# TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH DRAMA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

This paper tries to discuss about the importance of using drama as a tool to teach English from historical background. The discussion starts with the use of drama in education and and the role of teacher and drama play. Ghe concepts of theatre is also explored theoretically based on slme experts. Finally, some approaches to learning through drama are discussed. In conclusion, using drama in English teaching provides an interesting alternative to foster students' English ability creatively, communicatively and successfully.

Keywords: teaching English, drama, teacher's role

## INTRODUCTION

The subject of English Language teaching continues to develop and has been the main issue of many books, papers, and teaching methods. The purpose of this paper is to trace the development of the use of drama in English language teaching. Here, however, the issue examined is narrowed down to the perspective of English teaching through drama. It is a field that has evolved remarkably over the last sixty years.

The subject of English teaching through drama is, perhaps, better viewed through the pedagogical development of drama in education and its incorporation into language teaching. Not every element or development can be examined here but a look at the overall movement and the significant changes of thought and focus that have influenced practitioners in the area of pedagogy will be presented. Finally, possibility of the future of the field will also be looked at by considering its possible use in English teaching curriculum and its contributions to the development of EFL teaching methods in Indonesia since it is regarded something of the art and challenging for English

teachers. However, some quoted suggestions are given at the end of this paper to encourage teachers to use or incorporate drama in their teaching.

## DISCUSSION

### A. The Use of Drama in Education

It appears that Harriet Finlay-Johnson was the first to employ dramatic techniques in general education in the English-speaking world. Gavin Bolton (1999) is quite specific in his *Acting in Classroom Drama*: "Harriet Finlay-Johnson, perhaps more than any other pioneer in classroom drama, can claim the right to the title, on the grounds that she appears to have no model to follow or surpass, no tradition to keep or break. She was the first in the field, or at least the first whose classroom drama practice was to be recorded" (p. 5).

Head teacher of Little Sompting School in Sussex, England from 1897 till 1910, Harriet Finlay-Johnson wrote *The Dramatic Method of Teaching* upon her retirement in 1911. Her approach places her within the "Progressive Movement" emanating from John Dewey"s Experimental School in Chicago. Bolton writes:

Harriet Finlay-Johnson's approach involved much more than sweetening methods, for it embraces some of the features that later characterized the Progressive movement: 'integrated knowledge'; 'activity-method'; 'pupil-autonomy' – and 'dramatization' gradually and uniquely becoming Finlay-Johnson's means of achieving such goals:

(1) when she writes: 'Children…have a wonderful faculty for teaching other children and learning from them' she is seeing this mutual learning in the context of 'preparing a play';

(2) when she writes of making children 'self-reliant, mainly self-taught, and self-developing', she is seeing these maturing attributes in the context of 'preparing the play';

(3) When she speaks of developing in her pupils a 'habit of mind' in approaching 'thoroughly' any acquisition of knowledge or skill, she is seeing this seeking after high standards in learning in the context of researching for 'the play'.

(4)  Likewise the incentive of 'getting our play ready' allows her to revolutionize the traditional 'teacher-pupil' relationship. The teacher is to be regarded as 'fellow-worker' and 'friend':

There could be plenty of liberty without license, because the teacher, being a comparison to and fellow-worker with the scholars, had a strong moral hold on them, and shared the citizen's right of holding an opinion – being heard, therefore, not as 'absolute monarch' but on the same grounds as the children themselves.'

The educational goals to be reached through dramatization according to Finlay-Johnson can be summarized from the above paragraphs as follows:

Children will be 'keen to know'.
Children teach and learn from each other.
Children will become self-reliant and mainly self-taught
Children will acquire an habitual 'thoroughness' in approaching knowledge or skills.
Children are to see the teacher as 'companion' and 'fellow-worker' (Bolton, pp. 10-11).

These themes or strands will be seen to play continuing roles both in the field of second language acquisition and general educational theory throughout the ensuing century.

Also in England, around 1911 and later, Henry Caldwell Cook advocated, through his classroom work at the Perse School in Cambridge and in his book, *The Play Way*, the idea that students learn best through doing, having the liberty to choose how they want to work and how they want to evaluate each other's work (Boltin, p.4). He envisioned the class as a body of workers collaborating (Cook, p. 65) and like Finlay-Johnson, called for continuous activity, experimental learning, democratic responsibility, and cooperation between teacher and student in setting up the learning process. This cooperation resulted in the creation of 'a little state' whereby students could identify collectively as a band or company possessive of a certain level of finesse whereby they could then tackle problems through play making. Thus, two levels of role playing occurred: one, as a member of the collective or collaborating group, and the other as the role taken on in the process of doing the drama.

An important element emerges from the structure described above. That is that the learning goal is approached indirectly. Bolton points out: "It is possible to identify in Caldwell Cook's method a structure for engagement that appears dependent on the

teacher refocusing the task away from the main goal of study but to a connected but subsidiary goal, which becomes a focal task for the pupil" (p. 43). Such "unintentional learning" follows E.M. Forster's dictum, "Only what is seen sideways runs deep". It is in the process of constructing drama that other skills, be they linguistic, social, or cognitive, are acquired. We will see this approach much enlarged upon later in the work of Dorothy Heathcote.

Nellie McCaslin (2006) has pointed out that in the United States, a director of a New York City settlement house, one Alice Minne Herts, was perhaps the first to combine educational and social opportunities for ghetto immigrants through aesthetic experiences which included classes in acting, puppetry, and story-telling as well as performances of Shakespeare. In this way, the Children's Educational Theatre was born and became popular in settlement houses across the U.S.

Another pioneer of the drama in education movement was Winifred Ward of Northwestern University whose ideas about the use of drama in education were also influenced by John Dewey (1921). His, *The School and Society*, triggered an interest in child-centered education, releasing the self-expressive capacities of the child, developing emotional as well as intellectual skills, and nurturing the whole personality to "help…in the building of fine attitudes and appreciations and to give (a child) opportunities to grow in social cooperation" (Ward, 1957, p.4). Ward called her approach, "creative dramatics" and "emphasized the external skills that children displayed in that process" (Taylor, p.99). "Characterization, development of plot, enriching of action, ensemble work, and tempo are to be emphasized in class criticism, with voice and diction understood to be vitally important" (Ward, 1930, p.46).

In England almost thirty years later, Peter Slade renewed interest in using rhythm, dance, and drama as part of child education. His emphasis was squarely on child development and he played down the use of "theatrical" devices such as scripts and declamation as used in the production of school plays. Instead, his focus was on the play of children and their natural absorption in play making. He noted how children were engaged in the "doing of life" and how they connected spurts of physical release with imaginative activity. As a result, he introduced what he called "natural dance" and athletic movement as cathartic release in the process of learning. The creative absorption of the child was to be nurtured in the classroom, the teacher being a 'loving ally' to the natural, creative dramatic impulse in which learning occurs.

His work as Birmingham, England's first drama advisor in education from 1947 to 1977 no doubt helped to ease drama into the mainstream school curriculum in the U.K.

Brian Way (1967) also called for the integration of drama within the mainstream classroom in England during the 1960s. His *Development through Drama* served as a watershed for the drama-in-education movement. His emphasis was, as with Ward's and Slade's, the development of the whole person. "Education is concerned with individuals; drama is concerned with the individuality of individuals, with the uniqueness of each human essence" (Way, p.3).

In both Slade's and Way's approaches to the use of drama in the learning process, there is mention of 'catharsis' and learning through intuition. Both are key factors in the use of drama in any form of education. We will return to these concepts from time to time as this monograph evolves.

In order to train the use of intuition, Way developed a sophisticated program of concentration exercises: listening, looking, touch – linking the senses and linking sound and sense to stimulate imagination – using space, music, movement to develop emotion and logic and integrating speech and feeling for language as a means to increase awareness, group sensitivity, and the development of dramatic moments and characterization. His text, *Development through Drama,* and the ideas found within, remains a touchstone for drama-in-education practitioners even today.

But, even before Way was developing his ideas in the U.K., another Chicagoan had been developing her approaches to 'creative dramatics'. Influenced by Ward and Dewey, Viola Spolin (1963) began her career at Neva L. Boyd's Recreational Training School at Chicago's famous Hull House. Boyd, herself a sociologist on the faculty of Northwestern University, trained settlement house workers to use games, story-telling, folk dances, and dramatics "to affect social behavior in inner-city and immigrant children" (Spolin, p.vii). Later, Spolin was hired as a teacher and supervisor of creative dramatics on the WPA project in Chicago. She writes in the preface to her classic, *Improvisation for the Theater*, "This period of growth was most challenging, as I struggled to equip the participating men and women with adequate knowledge and technique to sustain them as teacher-directors in their neighborhood work"(Ibid.). Her emphasis, as Way's, was on the development of and learning through intuition (Ibid, pp.3-4).

As to the student/teacher relationship, she has this to say:

> True personal freedom and self-expression can flower only in an atmosphere where                                    attitudes permit equality between student and teacher and the dependencies of teacher for student and student for teacher are done away with. The problems within the *subject matter* will teach both of them" (p.8).

And in regard to group work and group expression she encourages cooperation.

> "A healthy group relationship demands a number of individuals working interdependently to complete a given project with full participation and personal contribution. If one person dominates, the other members have little growth or pleasure in the activity: a true group relationship does not occur" (p. 9).

And later:

> "If we are to keep playing, then, natural competition must exist wherein each individual strives to solve consecutively more complicated problems. These can be solved then, not at the expense of another person and not with the terrible personal emotional loss that comes with compulsive behavior, but by working harmoniously together with others to enhance the group effort or project" (p. 11).

She sums up: "Therefore, in diverting competitiveness to group endeavor, remembering that process comes before end-result, we free the student…to trust the scheme and help him to solve the problems of the activity" ( p.12).

Spolin's approach was always to solve problems related to a project. Her reasoning is instructive.

> The problem-solving technique used…gives mutual objective focus to teacher and student. In its simplest terms, it is *giving problems to solve problems*. It does away with the need for the teacher to analyze, intellectualize, disect a student's work on a personal basis. This eliminates the necessity of the student having to go through the teacher or the teacher having to go through the student to learn. It gives both of them direct contact with the material, thereby developing relationship rather than dependencies between them. It makes experiencing possible and smooths the way for people of unequal backgrounds to work together (p.20).

Although she started her career working with community members where she used games to release individual creativity, she later moved to training young people for theatre using the games to develop community creativity and cohesiveness. She

further developed her techniques in the Young Actors Company in Hollywood and later as the director of the Playwright's Theater Club and the Compass, North America's first professional improvisational acting company. She subsequently worked with her son, Paul Sills, as workshop director for the Second City Company. She published *Improvisation for the Theater* in 1963 as an outgrowth of her decades of experience in creating "theatre games" for growth within communities of actors and non-actors. She begins the book with the sentence, "Everyone can act." She went on to prove her point.

Back in England, even as Ward's, Slade's, Way's, and Spolin's approaches were contributing to community, classroom, and developmental success, Dorothy Heathcote was beginning her career in drama education at New castle University. She moved away from Ward's use of narrative drama. "Drama is not stories told in action. Drama is human beings confronted by situations that change them because of what they must face in dealing with those challenges" (Heathcote, 1967, p.48). Thus, Heathcote's approach, rather than dramatizing already written scenarios, encouraged students to devise their own scenarios together in a step-by-step process wherein they would have to make decisions for the direction in which the drama would flow acting as characters from *within* the drama they were creating. In such decision-making, students needed to understand the implications of their chosen action and the appropriate meaning of those actions (Bolton, 1948, p. 83). "Heathcote's idea of passion in drama would focus on moments in time which the group would devise, rather than Ward's dramatized plot scenarios contained in stories already written" (Taylor, p.102). Heathcote, as so many drama instructors before her, encouraged students to slip into the shoes of another character in order to empathize and understand from within, but rather than employing the 'magic if' (If I were that character, what would I do?), she encouraged the ethical choice (If I were that character, what SHOULD I do?). The action and the actions and the meanings of the action were explored. To guide students in developing scenarios in role, she encouraged teachers to take roles on as part of the exploration.

## B. Teacher' Role Within the Drama

When a teacher takes on a role within the drama, it is to be able to effectively shape the process of the evolving drama by stimulating the students' imaginations in

ways that will empower them to make necessary ethical decisions as to the direction of their drama.

From the pursuit of some of the major drama in education innovators of the middle of the Twentieth Century, let us now focus on how educational theory in general was affected by the revolutionary theorist/practitioner, Paulo Freire.

Bursting upon the world scene in 1968, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* stood the educational community on its head and galvanized progressive educators into re-evaluation of the status quo. Not since John Dewey's ideas first appeared in the early 1900s had there been such a response. In fact, Freire owes influence from Dewey and indeed, there exists a through-line from Hegel, Marx, Dewey, to Freire.

Paulo Freire was born in Recife, Brazil in 1921 of a middle-class family. Due to the early death of his father and the worldwide depression of the 1930s, he knew poverty and became aware of the many ills around him. He grew up in a situation where he and many of his friends knew hunger. However, his mother was able to convince the director of an elite private school to offer Paolo a scholarship for his high school studies. He later returned to the school to teach Portuguese.

Paulo Freire studied law at his home town University of Recife in Brazil. However, "He attempted only one case before abandoning his career as a lawyer" (A.M.A. Freire and Macedo, 1998, p.14) (Giroux, p.4). His greater interest was in the study of Philosophy, Linguistics, and Sociology of Language (Freire, 1996). 79). During the 1940s, he read widely and worked with the Catholic Action Movement and later with the Basic Church Communities. In 1947, Freire started work as the Director of Education at SESI (The Social Service of Industry: an employer's institution set up to help workers and their families). His work in the popular education program supported his emerging ideas on education which he incorporated into his 1959 Ph.D. thesis, "Present-day  Education In Brazil." He accepted the position of director of the Cultural Extension Service at the University of Recife soon thereafter (Roberts, 2000, p.5). It was here that he began his work with illiterate adults and developed the "culture circles" for which he became famous when 300 farm workers were taught to read and write within forty-five days. Because Freire creatively taught people to read and write while simultaneously increasing their awareness of oppressive social conditions, he was exiled by the Brazilian government and spent fifteen years in exile. During that time he taught at the University of Santiago (Chile) and educated

extension workers for the Chilean Agrarian Reform Corporation. He continued to lecture and work worldwide with Harvard University, the World Council of Churches, and adult literacy programs in Guinea-Bissau, Sao-Tome, Principe, Nicaragua, and Grenada.

During the 1980s, Freire was back in Brazil where he wrote and became involved in politics, serving as Secretary of Education in Sao Paulo in 1984 (Roberts, 2000, p.6). He resigned from the Municipal Bureau of Education in 1991 and continued writing till his death in 1997.

Freire's ideas in regards to pedagogy are important to the field of teaching language through drama because he integrates the social domain with the work of language development. His approach is the opposite to what he describes as the "banking concept" of education. In the banking concept:

(a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught;
(b) the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
(c) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
(d) the teacher talks and the students listen – meekly;
(e) the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
(f) the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
(g) the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
(h) the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who are not consulted) adapt to it;
(i) the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;
(j) the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the students are mere objects (Freire, 1969, p. 59).

Freire implies that in an effective education, the following model should apply:

(a)  the teacher and the students learn together;

(b)  the teacher and the students share their knowledge with each other;

(c)  the teacher and the students exchange in intellectual dialogue;

(d)  the teacher and the students listen to each other;

(e)  the material being learned and the learning process discipline both teacher and students;

(f)  the teacher and the students make decisions together as outgrowth of dialogue;

(g)  teacher and students act together;

(h)  the students have a voice in choosing the program content;

(i)    both teacher and students subordinate themselves to the authority of knowledge;

(j)    the students are the Subjects of the learning process while the teacher is a guide.

An echo of the early practitioners of drama-in education can be heard in such propositions.

> The moral force of Freire's approach stems from the following principles: As all aspects of reality are always changing, so also are human beings incomplete and engaged in the process of becoming. Unlike animals, human beings are conscious and have the ontological vocation of humanization. Thus, social evolution goes hand in hand with individual evolution. Social structures reflect the growth of individuals as in turn individuals impact society. No group, institution, or organization should impede the pursuit of humanization (Roberts, 2000, pp. 49-51).

For Freire, education implied an ethical, moral, and political consciousness on the part of the teacher, not to be applied in any authoritarian fashion, but communicated through inductive reasoning and dialogue with a purpose. The purpose was to be "liberation," and by this, Freire meant liberating the learner from being only a passive receiver of the dominant culture, but an active participant in changing it. In order to achieve this, Freire believed in problem-posing where students would examine problems through dialogue. In the following explanation, we hear echos of Viola Spolin, Brian Way, and Winifred Ward, as well as John Dewey.

> Central to Freire's approach to literacy is a dialectical relationship between                     human beings and the world, on the other hand, and language and transformative agency, on the other. Within this perspective, literacy is not approached as merely a technical skill to be acquired, but as a necessary foundation for cultural action for freedom, a central aspect of what it means to be a self and socially constituted agent. Most importantly, literacy for Freire is inherently a political project in which men and women assert their right and responsibility not only to read, understand and transform their own experiences, but also to reconfigure their relationship with wider society (Giroux, 1987, p.7).

Nina Wallenstein (1984) points out in "Problem-Posing Education: Freire's Method of Transformation" that the approach is particularly meaningful for some ESL/EFL populations.

> Problem-posing is particularly applicable to immigrant and refugee English as a Second Language (ESL) students, or workers with little control over their lives. The majority of ESL students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds with restricted access to education in their home countries. In the United States, they work primarily in unskilled or low-skilled jobs; they often experience social or emotional barriers to learning English, cultural conflicts, lack of self-esteem and a feeling of vulnerability in their new society (Shor, p.34).

And, in discussing the challenge of evaluation in a Freirian classroom, she says:

> Evaluation of student's progress with a problem-posing curriculum demands a different approach than other teaching methods. Because the curriculum constantly evolves from student issues, teachers can't measure fulfillment of predetermined objectives or test outcomes. Problem-posing evaluation concerns a broad spectrum of student's abilities to articulate their issues in English, generate their own learning materials, redefine their views of the world, and take risks to act in their daily lives. Because students' abilities change over time, problem-posing requires a process evaluation of both the expected and unexpected changes (Shor, 1987, p43).

The real test of a Freirean approach to the learning process is the impact the learner will have on the socially constructed environment in which s/he lives and operates, how the learner effects change and impacts the worlds in which s/he dwells.

In many ways, Paulo Freire's pedagogy sums up the major tendencies of the drama in education movement. As Dewey (1921) called for, the focus of the learning process is on the learner (child-centered, in the language of Dewey). As Winifred Ward stressed, narratives, scenarios, games, and activities aimed at releasing the 'whole person' should offer learners opportunity to play and act out natural, creative interactions supported by imagination and intuition (Way, 1967). The experience/knowledge gained from such activity will offer learners transformative understanding which in turn demands reflection (Spolin, 1963). Group work, cooperative endeavor, problem-posing and problem solving comprise a praxis that drives the evolution of the learner to new levels of interaction with external reality. This happens when teacher and students learn together as a team (Freire, 1967). The drama/learning process should be directed from within with students and teacher participating in its evolution. Evaluation of the results of the process will rest on the

learner's ability to affect the external world, the world outside the drama (Wallerstein 1984, Vygotsky, 1986).

## C. The Concept of Theatre

Into the matrix of classroom projects and community concerns as described above beginning in the 1950s, Augusto Boal developed the concept of Theatre of the Oppressed. As the name suggests, his approach to theatre was derived from the ideas of Paulo Freire and he approached work in literacy in the same fashion. According to Boal, the development of a theatre for literacy should start with an examination of the problems within particular communities.

> "In order to understand this <u>poetics of the oppressed</u> one must keep in mind the main objective: to change the people – 'spectators,' 'passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon – into subjects, into acting transformers of the dramatic actions'…The poetics of the oppressed focuses on the action itself: the spectator delegates no power to the character to think in his place; on the contrary, he assumes the protagonic role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for change – in short, trains himself for real action" (Boal, p. 122).

The spectators then, should take over the means of theatre production, in itself a 'revolutionary' act. To accomplish this, Boal starts with the body of the 'spectator' and works outward from that beginning.

The plan for transforming the spectator into actor can be systematized in the following general outline of four stages:

**First stage:** Knowing the body: a series of exercises by which one gets to know one's body, its limitations and possibilities, its social distortions and possibilities of rehabilitation.

**Second stage:** Making the body expressive: a series of games by which one begins to express one's self through the body, abandoning other, more common and habitual forms of expression.

**Third stage:** The theatre as language; one begins to practice theater as language that is living and <u>present</u>, not as a finished product displaying images from the past:

**First degree**: Simultaneous dramaturgy: the spectators "write" simultaneously with the acting of actors;
**Second degree**: Image theater: the spectators intervene directly, "speaking" through images made with the actors, bodies;
**Third degree**: Forum theater; the spectators intervene directly in the dramatic action and act.
**Fourth stage:** The theater as discourse: simple forms in which the spectator-actor (the spect-actor) creates "spectacles" according to his need to discuss certain themes or rehearse certain actions (Boal, p. 124).

Boal outlines the approach extensively in his book, *The Theater of the Oppressed* and in the later, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (2002).

In Boal's theater, we see the subject, the learner, actively participating in building the scenario – through writing, imagining to signal visually what the progression of the action might be, and through acting, participating in forum discussion of possible options and alternatively demonstrating these actions on a stage. The theater of Boal serves to strengthen the dialectic toward social/cultural change as it strengthens the subjects in whose hands the theater, and the socio/cultural environment around it, evolves. The approaches to the use of drama/theater-in-education that we have touched upon so far have demonstrated historic success in the attainment of their goals. It is time now to inquire, in terms of literacy and language acquisition, why such theater and drama approaches work.


**D. Approaches to Learning through Drama**

Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky, who has been called "The Mozart of Psychology," was born in Orscha in Belorussia in 1896 and became well known as the originator of Soviet developmental psychology. However, his work, published in Russia in the 1920s and 30s, only became available in the West in the 1960s. A major work, *Thought and Language* (in Russian, *Thinking and Speech*) was first published in English in 1962, but *Mind in Society*, published in 1978, received greater attention by psychologists and linguists. Since then, Vygotsky's ideas and concepts have supported a whole complex of psychological and pedagogical orientations, not least of which involve those of second language acquisition.

It is outside the scope of this monograph to attempt to do justice to all of Vygotsky's work, so this paper will focus on the parts of his theory that have the most

relevance to drama in language teaching. However, by doing this, Vygotsky's scope must needs be greatly abbreviated.

Vygotsky grew up in a time of great upheaval in the USSR. He supported the revolution, his work and writing influenced by Hegelean and Marxist theory. His approach has been termed a sociocultural approach because development, both cognitive and linguistic, is seen to occur though the process of social interaction. The space or area where learning occurs during such interaction was labeled by Vygotsky the "Zone of Proximal Development". Defined by Vygotsky, it is "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978). He then went on to differentiate between human learning and the behavior of other primates showing that "Children (learners) can imitate a variety of actions that go well beyond the limits of their own capabilities," something that animals are incapable of doing (Ibid, p.88). He adds, "that the only 'good learning' is that which is in advance of development" (p.89).

Through a process of internalization, social activities develop to become mental activities. Much of the process of internalization is achieved through play. Play is based upon needs. When needs are not met, "the preschool child enters an imaginary, illusory world in which the unrealizable desires can be realized" (93). "It is the essence of play that a new relation is created between the field of meaning and the visual field – that is, between situations in thought and real situations (Vygotsky, 1978 p.104).

Into this field of play and learning, the factor of cultural mediation is paramount. Following earlier Russian cultural-historical psychologists, Vygotsky believed that the "special mental quality of human beings is their need and ability to mediate their actions through artifacts and to arrange for the rediscovery and appropriation of these forms by subsequent generations" (Cole and Wertsch, p.2).

Such mediation occurs through socially meaningful activity (Kozulin, 1986) and indeed, that meaningful activity serves as a generator of consciousness. "The role of mediator is played by psychological tools and means of interpersonal communication". Psychological tools "usually have a semiotic nature" (Ibid, xxiv). These included "such psychological tools as gestures, language and sign systems, mnemonic techniques, and decision making systems – for example, casting dice" (Ibid. p. xxv).

Vygotsky focused on how the symbolic psychological tools and social relations are internalized and especially in the development of language in its relation to thought (Kozulin, 1982). His most popular book, *Myshlerie i rech – Thought and Language*, was the result. It is to this book especially, that practitioners' of drama in second language teaching are drawn.

Vygotsky's analysis of the process whereby thought generates speech drew upon literature and theater, as well as from his own analysis of language acquisition in children.

How does this work? Vygotsky underscores the transformation of image into word units.    It is at this juncture, where image becomes word *leading through meaning*, that second language teachers focus. In drama activity, the words of the second language that articulate the meaning of an inner image need to be used, either through the guidance of a script or through improvisation. How can this process best be achieved? Vygotsky continues, "The problem is that thought is mediated by signs externally, but it also is mediated internally, this time by word meanings…Thought must pass through meanings and only then through words." But, he goes on, "Thought is not begotten of thought; it is engendered by motivation, i.e., by our desires and needs, our interests and emotions. Behind every thought there is an affective-volitional tendency, which holds the last 'why' in the analysis of thinking." In understanding speech, we must understand motivation – which leads to an understanding of the thought – which leads to an understanding of the words. "In reality, the development of verbal thought (moves) from the motive that engenders a thought to the shaping of the thought, first in inner speech, then in meanings of words, and finally in words" (Vygotsky, 1986, p.253).

Vygotsky demonstrates the process of developing words from motive to thought to inner speech through meaning to words by citing Konstantine Stanislavski's work with actors at the Moscow Art Theatre. Stanislavski's approach underscores the need for analysis of subtext, the thoughts developed by the motivation of characters in the pursuit of intentions or objectives in the performance of a play. Thus, he completes his analysis of how words reflect consciousness and how consciousness is connected with the development of the word. It is only through play – and the play of drama -- that the process of language acquisition can be approached in such concentrated depth, for in the development of a character pursuing objectives and using speech to achieve a

goal, the natural process of acquisition is imitated and the path to new word meaning engraved.

The impact on pedagogical method implied by Vygotsky's illuminating studies has been slow to be realized, however much educators understand Vygotskian theory. Elizabeth Riddle and Nada Dabbagh have written: "Traditionally, schools have not promoted environments in which the students play an active role in their own education as well as their peers." Vygotsky's theory, however, requires the teacher and students to play untraditional roles as they collaborate with each other. Instead of teacher dictating her meaning to students for future recitation, a teacher should collaborate with her students in order to create meaning in ways that students can make their own"(Hausfather, 1996).

> Haught (2005) also points out in the conclusion to his Ph.D. thesis that:
>
> Drama based language learning serves as further support for a Vygotskian view of       learning and development. By capturing the the essential process of expansive learning through recursive internalization and externalization language performance demonstrates the validity of Vygotsky's thought. Embodied language performance reveals the social nature of teaching and learning and how meaning is expressly co-constructed through activity. With this realization, the language teacher can engage the learners in a seemingly endless variety of situations through the creative use of learning interventions. Activity becomes both the medium and the result for teachers and learning (Haught, p.151).

Throughout much of the above, we hear echoes of the earliest drama-in-education practitioners.

There is the call for democratic classrooms wherein the students and teacher become collaborators, the students learning from one another, developing responsibility and self-reliance, operating as active builders of projects that require imaginative and cognitive, physical as well as emotional, engagement.

If Vygotsky supplied the theoretical foundation for teaching language through drama, Dorothy Heathcote inspired the practice. Going back to the 1960s in England, although not professing a Vygotskian base, Dorothy Heathcote's approach to classroom drama reflected the Vygotskian emphasis on student-teacher-student-student interaction, a learner prescribed curriculum, and learning that occurred "authentically" within a collaborative environment. Gavin Bolton (1999), who worked

with Heathcote, notes when speaking of Heathcote in *Acting in Classroom Drama* that "(D)ramatic action was to do with attending to meaning, or, rather, meanings, to be negotiated with her class and leading to action" (p. 176). He links the idea to that of Vygotsky's that in play "a child deals with things as having meanings" (Vygotsky, 1933). Vygotsky underscored the notion that: "whereas in 'real life' action is prioritized over meaning, the opposite occurs in make believe" (Ibid, p.176). Heathcote worked on the basis that good drama arose in showing human beings working from a state of desperation ("Men in a mess," she called it) to some kind of resolution. "Drama is to be about meaning: meaning indicating, meaning seeking, meaning making, and meaning finding" (Bolton, p. 177).

Cecily O'Neill, another student of Heathcote's and a leading advocate of "process drama" suggests that:

> In developing this highly articulated approach to the themes and materials of curriculum, Dorothy Heathcote is proposing a paradox. The teaching is authentic, and yet it achieves its authenticity through "the big lie," since it operates within a powerful imagined context, created through the inner dramatic rules of time, space, role, and situation. This contextualization is the key to its effect. Thinking from within the situation immediately forces a different kind of thinking. Research has convincingly shown that the determining factor in children's ability to perform particular intellectual tasks is the context in which the task is embedded. In mantle of the expert (Heathcote's term for her approach where students take on 'expert' roles) problems and challenges arise within a context that makes them both motivating and comprehensible. Imagination is not an optional extra to the way of thinking but is essential to the symbolic and communicative tasks that arise from the work. It is imagination that allows both teacher and students to devise alternative modes of action, alternative projects and solutions, and imagination is at the heart of this complex way of thinking (O'Neill in Heathcote and Bolton, 1995, p.viii).

The kind of drama in the classroom pursued by Heathcote she termed at first "living through". She followed Kenneth Tynan's description of drama as "an ordered sequence of events that brings one or more people in to a desperate condition which it must always explain and should, if possible, resolve." Her focus was not on plot, which appeared in her work always after the fact, but on "one internal situation breeding or foreshadowing the next internal situation" (Bolton, p. 178). She relied on tension to glue the *successive* scenes together. The students always needed to choose the direction of the process, but with the teacher taking an active role, thus acting as

the chief stimulant to the "text," i.e., the action of the play-making. Bolton puts it thusly:

> The teacher-in-role's function is that of a dramatist, a dramatist who not only is supplying the words but also accompanying non-verbal signals so that the 'reading' on the students is multi-dimensional…As *dramatist* the teacher is dictating at both the structural and thematic levels (Op. cit. p. 184).

The teacher's role is to get the students to reason: 'look for implications,' 'check the motivation,'

'assess the consequences,' 'make decisions'. Such directives guide the student's exploration into meaning.

In addition to the teacher-in-role acting as a dramatist, s/he also initiates a cultural perspective as the students take part in their roles "primarily as we," the people of a certain culture. As Bolton points out, "Man in a mess" is rarely about a particular personality; it is about the problem we have to face" (Bolton, p.181). The orientation of "living through" is on problem-posing and on the problem's resolution. One hears echoes of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal here as well as Dewey, Ward, Spolin, and Vygotsky.

Later in life, Heathcote began to develop a heightened element of "living through" that she entitled, "mantle of the expert" approach. In the foreword of *Drama for Learning* (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995) Cecily O'Neil comments:

> The significance of the social dimensions of this kind of teaching should not be overlooked. Learning occurs most efficiently within a supportive and collaborative community. Here, students work in the kind of teams and collaborative environments that anticipate the challenges facing them in the real world. Instead of sterile competitiveness, everyone's level of achievement is elevated. The mantle of the expert sets up a supportive, interpretative, and reflective community through a pattern of relationships and a network of tasks, all embedded in a flexible context. Students are required to question, negotiate, compromise, take responsibility, cooperate, and collaborate, all in the service of something beyond themselves. Their energies are focused less on these interactions than on the tasks to be accomplished, and they develop an awareness of their own knowledge and competencies. They are active in the learning process, not just cognitively but socially and aesthetically. They express their understanding in their response to the variety of tasks demanded of them, and they reflect on their perceptions from both inside and outside the context (viii).

Heathcote herself was at pains to point out that using the mantle of the expert does not just entail labeling students as "experts". She emphasizes that:

> …For real meaning to be going on, the students not only need to reinforce these skills through practice over a period of time, they need to be conscious of their new skills and concepts as they are acquiring them – that is, they have to recognize what they are learning – and they have to take responsibility at some stage for their own learning. A mantle of the expert approach can do all this – *and without members of the class falling into their traditional role of students/learners.*

The mantle of the expert approach is an approach to the whole curriculum. The environment where it can function best is business related, an enterprise of some sort. That's because action occurs where enterprise occurs and tasks need to be carried out with a high level of responsibility. She says, "The common ground is that each member of the establishment is a worker and functions within the team responsibilities, sharing in the overall aspirations and skills, and, in modern business parlance, subscribes to the mission statement of the firm" (Ibid. p. 17). She goes on to point out that it is a contract that is established whereby the students know that they are contracting into the fiction, know the power they have within that fiction to direct, decide, and function. Student growth is achieved through the tasks they undertake as makers of things, but never of the actual objects their 'company' may produce. But they "will design, demonstrate, explain, draw to scale, or cut into templates exactly as such firms would" (Heathcote, 1995, p. 18).

Heathcote and, to a lesser extent, Bolton in some detail are quoted because it may be important that readers realize that the art of the mantle of the expert is dependent on having students experience drama through a certain prism. Dorothy Heathcote called it "a camera angle" through which students relate to the seen world and through which they can develop their own value system.

Gavin Bolton (1995) summarizes the main principle's that can be derived from Heathcote's approach to drama in education.

- If you are in teacher education, you *must* continue to work *directly* with children, students in kindergarten, the elementary grades, junior high, Senior High, indeed in educational institutions of all kinds, so that you are constantly

practicing what you are asking others to do and evolving theoretical principles from that practice.
- Drama is about making significant meaning.
- Drama operates best when the whole class together shares that meaning making.
- The teacher's responsibility is to *empower* and the most useful way of doing this is for the teacher to play a facilitating role (i.e., the teacher operates from *within* the dramatic art, not outside it). The regular teacher/student relationship is laid aside for that of colleague/artists (p. 3).

The entire process of 'mantle of the expert' is explained in detail in *Drama for Learning*. For this study, suffice it to say that "living through" and "mantle of the expert" are approaches to teaching that involve holistic commitment over an extended period of time so that various skills are honed in turn. Each drama unfolds based on the series of tasks that will bring resolution to an underlying problem. These tasks involve reading, speaking, decision-making, collaborative effort at negotiating, writing, and, of course, listening, in order to get the tasks done. The total project may take a week or many weeks, depending upon the involvement of the class and the emotional engagement of the students involved in the process.

Cecily O'Neill has long been an advocate of drama in education and has extended the Heathcote approach to what she calls "process drama". Born in Ireland, O'Neill became interested in Dorothy Heathcote's methods and worked with Liz Johnson in collecting the writings of Heathcote that are now housed at the University of Durham in England. She has published widely on drama-in-education and conducts workshops internationally. At this writing, she is affiliated with New York University in the United States. Her books, which include

*Drama Structures: A Practical Handbook for Teachers,* (written with Alan Lambert), *Drama Worlds: a framework for process drama,* and *Words into Worlds* (with Shin-Mei Kao) explain the concepts of teaching through process drama in great detail. In this monograph, this paper will endeavor only to outline the main features of O'Neill's approach to whet the appetite for readers of this material to delve further into the process drama approach as described in O'Neill's publications.

Dorothy Heathcote, writing to Gavin Bolton at the end of *Drama for Learning*, has said:

Regarding your doubts about equating theatre and the mantle of the expert: it is a myth that I have done so. I see the *laws* of theatre expression – the seen and

the not seen, the spoken and the withheld, the still and the moving, each dimension expressed **SIGN***ificantly*—as applying to both. You are right when you see *time* as being differently used (Heathcote, 1995, p. 195).

It is the element of time, which, in process drama, O'Neill has exploited to add to the learning process. "The potential for 'living through' drama expands, making a cascade of possibilities if the present embraces the past and the future, if the pain of an event 'yesterday' or the implication of an event is 'tomorrow' (Bolton, 1999). In other words, events can be examined not only as they occur in the present, but the roots of the present can also be examined through the prism of the past and the implications seen for the future emanating from the present. She also emphasizes the factor of tension, introducing plot twists as teacher-in-role that will add to increased dramatic tension within the unfolding series of events. Finally, O'Neill applies more traditional theatre terminology to define the characteristics of process drama as a genre of theatre.

In *Words into Worlds*, O'Neill turns her attention toward teaching language through process drama. She writes that: "(Process drama) refers to drama activities that aim to go beyond short-term, teacher-dominated exercises. Instead, the drama is extended over time and is built up from the ideas, negotiations, and responses of all participants in order to foster social, intellectual, and linguistic development" (Kao and O'Neill, 1998, p. x). She points out that most classes that use drama activities to teach language do so in limited ways, engaging in dialogue role plays or improvisations, but failing to take advantage of the long term benefits of acting in role the process drama over an extended period of time. As listed by O'Neill, the main characteristics of process drama are:

1. Its purpose is to generate a dramatic "elsewhere," a fictional world, which will be inhabited for the experiences, insights, interpretations and the understandings it may yield.
2. It does not proceed from a pre-written script or scenario, but rather from a theme, situation or pre-text that interests and challenges the participants.
3. It is built up from a series of episodes, which may be improvised or composed and rehearsed.
4. It takes place over a time span that allows this kind of elaboration.
5. It involves the whole group in the same enterprise.
6. There is no external audience to the event, but participants are audience to their own acts (Ibid. p. 15).

For language teachers, it can easily be seen that involvement in process drama should increase speaking fluency by offering students opportunity to communicate within an authentic context and negotiate meaning as they proceed. Student bonding occurs by alternating whole class activities with small group and pair work as the drama unfolds. The teacher joins in the process by introducing new developments in the drama to which the students must react. To react, students must reflect, express opinion, negotiate, make decisions, put feelings into words and take action. In doing these things, O'Neill points out that "The use of process drama in L2 is essentially a liberating one. Its qualities relate closely to the characteristics of the kind of liberating education advocated by Freire (1972)" (Kao and O'Neill, 1998, p. 17). She continues:

> These characteristics include:
> 1. participation;
> 2. cooperation;
> 3. posing problems;
> 4. the validation of students' ideas for classroom content and discourse;
> 5. students' control over the learning process;
> 6. learners working in community, cooperating and pooling their resources;
> 7. the teachers' creativity;
> 8. reflection;
> 9. self and peer evaluation; and
> 10. a sense of coherence. (Ibid. p. 17)

In laying out a ground plan to execute process drama, Kao and O'Neill suggest that the first thing to consider is the issue of *context*. By context is meant a theme or the framework upon which the drama will be based. The authors point out that "this starting point should rapidly enlist the students' language and imagination in creating the functional world that will emerge through the drama" (Ibid, p.22). Thus, the initiation of context must be drawn from the students rather than a superimposed curriculum design. The authors remind us that student imaginations can be stimulated by current events, novels, short stories, or "real life experiences of participants" (Ibid, p.22).

In process drama, the role of a student, or the roles that students play, can begin in rather a generic fashion. As in Heathcote's mantle of the expert approach, they may all be members of a certain classification or group, i.e., members of an architectural team, a group of museum curators, workers in a particular unit of a company and so forth. Once having established the generic classification though,

students are free to embellish their characters depending upon the development of the scenarios.

Most of the work in process drama, however, requires students to "adopt particular attitudes and perspectives and to respond appropriately" (Ibid. p. 26). To do this, students need to reflect upon the situation and the ethical perspectives involved. Again, they are constructing the drama based not upon "if" but rather upon "What *should* we do?"

O'Neill emphasizes that "teacher in role is one of the most effective ways of beginning process drama" (p. 26). By working from within the drama, teacher and students are able to create a fictional world together, establishing imaginary situations, modeling appropriate behavior and language, assigning roles, directing scenario direction, and maintaining tension. The teacher in role brings the "students into active participation in the event" (Ibid. p. 27).

*Tension* is seen as another key characteristic of process drama. "It exists between the situation as it appears any one moment and the complete action" (Ibid. p.28). The teacher asking questions, posing problems, and, when in role, introducing issues that may obstruct the goals of the group members does this. "Tension may arise from the direct confrontation, as a way of harnessing the energy or resistance of the class; it may appear more subtly as a dilemma, a veiled threat, a pressure posed by an outside agency, or by such factors as a time pressure which demands immediate response" (Ibid. p. 29).

All language teachers know the value of *negotiation* and negotiating is an activity that runs throughout the drama process, whether it is in the negotiation of a fictional world among students as they work together in pairs or small groups, or as they prepare for performance for other class members.

The paralinguistic elements of gesture and movement are another feature of process drama. Kao and O'Neill list them as *non-verbal activities.* Through movement, students need to take on the behavioral characteristics of the target culture, rehearse and experience the proxemics related to the environment of the fictional world within which they move and speak. Kao and O'Neill also suggest that the use of tableau, freeze frame, and slow motion effects can excite verbal expression and inspire reflection (Ibid, p.30).

Another important characteristic of process drama is "authentic" questioning. The teacher, in process drama, is really dependent on student responses to develop the drama. Instead of a canned exchange, where the teacher already knows the answer, in drama work and in process drama particularly, the teacher is truly informed of student opinions and decisions. The traditional power flow is reversed and authentic dialogue is enabled.

O'Neill, in referring back to Heathcote, notes that "the explicit educational aim of her work in drama is always to build a reflective and contemplative attitude in the recipients" (Ibid. p.31) This is important, for students always need to know what they are learning and its significance "both socially and linguistically" (Ibid p. 32). It is a period where students and the teacher can look back at what has been done, discuss the implications of what has occurred, negotiate for the next series of events, sort out student feelings about the experience and generally review the action to prepare for future events. Gavin Bolton, in *Acting in Classroom Drama*, notes that many writers have compared this process as being similar to the theatre aesthetic of Bertolt Brecht. He writes in connection with Heathcote's use of episodic drama:

> With these continual teacher interruptions, the ensuing drama can at best be episodic, but this is to be one of its strengths, not a shortcoming to be regretted. Heathcote's aim is to construct a series of 'episodes', not a through-line of the Naturalistic dramatist but the episodic presentation of Epic Theatre. Whereas Stanislavski appeared to aim at a seamless flow of events, Brecht writes as follows:…"The episodes have to be knotted together in such a way that the knots are easily noticed. The episodes must not succeed one another indistinguishably but must give us a chance to interpose our judgement" Bolton 1999, p.180).

Through the window of the periods of reflection in process drama, the teacher can introduce a number of other expressive activities. At these points, writing of letters, editorials, essays, special reports, can be initiated, as can special presentations, speeches, and debates. It can also be the opportunity to review linguistic points, make some corrections, and outline alternatives to the linguistic elements already used. Kao and O'Neill point out that all the evaluation needs to be "handled positively by focusing on what the students have achieved" (Kao and O'Neill, op. cit. p. 32).

**CONCLUSION**

Certainly, we have traveled some distance from the days of Harriet Finlay-Johnson and Caldwell Cook. But right from the beginning of the drama-in-education movement, we have seen a number of themes or pedagogical principles that remain the same: Learners learn form learners as well as teachers, learners become responsible and self-reliant through work on the drama, learning becomes a 'habit of mind,' the teacher is always a 'fellow worker' and 'friend' (Finlay-Johnson in Bolton 1999, p.11). Much of the imaginative and creative work flows from the premise of the class being an alternative culture, a 'little state' to use Caldwell Cook's term. It is also an underlying method that drama work structures for engagement by "refocusing the task away from the main goal of study to a connected but subsidiary goal, which becomes the focal task of the pupil…Thus, much learning occurs unintentionally as a result of the engagement (Bolton 1999, p.43).

That drama work teaches indirectly has long been the premise of the drama-in-education movement as well as of those language teachers who use drama in their classes. Indeed, since drama seems to facilitate learning indirectly, it can be seen to operate in a way similar to 'desuggestopedia,' the method of the Bulgarian psycholinguist, Giorgi Lozanov who claims learning can be accelerated by release of the sub-conscious. It may also be viewed as the 'Natural Approach' par excellence as language acquisition occurs through the process of negotiation in the target language. At this juncture, however, there is much that remains to be done to encourage greater use of drama in language teaching curriculum. Numerous studies (Coyle and Bisgyer 1984, DiPietro 1982, 1985, 1987, Green and Harker 1988, Haught 2005, Kao 1992, 1994, 1995, Kramsch 1985, Nunan 1987, Sjorslev 1987, Shacker et al. 1993, Wilburn 1992, Wagner 1988) support the effectiveness of teaching language through drama, but more empirical research is needed to persuade administrators to structure more learner oriented programs and accreditation teams to recognize alternative means of assessment.

As we have seen, the integrated use of drama activities in process drama seems to offer the greatest tool for organic linguistic development within language classrooms. Therefore, this paper would venture that this is the wave of the future for the teaching of English through drama. Unfortunately, the distance is still great between existing language teaching practices and the integrated approach of language acquisition through the use of process drama. More work needs to be done to integrate the use of drama within teacher training programs in general and TESL/TEFL programs specifically as well as finding ways to develop more drama use in language classrooms. Administrators and assessment organizations must be made to understand that assessment should be geared to function and learning to action that occurs not from a goal, grammar, or skills based curriculum, but upon the indirect process where goals and the skills they encompass are student generated and sublimated to the overall flow of the dramatic process. As E.M. Forster, the great English writer once said, "Only what is seen sideways sinks deep." Drama teaches language thusly.

Finally, the entire summary that Kao and O'Neill have written in Words into Worlds so is quoted so that readers may reflect upon this detailed outline of process drama. It is meant to encourage anyone who wishes to actually implement process drama in their classroom to read O'Neill's complete work which includes the above mentioned book written with Kao as well as others mentioned in the reference section of this paper. Therefore, O'Neill suggestions for teachers could be implemented here in using drama in EFL classroom, as follows:

1.     Finding an effective starting point for the drama, and if necessary, initiating the drama in role.
2.     Choosing themes and topics appropriate for the social and linguistic abilities of the students.

3.      Introducing a variety of roles in order to familiarize students with a wide range of language functions.

4.      Understanding and fostering the operation of tension in the dramatic situation, so that encounters continue to be predictable and authentic.

5.      Handling the class as a whole group as well as organizing students into pairs and small groups.

6.      Releasing students from the constraints of language and providing them with fresh opportunities by incorporating non-verbal activities in the process.

7.      Negotiating the development of the drama with students, and encouraging similar positive interactions among students.

8.      Using a variety of forms of questioning to promote involvement, support students' contributions and challenge superficial or inadequate responses.

9.      Reflecting on the experience, both in discussion and through the use of other modes of expression.

10.     Extending the drama experience beyond the limits of the classroom by making          connections with society and with the students' own lives

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