenty of discussions and analysis time in order to understand the differences between these.

Organising the development of the drama activity

Students will be asked to work in groups. The number of students per group depends on the theme, topic and area, yet there are certain guidelines to take into consideration, as follows: there must be at least 1 student per each detailed theory, 1 Supporter, 1 Detractor, 1 Balancer and 1 Outsider. Also negotiation must be carried out as to what “artefacts” will be used by each group as starting points for the development of their scripts. Surely, the lines above are mere methodological

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suggestions, so teachers can start from the expressed idea and adapt it to their needs in any way they consider proper.

Time allocation

As this activity works well for revision and round-up, time should be plentiful, therefore 2-3 classes is the minimum recommended, mainly because the preparation stages are quite complex. Time limits should also be set to every group so that assessment will be objective in this respect.

Space, setting, materials and resources

The “artefacts” are the props necessary for the development of the activity and the visual support of the performance, the classroom is a proper space for the performances to take place (though larger options may be considered), as for the setting, each group will arrange the items of furniture available as they consider best. Any other input rests in the hands of students and their creative side, yet it is best if the number of “artefacts” and even types of these are clearly established from the very beginning in order for students to work with the same items and thus ensure equity.

Performance

Every group will present their final product, this being the performance based on their dramatization of the given theme or topic. Time constraints should be observed by each group. Each

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group member will have to play a role or make a distinct contribution to the success of the group's endeavour.

Evaluation

Students' performances will be evaluated per group, following criteria such as task accomplishment, interpersonal communication, relevance, creativity, accuracy and fidelity in presenting well-known philosophical theories and their implications.

Exemplification – “What is Time” script

Arranged items: a yin-yang symbol, a puzzle, a wallet with money, an arrow, a clock and a photo.

Girl 1: (Blond, dressed in white, symbolizes the light side in the yin-yang symbol). I am having a great time, everything is beautiful, and I feel like flying!

Girl 2: (Melancholic, dressed in black, symbolizes the dark side in the yin-yang symbol). Are you serious? Beautiful? I am having the worst time! Life is terrible and I cannot stand it and you are terrible, and terrible things are happening all the time! (She sits down and cries).

Girl 3: (Hugs her and then arranges a puzzle). Do not cry! Whatever has happened, time will heal it. Time is the best medicine! The more time passes, the better we feel. See, it's like arranging a puzzle. Sooner or later every piece comes to its place.

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Businessman: *(A boy, dressed in a suit). This is nonsense! Time does not heal. It can not help us forget a loved one, a missed opportunity or a deep wound. It remains forever, for the rest of our lives. (He takes a banknote of money from the wallet). Take that for example. If I tear it, it will never become whole again. A smart person can not sit and wait for time to save him from the situation he has gotten into, but he is looking for a solution. And the real solution for everything is money. Time is money and money is time.*

Philosopher 1: *Stop! Stop! Do not argue! Warm, cold, heals, does not heal - the argument is useless. There is no point in it. If you look at it philosophically you will see that time actually does not exist. Look! (He takes the arrow, stands up and begins to explain the theory of Zeno). Take for example this arrow, which should move to the other end. Do you think it can move?*

All: *Of course, yes.*

Philosopher 1: *At any moment of its flight, it is in a state of peace. (He is moving the arrow). Here it is at rest, here it is also at rest and so onThe sum of states of peace is...*

All: *Peace.*

Philosopher 1: *Therefore, the arrow does not move at all. It is at rest. Therefore time does not exist.*

Philosopher 2: *Move a little! Stand right there! (He folds a piece of paper into a ball and throws it at the philosopher 1).*

Philosopher 1: *Are you normal? How dare you hit me?*

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Philosopher 2: *(Takes the clock). If there is no time and the sum of all states of peace is peace, then it is stupid to claim that I have hit you. (He explains the theory of Kant that the time is a human form). Time exists because we exist, it is expressed by people through devices like the clock, but if the clock stops time does not stop, it goes on.*

All: *Then what is time?*

Philosopher 3: *When they do not ask me I know. When they ask me I can not say. I know only that if nothing went by, there would be no past. If nothing was to come, there would be no future. And if nothing existed, there would be no present. (She explains the theory of Augustine for the present). When I measure the time, I measure the feeling. (She takes the photo). I measure the feeling that the passing events evoke in me and the feeling that remains after they have passed. I measure the feeling itself at the moment of its existence, not the events that have already passed.*

All: *We have to:*

Girl 1: *Use the good weather for a walk in nature.*

Girl 2: *Use the bad weather to talk to a good friend.*

Girl 3: *Know that every minute we're sad we lose 60 seconds of happiness.*

Businessman: *Use the money to help the people around us.*

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Philosopher 1: Believe that we can be the change we want to see in the world.

Philosopher 2: Not forget that memories are the only thing left to us.

Philosopher 3: Remember that present is the most valuable thing we have.

**(By courtesy of Secondary Vocational School of Economics
“Prof. Dr. D. Tabakov”, Sliven, Bulgaria)**

D.7. MONOLOGUE BASED DRAMA

Developing the Key Competence of Communication, Public Speaking and Self-expression on various topics



DEVELOPMENT

Different learners might have different needs according to their levels of general knowledge, their personality types, memory, age, personal experience and interests. For clearly distinct

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groups, classified in accordance with their training levels and any or all of the criteria above, the teacher can prepare certain techniques or stimuli. A variety of different individual needs would require resources for the development of differentiated materials and the teacher will generally try to adapt the lessons in such ways as to suit the individual needs of the students.

The exercise of monologue-based drama offers the general framework for differentiated learning within a given unit, topic or theme, while catering for individual interests, levels of competence and so on. Students will respond positively once they understand that there are few restraints involved, and a lot of freedom, creativity and spontaneity, plus an essential life skill that is developed gradually. Even if generally shy at the very beginning, they will undoubtedly become more confident with exercise while also being able to watch their own personality and skills grow and improve. Moreover, the technique can be applied with any Humanistic science or subject and beyond, and works great with teenagers and not only, as overcoming the fear of public speaking is one of the prerequisites of such activities, and once overcome, the desire to keep performing and to be more and more creative definitely increases.

Aim

The purpose of this type of activity is to give each student the chance to express his/her thoughts on a specific topic in the

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form of a monologue, but at the same time to benefit of group support, as other 2-3 students would be miming, ensuring background, completing silently, or helping out with IT displays during the monologue. Learning how to participate constructively and cooperatively during the class development is based on interpersonal communication. This involves clear and logical thought, on the one hand, and speaking skills, on the other, but also listening to what someone else has to say, not interrupting and finally speaking relevantly and clearly. Non-verbal communication is also integral part of the process and should be encouraged and fostered for students need to understand and intake that a significant part of what people perceive in others is to be found in the non-verbal signs that hugely help communication, therefore also building and maintaining relationships.

Lead-in

The activity is suitable for the beginning or ending of a module as in both cases it will start from and with the students' points of view and enlarge upon these on the basis of individualized interests and perceptions.

Organising the development of the drama activity

Students may be organised in groups of maximum four by their choice. The teacher explains the aim of the activity and sets the

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topic or theme. Each member of the group is going to prepare a monologue by dint of his own creative powers, while the other members will provide assistance. For example, one of the group members performs a monologue on success, while the other members conceive a strategy to mime and support the main performer. Another one may present a monologue on discoveries that changed the world and, in turn, the others mime or find ways to illustrate the main performer's ideas.

Time allocation

This activity requires at least 2 hours class work and/or working at home on the individual monologue. Each group will also have to discuss about the assisting or miming strategy, negotiate and rehearse for each monologue before presentation of each of these. The time limit per monologue should be between 2 and 4 minutes, depending on topic complexity and student age range.

Space, setting, materials and resources

Students need to investigate, gather material and organize ideas in an original way. They may start to work on their monologue based on a survey, searching for sources on the Internet, using materials from textbooks, other relevant references, and magazines. Monologues should take place in the classroom first, then the space can be enlarged once the students gain confidence

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and larger audiences can be invited to attend. IT components might come in handy, as musical background, lights and video projections are possible meaningful additions.

Performance

Every performance will be presented in front of the entire class, taking turns in doing so and if possible, rotating groups in order to obtain both variety and keep students motivated and interested in listening to the monologues. Time limits should be observed and QA or feedback mini sessions should follow each performance.

Evaluation

Students' work will be evaluated taking into account their individual and group task accomplishment and/or task relevance, as well as fluency, originality and coherence. Peer evaluation is also advisable to be applied here, as skill for life and method of developing self-evaluation skills.

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D.8. IMPROVISATION-BASED DRAMA

**Developing the Key Competences of Communication,
Learning to Learn, Cultural Awareness and Cultural
Expression**



DEVELOPMENT

Aim

Using language functions for communicative language teaching has been lately considered a must in order to prepare students for using the language independently. This method of teaching implies that students need to understand the meaning and the communicative function of a language in order to learn it, while at the same time, getting accustomed to the cultural aspects that come along with any language and mastering them, or at least gaining the sufficient knowledge that will allow them to quickly adjust and blend in the given culture. Nevertheless, this type of activity can be used successfully with subjects other than of the linguistic type, mainly in high school, where optional

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courses focusing on culture and civilization issues will clearly benefit from such improvisations.

Lead-in

There is a wide range of language functions to be used during different stages of language classes and for different levels of knowledge:

- introducing people
- identifying oneself to others
- expressing joy at another's success (or disappointment at another's misfortune)
- expressing concern for other people's welfare
- extending and accepting invitations
- refusing invitations politely or making alternative arrangements
- making appointments for meetings
- breaking appointments politely and arranging another mutually convenient time
- apologizing
- excusing oneself and accepting excuses
- indicating agreement or disagreement
- interrupting another speaker politely
- changing an embarrassing subject
- receiving visitors and paying visits to others
- arguing and/or debating

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- offering food or drinks and accepting or declining such offers politely
- sharing wishes, hopes, desires, problems, beliefs, thoughts, opinions
- asking about others' wishes, hopes, desires, problems, beliefs, thoughts, opinions
- making promises and committing oneself to some action
- complimenting someone
- negotiating conflict

Below there are only a few examples of drama activities that may help the development of these language functions, as well as of the cultural aspects that accompany them.

Organising the development of the drama activity

- a) Expressing surprise, accepting a new unusual idea

The class stands in two circles, an inner circle facing outward, and an outer circle facing inward. Each student faces a partner. One of the two offers a ridiculous statement to the other, and the second expresses surprise and goes on with it. For example:

1st Student: Jenny, I haven't seen your pet owl for a while.

2nd Student: Oh really? I can't believe that! He keeps showing off in the neighbourhood!

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b) Pointing out the main ideas: *The Human Slideshow*

Students are organised into groups whose numbers correspond to the number of characters/events/features needed, and they are asked to put together a human slideshow, creating *slides* or *photographs* by posing. For example, each group of students is assigned a chapter or excerpt from a literary material and then asked to choose the three most important moments from that chapter or excerpt.

Students will create a living picture to illustrate selected material, while one of them, the narrator, will explain what is happening and why it is a key moment. To be more efficient and fun, students may bring in props and/or create costumes.

c) Highlighting a story: *The Two-minute Act*

Students are organised in teams and each team is supplied with a summary of a full play/story/film and then they are asked to read it, assign roles and put together a two-minute mini play that goes with the summary. It is a good way to get students familiar with the subject, to facilitate comprehension of the characters and prompt the development of a personal perspective.

d) Reacting to news: *Good News – Bad News*

Students are organised in circles. One student is given a piece of good news; the student next to him in the circle will overhear it, will react to it and go on with the idea, this time telling the third student some bad news that connects to it and so on. The *Good*

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News - Bad News technique, besides employing reactions to different pieces of news, is also a good exercise of telling stories and improving fluency, as each person in the circle may contribute to the line of an ad-hoc imagined story. Alternately, each person should start with either “The good News is...” or “The bad News is...” and the idea is not to cancel out what the student before has just said, but rather to continue it while spiralling the entire construction.

e) Expressing feelings: *The Hitchhiker*

A set of four chairs are placed in front of the class. Two will be the front seats of the car, and other two are the back seats. Three volunteer students sit in the imaginary car, two in the front seats and one in the back. The driver in the front is talking to the others, and on their way he/she spots a hitchhiker, in fact another volunteering student and picks him or her up. When the new person gets in the car, he/she chooses a feeling: happy, sad, tired, or angry, as well as combinations of these, basically whichever the hitchhiker prefers, and acts it out that way.

The other students in the car should pick up and act out the same feeling(s), or just oppose it by picking another feeling or combination in order to balance the hitchhiker. So if the person who gets in the car is acting tired, for example, the driver might start slumping in her seat, slapping her face to help herself stay awake or laugh out loud, tell jokes, etc. The fourth student

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should tell the others something about his/her mood and let the others give a reply.

This will take only a short amount of time, up to one minute, and then have the car stop to pick up another hitchhiker. Those already in the car should rotate seats; the driver will exit the car, the front passenger slides over, one of the back seat passengers should move up front, and the former hitchhiker slides over a seat. For this activity to work at its best, students are encouraged to come up with new creative ideas for fun.

f) Word Associations: Clicks

This is an activity used to improve fluency and spontaneity. Students are organised into a circle. First, the teacher shows the students the rhythm which they have to make with their bodies: thigh slap, clap, then click (right hand), click (left hand), and get the group comfortable with this rhythm. When clicking with the right hand the student whose turn it is should tell the persons before him/her a word and then a new word that associates with that word when clicking with the left hand. The next person in the circle, in a clockwise motion, should do the same. They have to repeat the last person's word with the right click and then think of a new word when they click with the left hand. The thigh slap and clap gives the game a steady rhythm and stops students from panicking. This may continue until there

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have been done a few successful laps around the circle. Students often find this game funny and it keeps them focused.

g) Agreement and disagreement: *Freezing*

This activity may work as a great warm-up for more extensive improvisations. Teacher gets the students in pairs. Student A has to create a pose of a frozen image with his/her body. Student B must then, without thinking about it too much, create his/her own pose that compliments Student A's pose. For example if student A may have posed doing a karate chop, student B may then freeze in a scared/defensive pose.

Another pair of students, C and D, is going to improvise short dialogues using language functions, such as agreeing and disagreeing, to illustrate in words what their classmates suggested through their poses.

Student A then unfreezes and creates a new pose that compliments Student B's pose and the short dialogue will capture new linguistic input, and so on.

h) Dealing with life-like situations: *Expert Double Figures*

This is good as a warm-up activity as it is fun and a performance game. The teacher chooses four students to take part in it. Two students will sit in front of the class on two chairs. The chairs

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should be set up as if for an interview. They must then put their hands behind their backs. Other two students should hide behind the chairs and slip their hands through the seated students so that the impression is that they are the seated students' arms.

One of the seated students will be the interviewer and the other one, the interviewee. The interviewee must be an 'expert' in a particular field. While they present their on the spot scenarios the other two go on miming gestures.

i) Multitasking: *Maths, Life Questions and Movement*

Students are arranged in groups of four. Student 1 asks student 2 a simple Math questions. Student 3 asks student 2 a simple personal question. Student 4 does simple movements for student 2 to copy. The student who is questioned must answer all the questions, and keep the movements going, all at the same time. The questioning students should be insistent, keeping his/her questions up front, and not waiting for the other. The object of the activity is for the "actor" to handle all the questions and the movements at the same time. The aim is to foster the ability of multitasking.

j) Simple ideas into words: *Drawing Magic Pictures*

Students sit in pairs with a large imaginary piece of paper between them. The idea is to draw "everything" one says as

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he/she is telling a story. At a signal given by the teacher, the students exchange roles. The activity helps to stop the imagination being “blocked” by over-thinking what they will say next, as there is no time for thinking, just drawing. Almost every language function can benefit from this activity. In turn, this can either function as a starter, a mover, a filler or similar.

k) Revising language functions, roles or vocabulary:

Circle of Characters

This activity aims to put together certain well-known figures of historic, literary, civic, scientific importance in an attempt to tackle cross-curricular areas and merge knowledge to its best intake. It works best as revision activity at the end of a semester, but only inasmuch as teachers of different subjects converge and contribute to the realisation of it. Also it works best with teens, even adults, as there are a number of prerequisites that make it suitable for certain age groups mainly, among which the most important certainly is represented by the fact that it is based purely on improvisation, and on maintaining character for as long as necessary while at the same time carefully observing others’ characters.

It is a group activity; therefore the class has to be divided in groups of 8-10 people, which also makes the activity very useful with medium to large groups. Even numbers of students per group is not a must-have as there is a role that can be taken over by either a student or the teacher, that of Leader.

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Each student is given an index card, or a slip of paper of similar size, on which each will have to write the name of a famous person, literary or historic figure, famous scientist, etc. The choice here depends in the subject and the topic chosen by the teacher. Then the Leader collects the cards and re-distributes them very carefully, ensuring that no student in each group gets the card he/she initially wrote on.

Then the Leader announces the scenario, which will have to be pre-established by the teacher, again according to the aim that the activity will answer. For example: “A bunch of people are gathered together at a dinner party in honour of someone’s birthday. They mingle for a while and eventually sit down to dine round this table here, which has precisely the right number of chairs.” Any scenario can be made up, but they must all end with all students being seated in a circle, therefore space and furniture will have to be adapted accordingly.

As the students begin to play out the prescribed scenario through the filter of the assigned character in pure improvisation, each is also searching for the person who is playing the character he or she named. The idea is to end up precisely identifying each character by the exact person that has named it. When all have been identified, or at least so considered, and all are seated, the game ends and winners can be established, as only a 100% match will point to the winner group.

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More scenario ideas:

- a) The world is about to end, and these people are the only ones left alive. They are provided a spaceship which will carry them all to another galaxy, but there is no guarantee they will find a suitable habitat on another planet there. They argue and go back and forth, and eventually decide to get on this rocket ship offered, which has the exact number of seats, arranged in a circle.
- b) A group of people are at an amusement park, chatting while waiting for the carousel to stop. When it does, they each select an animal to ride and get on.
- c) A group of people has just discovered a chest filled with gold. They quarrel over it. As it grows dark, they decide they must guard it against theft, and the only way to do so is to sleep in a circle around it.
- d) A group of people are on a jury together. They have been sent into the jury room to deliberate. They discuss the case in a haphazard way until the foreman persuades them all to sit down at a round table.

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Evaluation

Students' work will be evaluated taking into account their perseverance to keep up with the task requirements, their spontaneity and flexibility in response, as well as their ease in the use of the language in order to express themselves, while mastering specific language functions, vocabulary area, basic knowledge or similar, as targeted by each of the activities above, and in accordance with the educational aim that these activities might serve.

D.9. MOCK JOB INTERVIEWS

Developing the Key Competences of Communication, Learning to Learn, Entrepreneurship, Basic Literacy and Cultural Awareness



DEVELOPMENT

Mock job interviews, in whatever format they may occur, are a great way of preparing our students for real life situations of similar kind which each and every one of them will have to go through at some point.

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Aim

Students experiment a mock job interview meeting in which the interviewer does not strictly follow a formalized list of questions, using a semi-structured interview technique.

Lead-in

This activity may be used as a follow-up of a module or lesson about the job market. In order to prepare students for a real life job interview, the teacher invites students to think of a certain field of activity and devise the questions for a mock interview. A real-life employer will conduct an analysis of the requirements for the job and build a profile of the ideal candidate, so as to develop questions and conversation starters meant to draw information from the interviewee(s) about their qualifications. Depending on each candidate's answers, the interviewer may ask supplementary questions to gain a more in-depth understanding.

Organising the development of the drama activity

Students, organised in groups of 3-5, will be asked to devise a dialogue. Two of them will be the interviewers and will think of more open-ended questions, inciting to a discussion with the interviewee rather than a straightforward question-and-answer format. The other student(s) in the group will be the

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candidate(s). Each candidate may give himself/herself a name and fill in a fictional CV which would be appropriate for the chosen job, considering the qualities and experience that would make the interviewer like him/her more.

The interviewers prepare a list of questions, but do not necessarily ask them all, or touch on them in any particular order, using them mainly to guide the conversation. They have to research the job area to ensure that all the job requirements are addressed. Students decide what to do in groups, and convene on the steps they have to follow. The teacher gives them support by guiding their work and helping them whenever necessary.

Time allocation

Students are going on with their research during the class and at home. Each group will have to find the most important requirements for the job chosen and prepare the possible questions and answers for about 10-15 minutes of role-play. The length of the interview may vary a little from one group to another, yet the space of time should be clearly set, also taking into account the number of interviewees. On the whole, this activity may require between 2 and 5 hours, depending on the input foreseen, such as vocabulary, structure of written components, for example resumes or letter of reference, etc.

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Space, setting, materials and resources

This activity does not require a previous organisation of space. Students may use the classroom furniture, some pre-recorded material for questions-answers sessions to practice, and try to be more concise while giving the answers, or they may record themselves during their performance and become aware of the things that might be improved in the final interview presentation. The layout is simplistic, yet certain basic setting arrangements will be necessary before the actual performances begin.

Performance

The students may be given by the teacher some cards with job requirements and they use their researched materials and adjust their findings to the given task. Each group may practice the interviews with the established roles prior to the final presentation; each group will present their performance in front of the class or any other audience deemed suitable. If there is enough time and to encourage more practice, it would be a good idea to swap roles in the group, meaning that the interviewers will become interviewees, while applying the same format they have all conceived and designed together.

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Evaluation

Students' work will be evaluated taken into account their task accomplishment, interpersonal communication, pronunciation and their spontaneity in devising the follow-up questions during the interview to draw out more specific evidence about the candidate's assets, as well as on the fluency of the students who answer. The teacher will encourage the two-way communication; both the interviewer and the candidate can ask questions, which allows for a comprehensive discussion of pertinent topics. Because of the conversational tone, the candidate may feel more comfortable expanding on techniques and experiences that will highlight the traits that make them a good fit for the position.

Exemplification 1

Examples of job requirement cards:

Situation 1:

We are looking for someone to write a weekly column in our magazine on any topic they want.

Opportunities:

- excellent pay
- you become well known
- people everywhere read

Requirements:

- ideas
- imagination

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- | | |
|---|--------------|
| your opinions | • opinion |
| • we offer free training and editorial help | • enthusiasm |
| • entertainment allowance | |

Situation 2:

We are looking for public relations representative

Opportunities:

- Fabulous pay
- Great working conditions
- An exciting, eventful life

Requirements:

- Success in landing new clients
- Strategic planning skills and strong supervisory skills
- High level skills with writing press releases
- Proficiency in developing content for online media

Situation 3:

Volunteers wanted for a new TV show:

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“Supreme Challenge” will take 15 ordinary members from the public and put them in difficult physical circumstances (on mountains, at sea...)

Opportunities:

- Unbelievable gains
- The beginning of a star-studded life
- An extraordinary challenge

Requirements:

- Being brave
- Cheerful character
- Fit and sociable
- Good in a crowd
- Very competitive

Situation 4:

If you want to become a successful animal trainer at our Circus apply now:

No experience necessary; we supply on-the-job experience based training.

Opportunities:

- Appear in world-famous circus performances
- Excellent pay
- Travel around the world

Requirements:

- Energetic
- Decisive
- Ready for anything
- Fit and healthy
- Good humoured
- Ambitious

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Exemplification 2

Example of a framework that characterises an interviewer's way of approaching the job interview:

Interviewer: Good morning. Come in and sit down

Interviewee.....

Interviewer: Now then, I wonder if you could tell us why you are interested in this job.

Interviewee:

Interviewer: Thank you for your answer. What qualities do you think someone would need for this job?

Interviewee:

Interviewer: I see. Do you think you have these qualities?

Interviewee.....

Interviewer: Moving on, I'd like to ask you to give us some idea about yourself. Do you have any hobbies, for example?

Interviewee.....

Interviewer: I see, and what is your favourite way of relaxing?

Interviewee.....

Interviewer: We've come to that moment in the interview when you can ask us any questions you might have. Do you have any questions?

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Interviewee.....

Interviewer: Well that just about finishes the interview for the moment. Thank you very much. If you want to wait in the library we'll let you know if we'll need you again. Could you send the next person in?

Interviewee.....

Interviewer: Not at all. It was a pleasure meeting you. Goodbye.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

MOST COMMON ISSUES RELATED TO THE USING DRAMA TECHNIQUES IN THE CLASS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many times teachers are reluctant to use drama activities in the classrooms for various reasons: they do not know how to use the activities, there are both limited resources and time constraints, or mainly there is an overgeneralized fear of looking and feeling foolish, to name just the most common reasons why teachers avoid this type of activities. Generally these feelings are more prevalent when attempting to use drama with teens or adults. Teachers of young children tend to use more play, games and drama type activities since the children are closer to the "play and explore" stage of development. Often children are much more receptive to any kind of "make-believe" or drama type

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activity. Of course this is not always the case and it would depend on the cultural values, the ability of the children, and varying social factors. Yet teenagers are also very much attracted to drama, to performance, and to expressing their own ideas, which is exactly why they are the best target of drama activities in almost all subjects.

Using drama in the classroom in order to boost students' interest and motivation is generally seen as an excellent choice. Yet, with inexperienced teachers in the area of drama techniques blended with ordinary teaching approaches, a number of issues might appear. In the following lines we will try to tackle the most common occurrences that might hinder a novice's approach to teaching through drama.

- **Learners using their own language**

If the role play is carried out in a mono lingual class, the students may use their first language extensively, therefore the teacher should decide and negotiate with students the extent to which native language usage is acceptable.

- **Some learners participate less or not at all**

By giving more freedom to the learners, the teacher may also be giving them the freedom to avoid working for the given task, unless the activity is carefully planned and roles are decided at the very beginning, which would reduce the possibility of this to

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happen. Taking into account that teamwork and role playing require real life communication and solving problems, students should learn about how to deal with passive team members and make them more dynamic and involved, get to know each other's abilities better and make use of them in the benefit of the group and finally of the individual, too.

- **Teams working at different speeds**

One team may finish preparing the drama activity earlier than others and complain that they have nothing to do. The teacher may remind them it is their responsibility to fill the time allocated and have them discuss ways in which they could extend the work they have already completed.

CONCLUSION

Trying to make distinctions between **simulations** and role plays is difficult, implying that usually “simulations are complex, lengthy and relatively inflexible events” according to Porter Ladousse (1992:5), that contain elements of role play associated with analysis of data and discussions of options, while **role-plays**, besides their simplicity and use of brief techniques in the organising process, are “highly flexible, leaving much more

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scope for the exercise of individual variation, initiative and imagination”(Porter Ladousse : 1992).

What is more important is not the distinction between these types of activities, but the fact that both have the same purpose, which is to train students to deal effectively with the unpredictable nature of knowledge when applied directly to presumptive real life-like situations.

Finally, using drama activities in class enables our students not only to acquire certain language items, to better understand certain contexts, or to develop insights into certain phenomena, but also to learn how human interactions might take place in a variety of situations and to get to know better their own selves.

Acting is a source of tension, it is both challenging and fun, being limited by certain rules, as in group contests, or by setting a time limit. Using drama-based activities generally produces enjoyment and enhances motivation. They involve students' imagination and take them out of their comfort zones, yet only to a good cause. This way, even the overly inhibited students, who may find these activities intimidating at first, have good chances to appreciate them in time.

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