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**Trabajo Fin de Grado: Theatre as Didactic Resource in an English Classroom**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this final project is to examine the importance of theatre as an educational means in the teaching of English as a foreign language and to discover all the advantages that it can offer to students in comparison with the traditional method that is based on textbooks. Students become in active participants obtaining a full knowledge of the language through theatre and it also develops their communicative competence, so it seems an excellent resource to be used in language classrooms. However, nowadays teachers continue using books which contain boring tasks and it is because they think that to organize dramatic activities or to create a play to be performed supposes a lot of time that they can use to do many traditional activities, such as speakings, writings, grammar tasks, etc. Therefore, this project tries to find a way to promote the use of theatre in language classrooms as an original and important element in the students' learning.

## **RESUMEN**

El objetivo de este trabajo fin de grado es examinar la importancia del teatro como un medio educativo en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera y descubrir todas las ventajas que éste puede ofrecerle a los estudiantes en comparación con el método tradicional basado en libros de texto. Los estudiantes se convierten en unos participantes activos obteniendo un conocimiento completo del idioma a través del teatro y además desarrolla sus competencias comunicativas, por lo que parece un excelente recurso para ser utilizado en las aulas. Sin embargo, hoy en día, los profesores siguen utilizando libros que contienen tareas aburridas y la razón es que piensan que organizar actividades dramáticas o crear una obra de teatro para ser representada supone mucho tiempo que podrían utilizar para hacer muchas actividades tradicionales como actividades orales, actividades escritas, ejercicios de gramática, etc. Por lo tanto, este trabajo intenta buscar una manera de promover el uso del teatro en las aulas de idiomas como un elemento importante y original en el aprendizaje de los estudiantes.

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## INTRODUCTION

From the point of view of the cultural transmission, theatre is a literary genre that has caused an enormous impact all the world. Throughout history, people has used theatre as a means to transmit several ideas related to important topics of life and it provokes that the audience starts to think about them. The Greek theatre has a great influence over people and “Poetics” written by Aristotles is the first book in which he talks about Literature and literary genres. Then, in the Renaissance it should be pointed out that the Shakespearean plays have influenced over people in a significant way. This relevant author provides philosophical and moral reflections through his tragic plays about human feelings. In “As You Like It”, Shakespeare says: “All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players” ( Act II, scene 7).

Nowadays, teachers are more focused on the new technologies, but they should reevaluate a resource as old as theatre because it constitutes a full language and at the same time it provides many advantages to students, and specifically, it facilitates their language learning. Thus, the aim of this project is to explain the importance of theatre as a pedagogical tool in the learning of English as a foreign language in order to promote this original method in Spanish classrooms.

The work is divided in two parts: the first one deals with the theoretical elements of theatre related to education and in this part we can distinguish different sections: first of all, there is a definition about what is exactly theatre as a didactic resource and it is explained what is its background and the different stages of theatre related to the age of students. The second section is about the numerous advantages that theatre provides to students who develop themselves both personally and professionally in the language classrooms. Thirdly, there is a detailed information about the development of students’ competences and among them the most important competence is the communicative one which facilitates the development of the rest of competences. The fourth section is related to different methods that can be exploited through theatre: the Communicative Language Learning, the Total Physical Response, the Suggestopedia and the Silent Way. The fifth section includes the performance’s goals at school according to Torres Núñez and some examples of these goals are: the acquisition of new vocabulary and linguistic structures, the improvement of the pronunciation, to overcome the shyness and to work as a group. The sixth section provides the general rules in order to create an appropriate play to be performed at school, Wessels proposes the general rules which are applied in England and Torres Núñez points out the general rules that are needed in Spain. Finally, there is a section about the importance of the term appropriateness related to theatre.

The second part of the project consists on a practical approach to theatre and it is divided into three sections. The first one provides the differences between drama and theatre in general and related to education because teachers still confuse these two terms. The second part deals with the concept of dramatic activities, the advantages that they provide to students in class and their different kinds, like

role- plays and simulations. The last section is about the selection of adequate materials according to the age of students and their needs. Then, it deals with the creation of an original theatre according to the general rules proposed by Torres Núñez and the analysis of two plays with a personal comment.

# THEATRE AS A DIDACTIC RESOURCE IN AN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Sandra Esteban Pérez

## 1. Theoretical approach

### 1.1 Theatre as a didactic resource.

Theatre in education (TIE) refers to a particular kind of theatre practised by several groups composed by professional people who work in educational projects and whose aim is to be performed at schools. The origins of this kind of theatre are in Great Britain, specifically, in Coventry, 1965, when a group composed by actors and teachers decided to create different projects directed to students and then, it was established a permanent group at the Belgrade Theatre. Lately, this theatre became so popular that it was extended in different countries and the creation of some varieties.

Deary (1997) says that the origin of Theatre in Education resides in the experience of children with the Educational Drama and he points out that theatre in education is a combination between theatre of children and educational drama. He also says that:

*Educational Theatre places the emphasis on the performance and acting skills, with less physical participation on the part of the children. But the educational aim of the plays are clearly defined; Educational Theatre plays are the starting-point and stimulus to the children's own work, and not an end in themselves. (Deary, 1997: 7).*

It involves a great programme of work that includes activities to develop students' competencies and the representation of the play before the public. The performance is totally planned by the teacher and students acquire a meaningful learning according to particular educational goals.

It is interesting to talk about the work of the English Theatre Company and the Lingua-Arts Theatre Company which are international theatre companies that represent educational plays to Spanish children who are learning English and their goal is to motivate young audiences in the study of that language and to increase their interest about the culture and other aspects related to it.

Regarding education, we can distinguish between theatre "of" children and theatre "for" children. Although they are very different, these two kinds of theatre share the same goal, that is, the teaching of a foreign language. Theatre "of" children is based in the creation of plays by

children, so they are responsible for the different aspects related to the play, such as the creation of characters, the preparation of the set, dialogues, etc. By opposite, theatre “for” children consists on the creation of a play by the teacher or a group of teachers and it is directed to their students, and then they perform it before the public. Each of them supports educational knowledge to learners, so it is necessary to accept the two kinds of theatre.

In comparison with other countries, there is not much influence of the educational theatre in Spain and it is due to the lack of resources needed to develop it at schools. Moreover, teachers have little knowledge about how to use theatre as a didactic resource and English authors do not write books directed to the teaching of languages, they normally write to native students that have a high level, so these books are inappropriate to Spanish students.

*El error de algunos profesores se debe a su deseo de imponer el drama y olvidar el teatro, sin tener en cuenta el desarrollo y la madurez del niño. Y son precisamente los niños los que se cansan del drama, si el profesor carece del conocimiento adecuado para enseñarlo. A medida que los alumnos entran en la adolescencia nosotros podemos satisfacer sus necesidades con los textos teatrales. (Torres Núñez 1996: 29).*

Finally, it is important to consider the stages of theatre in education. As Mantovani (1988) says in his book, there are four different stages in theatre as a didactic resource related to the age of students: symbolic plays, dramatic plays, creative drama or role- playing and collective creation or theatre. Here there is a definition of each stage:

- Symbolic plays are directed to kindergarten, that is, children between 2-5 years old and they represent a daily event, for example, watching the television and then through the imagination they become an object in an imaginary one, a stick in a magic wand.
- Dramatic plays treat about the interpretation of characters in a particular situation by children between 6- 8 years old and they can become in a chef who works in a restaurant. Moreover they use the linguistic communication and the body expression to do the activities individually or as a group.
- Role- plays are those kinds of plays for children between 9- 13 years old and the teacher has a essential role because she explains a particular situation and at the same time children imagine how they would behave in that situations. Then, she gives different roles which contain some aspects, like the characters’ personality that children interpret through improvisation.

- Theatre is a more complicated activity, so it is recommended to young people (more than 14 years old) because they can understand the communicative function of all the theatrical elements, that is, actors, spectators, director. To obtain a good result they should rehearse frequently and it is also important the presence of the public.

### **1.2 Advantages of theatre in education.**

Theatre seen as an educational resource is a very interesting technique that provides to students many facilities to learn languages. Through theatre they have many chances to communicate between them and to develop some competences. Some advantages of the educational theatre are:

- To make English learning a motivating experience. It is fun to learners dramatize any kind of text and they can do the same activity at different levels, so all learners can do it successfully.
- Students improve their self-esteem and gain confidence to speak in a spontaneous way. In performances, students become an unknown character that offers them the possibility to speak without being afraid. Teachers can use roles to encourage shy students through this technique.
- To bring the real world into the classroom. Teachers can introduce topics from different subjects to acquire new vocabulary and they can also treat another interesting topics like the respect for the environment and other situations that occur around them. Teachers can introduce English culture through stories customs that they can represent with several kinds of behaviours.
- To stimulate learners' intellect and imagination. Through theatre learners can develop their imagination and creativity inventing new characters and situations.
- Learners empathize with other and thus become better communicators. They work as a group, so they have to understand each other and to listen the suggestions of other students in order to achieve their aims.
- It helps students acquire the language by focusing on the message that they are conveying rather than on the form of the utterances.

### **1.3 The development of students' competences through theatre**

In traditional classrooms, teachers carry out many activities to develop the linguistic competences needed to learn a foreign language. However, theatre as an educational technique

uses just an activity to develop all these competences in an innovative way that motivates the student.

The teaching/ learning of a foreign language implies the development of the communicative competence which is defined as the ability to use a foreign language in activities of understanding and oral/ written interaction. It is the most important competence and it facilitates the development of other competences:

-The competence in linguistic communication consists in the right use of the linguistic system and treats the formal aspects of the language.

-Sociolinguistic competence: knowledge and skills needed to treat the social aspects of the use of a language. It includes some skills like the courtesy rules and differences of register, dialect and accent.

-Pragmatic competence: it is about the organization of the discourse in a coherent way, the construction of narrations and reasoning, the use of structures and communicative functions.

-Intercultural competence: the ability that people has to manage themselves in an intercultural situation where the speaker can feel sensibility towards foreign cultures.

Therefore, teachers should consider theatre as an important means to the learning of a foreign language because it is more interesting than traditional activities which students do in their books.

#### **1.4. Theatre in education: methods involved**

Communicative Language Learning: this method can be exploited throughout theatre used in classrooms. Students work in groups and they learn themselves, so teachers are less needed in this case. In this method interaction is considered as a vehicle of learning because students have to speak between them and they are also who decide what content is included in the activity, so they can establish real conversations without books and the teacher's function is to observe his students.

Richards and Rodgers points out that "students may work in group to produce their own materials, such as scripts for dialogues and mini-dramas" (1986:123).

Total Physical Response is another method that can be also exploited through theatre. This method includes an essential part of the driving activity which facilitates the rote learning.

Richards and Rodgers says this method combines "tracing activities, such as verbal rehearsal accompanied by motor activity" (1986:87). This language learning method is based on the teaching of a language through physical activity and the traditional drills are the main activities used by teachers in the classrooms. Students must listen to the teacher and respond physically according to the commands given by the teacher who plays an active and direct role because he decides what to teach and the materials needed to each activity. He can use pictures and other objects to do the activities more interesting, so he points out some pictures and students respond in a non verbal way, that is, using gestures, sitting down or standing up. Therefore, in this method students are involved physically as well as mentally and it is a perfect to put in practise the four skills which are involved in language learning.

There are also other modern language teaching methods which are related to theatre:

Suggestopedia: this method was created by Lozanov in 1982 and it is used to foreign language teaching through songs, drama, games and other activities that belong to the four skills. The atmosphere has to be relaxing in order to get that students assimilate the content without feeling tired, so it is recommendable to use music in the classrooms. The vocabulary is an important part because to memorize the vocabulary is one of the goals in this method.

The Silent Way, that was created by Caleb Gattegno (1963), is a method used for the language teaching and the most important element is silence. Teachers should remain a lot of time in silence, so students become in active participants of their learning, although the teacher can use some gestures to help them. Moreover, the pronunciation has a fundamental role in this method.

*The Silent Way teacher, like the complete dramatist, writes the script, chooses the pros, sets the mood, models the action, designates the players, and is critic for the performance.* (Richards and Rodgers, 1986:107).

### **1.5. Aims in the performance of a play at schools**

a) Acquisition of new vocabulary and linguistic structures (Torres Núñez, 1996).

New vocabulary is essential in communication and students will express themselves in a better way if they know more words about some topic. It is necessary the learning of vocabulary to express what people feel at every moment. We need a wide range of words to communicate

between us in an appropriate way, so each time we should increase our list of vocabulary. Therefore, the role of teachers is essential in order to students acquire new words, but the long vocabulary lists that appear in textbooks do not contribute to facilitate the learning of these words because students are tired to repeat the same words every time, so we have to change this traditional method.

Teachers can use theatre as a didactic resource in their classrooms to encourage students to enrich their vocabulary. Throughout this method learners are forced to search words in dictionaries to obtain a good understanding of any text and it is also useful to compose their own play what creates confidence in them to learn the language.

Rehearsals and the final performance of a play in drama projects, as C.Wessels calls theatre, is an interesting and friendly way to learn in class. She says that:

*It helps the learner acquire new vocabulary and structures in a fully contextualized and integrated manner -so it fulfils the aims of the communicative approach. By making the language more accessible to the learner, it builds confidence in the learner's ability to learn the language ( C.Wessels, 1987: 114).*

Moreover, teachers have to take into consideration the level of each course to choose the adequate material looking at the structure of each level. Some students have some difficulties when they translate words into other language, so teachers must change some words to obtain a better result in their translation.

To sum up, this modern technique is more effective than the traditional technique, that is, drills which are based in the repetition of vocabulary lists, but they do not motivate students. Children also repeat in rehearsals, but the difference is that they entertain themselves by repeating the same words.

#### b) The improvement of speaking.

Teachers should decide what is the better way in order to get that students improve their speaking skill. One of the most popular methods used in class are the songs because students really like music, but it is not an appropriate technique considering that students are more focussed in the rhythm of the song than in what they really say. However, using theatre students feel the need to communicate between them and to convey the message to the audience, so they improve their speaking correcting the pronunciation of words through the repetitions in

rehearsals. It causes that the student gains self-confidence and he also loses fear to speak in public.

c) The improvement of the pronunciation.

Students normally improve the pronunciation when they repeat several times some particular words that the teacher says. In theatre it is an amusing process because there is contextualization and children are not tired to repeat the same words. Theatre can be seen as a reinforcement technique of the pronunciation and it works some aspects like the proxemics (it treats gestures, facial expressions...) and paralinguistics (it treats the intonation and pauses).

*One advantage of the students learning their parts is that it affords an opportunity to concentrate on voice and pronunciation work in a more interesting way than through classroom drilling. Each utterance can be examined from the point of view of articulation, stress, intonation, etc. and the appropriateness of the register to the situation and role. (S.K. Hayes, 1984:100).*

d) The improvement of the communicative competence.

Theatre is defined as an essential act of communication, so the communicative competence is an important aim in it. Some students can speak a foreign language without problems, but most of them are shy and it is difficult for them to communicate with foreign people. Textbooks contain dialogues and other speaking activities that serve students to practise the speaking skill, but these dialogues are artificial and they do not show situations that you can find in life. However, theatre offers a wide range of situations which permit students communicate between them in a real environment.

In performances there is a mutual communication between students, that is, they have to listen one to another to get a good result. In the educational system there is a lack of communication because the teacher explains some aspects related to a particular topic without giving the opportunity to student expresses his opinion about that topic, so there is not a mutual communication. In the next quotation R.Linnell (1985, 16), shows what it is said about communicative competence: "One of weakness of modern education is that so much of it denies any opportunity for direct communication".

e) Personal relationship: emotions

In theatre, students work as a group and each of them feels different emotions that teachers should study to understand how they feel themselves in each moment. Teachers should try to strengthen the learner's expressive ability and an excellent way to do that is throughout a method that Stanislavsky calls "transfert" in which the student remembers some specific moment of his life that provokes a similar emotion like his character expresses.

In rehearsals, students produce several actions, emotions and feelings that imply the union of human relationships. They express their emotions in a natural way and have less fear to speak in public. Moreover, the relationship between teachers and students is better because of the different moments that they share.

f) Body skill.

Throughout body language students can express in a simple way what they think or feel at every moment. The term "warms-up" is important because it refers to body activities that provide a motivating group of people who are ready to learn. Body language implies a connection between the movement and the expression of an individual and it also improves the memory. Theatre offers the possibility to learn different cultures because students have to interpret a different language in each role.

S.K. Hayes (1984, 9) affirms that students "learn to link language to other forms of communication, that is gesture, facial expressions, body language and they increase their fluency".

g) It helps to overcome shyness.

There are a great abundance of shy students in classrooms and the reason is that they have little self-confidence in themselves. As a result, they are uncomfortable when they have to joint to the rest of students and do not participate in activities that the teacher proposes because they believe that their answers are wrong, so they prefer to stay quiet. However, in rehearsals, students have the chance to communicate with more fluency and they gain self-confidence when they exchange information.

h) Memorizing and improvisation.

On the one hand, children have to memorise some lines to get a good performance, though it is a criticised method in the educational approach. When students memorize a text in theatre they should not learn lines as a parrot and Allen says,

*learning anything parrot-fashion there can be no question but to learn lines in order to act a play is an acceptable activity provided that the teacher can find a way of helping the young people to make those lines, as we say, their own, to integrate them with the character they are creating. (1979: 129).*

On the other hand, improvisation increases the number of mistakes that students have, but it also helps to develop their creativity to imagine new situations. People defend a theatre that combines these two methods because each of them provides advantages to children.

S.K. Hayes says that improvisation is

*a group activity in which students create people and relationships in time place, and act out a situation using speech and movement, but usually without any preconceived plan. (1984: 90).*

She also distinguishes two kinds of improvisation: open-ended process and finished dramatic statement. It is important what Diaz calls “improvisación dirigida” (directed improvisation) in which students propose original ideas and then they understand the construction of the characters.

## **1.6. General rules in theatre at school**

“The Secondary School Theater Association” created a list with the rules needed to choose an appropriate play directed to students of secondary school. They proposed different types of books from classical literature to contemporary literature. Landy (1982,81) summarizes the main points of this list:

1. character worth doing, challenging to the performers.
2. Theme worth expressing - of lasting value to the audience as well as the cast and production staff.
3. Lines worth learning - good literary quality.
4. Suitable cast size.
5. Audience appeal.
6. Capable of production with the budget and with the facilities.

These rules were created to students in the United States and they took into account the problems in that country and we need to establish our own rules related to the needs of Spanish students. However, in this case, there is a coincidence in their needs, so the general rules can be applied to Spain. To select the appropriate play to each group of students, teachers should keep in mind the theme, the level of the students, the number of characters, the public, the language that they learn, the facilities and the budget .

Charlyn Wessels proposes her own general rules about theatre as a technique for English learning. This author uses the term “drama projects” referring to plays performed at schools. She says that students can develop their “competence” in rehearsals.

Wessels points out the conditions that plays have to fulfil in order to the teaching of English through theatre:

1. They should be written in contemporary English...
2. ...avoid plays and monologues...
3. ...have as many parts as possible (no fewer than six)...
4. The main plot should be fairly simple.
5. The theme must be interesting and amusing...
6. The contents should be relatively concrete...
7. They should be either a one-act play or a very short full-length one.
8. It should be fit a rehearsal period of not more than six weeks...
- 9 If you can, you should choose plays written specifically for native speakers, but which are linguistically accessible to the learners...

Torres Núñez proposes his own general rules to select an appropriate performance according to the needs of our country and these rules are:

1. To create an original English theatre, written and leaded by pupils and their teacher. The final copy has to be well checked before pupils learn it. The teacher will give his/her opinion about the rehearsals, showing his/her authority just in the linguistic part.
2. All pupils will participate in their elaboration if they want. They are completely free to choose whether they want to act or not. Therefore, nobody will be forced to act

3. There will be one or several characters who only speak in Spanish. It will originate a conflict that will cause the translation from Spanish to English and viceversa. It will help to the lowest level pupils to understand the play and those pupils who could not follow the dialogue.
4. To look for an environment theatre (we use this term to refer to a theatre created in the cultural environment of pupils). It is preferable that Spanish characters belong to the place where the play is represented. Moreover, they should speak with a local accent.
5. The topic will be chosen by the group (pupils and teacher). They will enrich the play with their ideas organized little by little, in Spanish or in English, until the pupil delivers his final English copy.
6. Children will learn the English language with literary and colloquial quality, without particular accents neither word games. This last thing is just for Spanish characters.
7. The lexical difficulty of the play will be between the minimum levels proposed to reach in programs.
8. The number of characters has to be the biggest. The perfect number would be the half of the class and the other half would be dedicated to the rest of jobs.
9. A mixture of the characters, that is, gender diversity.
10. A character cannot have a role during all the play. It will try to get a good distribution in each moment. The length of the play will depend on the distribution of the roles.
11. The action of the play has to be based on the dialogues, movements and gestures. The pupil will associate the language and gestures to different situations.
12. The simplest set taking into account the scarcity of budgets, it will try to use the school material.
13. They will contain a one-act play. It will add more acts if the set is the same and they have to be very economic and easy to stage.
14. The play will last about fifteen and sixteen minutes apoximatly.
15. The play has to be original and it will be possible to adapt to English existing plays. In the adaptation process it will try to apply the most possible number of these general rules. It is also possible to adapt narrations and tales.

## **1.7. The importance of the term appropriateness**

Hymes, in his book about communicative competence, includes appropriateness as the third judgement and this term is defined as “the sense of relating to contextual features” (1972: 286). He also says that “from a communicative standpoint, judgments of appropriateness should not be assigned to different spheres, [...] the linguistic and the cultural: certainly the two spheres will interact” (1972: 286).

*Many of the skills we most need when speaking a language, foreign or not, are those which are given least attention in the traditional textbook; adaptability (i.e. the ability to match one's speech to the person one is talking to), speed of reaction, sensitivity to tone, insight, anticipation; in short, appropriateness (A. Maley and A. Duff 1978:7).*

When a teacher writes a play to be performed, he must adapt it according to the linguistic level of his students, in other words, the teacher should write the text related with the knowledge that each student has about vocabulary and grammar in order to get that they show interest about the reading.

Other times, students create their own plays based on their favourite themes and they also imagine characters which have something in common with them. However, to create a play is a difficult thing to students because they sometimes do not have enough vocabulary to write what they think in a clear way, so the teacher must help them changing some words and expressions by others that are more suitable to their linguistic level. In this way, students develop their creativity and at the same time they acquire new vocabulary increasing their knowledge.

## **2. Practical approach**

### **2.1 Drama versus theatre in education**

It is interesting to explain the difference between drama and theatre in education because many people have doubts about these two terms even nowadays. R. Burgess and P. Gaudry though that it started in the 70s when people considered drama as a process and theatre as a final product.

Some people think that drama is an educational process that consists in activities and whose aim is to develop the student's creativity. They learn to communicate with the rest of students in a better way and it also develops their personality.

In the case of theatre they think that it is a product in where the teacher has an important role because he has to create a play and students perform it before the public.

The Collins English Dictionary defines drama as “a work to be performed by actors on stage, radio, or television” and theatre as “a building designed for the performance of plays, operas, etc”.

The Longman Dictionary defines drama as “ a play for the theatre, television, radio etc, usually a serious one, or plays in general”. Theatre means “ a building or place with a stage where plays and shows are performed”.

Looking at these two definitions of each term, drama is considered as a play to be performed and theatre is simply a place.

From an educational point of view, these two concepts need to share a function in the learning of students because they contribute to the development of many competences.

*In school, drama usually refers to informal , improvised enactment in which the goal is not presentation, but the experience and satisfaction of the participants. Theatre indicates the more formal study of the techniques of acting and stagecraft, often culminating in a performance in front of an audience. (O’Neill, 2006: 31-32).*

Susan Holden (1981), in her book about drama in the language learning, distinguishes between these two terms: drama refers to activities related to the term let’s pretend, that is, communicative situations in where a student works with different words, actions and ideas. By contrast, theatre is more related with the performance and the presence of a public.

Moreover, Holden (1981:9) also quotes two important authors in her book and each of them has a different opinion about the two concepts.

On the one hand, John Seely says that “there is nothing more destructive of useful work than the knowledge that, willy-nilly, a performance of some kind has got to be given on a certain date”. In other words he says that the performance of the play does not contribute to the benefit of the student because he is nervous performing it before people.

On the other hand, Richard Via affirms that “the performance of a play in English is a success. We all need successes, for this encourage us to strive for further success. Even though their production of a play may be less than perfect, the students will feel it is successful, for they have done it”.

Therefore he thinks that the performance is a triumph to the student because he can see the result of his work in the class.

It is important to tell what R. Burgess and P. Gaudry think about drama and theatre:

*the relationship between drama in education and theatre has been somewhat mysterious and confusing, many teachers have felt very apprehensive about using language that implied that a relationship clearly existed. (1985,127).*

They think that drama and theatre can cooperate between them and they contribute to the mutual enrichment, so they do not share the opinions that the rest of authors have about drama and theatre related to education.

In drama, students can be as actors as spectators and they can change the roles during the activity. The teacher can stop the activity to give some comments and advices to them.

However, in theatre each student has his role and they can not interpret other different role, so actors interpret their correspondent character and spectators have a passive role because they observe them. In this case the teacher can not interrupt the performance because he is part of the public.

## **2.2 Dramatic activities before the theatrical performance**

Drama can be seen as a tool to the teaching of English as a foreign language and teachers use it more frequently in language classrooms. Dramatic activities tend to remain “exercise-based, short-term and teacher-oriented”. ( O’Neill 1998,3).

Activities related to drama have several purposes:

- Dramatic activities use the language in real or invented situations and students can explore the language in the classroom creating different situations.
- These activities try to reinforce and increase the English vocabulary and grammar that students are learning through dialogues and games related to a variety of topics, like environment and animals.
- They develop their communicative competence because the student is forced to interact with others and he is more focussed in using the language appropriately than in the form and structure.
- They make the English learning more enjoyable and students show more interest about many aspects related to this language.

Maley and Duff point out that dramatic activities are not the performance of plays before passive audiences; the value of these activities lies "not in what they lead up to but in what they are, in what they bring out right now" (1984: 6).

Dramatic activities in the teaching of English as a foreign language:

1. Role-play is a very resource popular in the class because students think that it is one of the funniest activities, so they have a great time when they practise it. The Collins English Dictionary defines role-play as "the act of imitating the character and behaviour of someone who is different from yourself, for example, as a training exercise, or in language learning". In this kind of activity students choose a role being an imaginary character, but in other cases they represent a real person. It implies a spontaneous interaction of participants in order to complete the particular task and at the same time they can check their vocabulary and knowledges about different topics. The teacher sometimes can give some feedbacks and ideas to students, but he normally is out of the conversation between them. For example, the teacher can give to students a page which contains information about drinks, popular foods and their correspondent prices, then they assume different roles in pairs, that is, one student can be a waiter and the other is a customer who asks for the menu, so they establish a conversation about a real situation.

*Encourage students to work through dramatic situations, in fictitious roles, enables them to view their own behaviour, and other people's, from unfamiliar perspectives. The emotional experiences is real for the student even though the activity is fictional (think, for example, of the real sadness that may move us when we read a sad story). As a consequence, the students can be helped to reflect on their behaviour in the drama from "another" person's point of view. The right choice and management of situations, context and stories relating to the environment, for instance, can provide young people with authentic experiences of what it would be like to be a threatened environment which may be far remove in time and place from their own immediate and protected environment (Neelands, 2010:38).*

2. Simulation: according to Ken Jones it is the "reality of function in a simulated and structured environment" (1982: 113). This activity has many things in common with the other one because in here students are themselves or another person in a simulated context and it should be credible to spectators. In simulation students are implied in a deep learning in order to increase the

understanding of a text in comparison to the surface learning in which students must memorize what they read. An example would be a simulated journey in where students imagine that they travel to a poor country that does not have modern technologies and other basic resources. With this activity students can compare the lifestyle of these people to their own lifestyles, so they check the differences between these two countries and they learn other aspects about the culture.

There are some advantages and disadvantages of these two activities:

Advantages:

- They create real conversations between participants. Students can interact between them developing their communicative competence and they employ the language that they use in life in each situation.
- They are suitable for consolidation. They are practical activities and serve to consolidate some aspects of language.
- Create a sense of awareness about some particular topics which are important and students can also express their emotions because they bring the language and situations of the life into the class.
- A break for routine. Activities like those offer the possibility to introduce new approaches about some topic and they are more interesting than the traditional activities which appear in books.

Disadvantages

- Activities are difficult to monitor. Sometimes, teachers have problems to monitor the conversations that take place between students and they also think that when children are having a good time they do not learn in an adequate way because they are less concentrated.
- Some activities can be unsuitable for certain levels. Students normally have different levels, so the teacher must try to prepare an activity of an intermediate level in order to facilitate the participation and encourage students to talk.

3. Tableau. Students make frozen images with their bodies in order to represent a scene and in this activity can participate a large number of students. There is no movement, so it is easy to manage. Firstly the teacher talks about some topic and students form a circle, then each student creates a still image in relation to one another until the task is complete. They look at a painting

of a historic scene that shows a selection of some characters and bring it to life by representing the characters with their bodies, for example, Washington Crossing the Delaware.

4. Storytelling. It is a very interesting method in the classroom in which the teacher tells a particular story or he can invite a professional storyteller, but other times students become in storytellers and it provides many advantages because learning to tell stories improve the oral language skills and develops the students' understanding of the plot, so they can tell their favourite story.

5. Talking walls. The teacher speaks about some topic related to the English culture and then, students represent a wall which expresses opinions in connection with this topic employing the vocabulary acquired in the class. Students treat numerous topics adding their personal opinions about them. For example, they can speak about the typical food in England and use the vocabulary related to this topic.

6. Scaffolding. It is a teaching technique used in the language learning and Gibbons defines it as “the temporary assistance by which a teacher helps a learner know how to do something, so that the learner will later be able to complete a similar task alone”. (Gibbons 2002:10). Some students need more help than other because it depends on their levels.

### **2.3.Selecting materials**

2.3.1 Modern English Theatre: according to the general rules that Torres Núñez proposes in his book about theatre as an educational technique, this kind of theatre shows some difficulties in order to the performance of plays because of the linguistic levels, the extension (it is related to the number of pages), the number of characters and to the lack of motivation towards students. Some examples of unsuitable plays by relevant authors are presented below:

“An Ideal Husband”, by Oscar Wilde: this is a romantic comedy and the setting is located in London that is a rich city at that time. It treats some political topics what result interesting to the audience, but it presents a great amount of pages. It has a high level of vocabulary to Spanish

students and the clothes needed to its performance are expensive, so only a few number of students can buy them.

“Selected One Act Plays”, by Bernard Shaw: the advantage of this collection of one act plays is that they contain very few pages, so students could represent it, but the problem is that there are characters who speak a lot of time, such as the narrator, and in other plays there are few characters.

However, there are some modern plays that can be adapted to students, but it requires a great effort by the teacher and creative ideas that result interesting to students, like the play that Torres Nuñez says in his book, that is, “Salomé” by Oscar Wilde. This play includes a great number of characters, the plot is interesting and the clothes are simple and economic, so all students could buy them. It is difficult to introduce a Spanish character who creates a conflict to obtain characters that speak in two languages. In the original play there are some parts written in Old English and teachers must translate them into Modern English in order to facilitate the understanding.

### 2.3.2 Classical English Theatre.

It is composed by adaptations taken from masterpieces written by relevant authors, but these adaptations continue without resolve the needs of the students because the linguistic level is very high and some of them contain a boring plot which does not encourage the students. Here there are some examples of plays with their correspondent problems and other plays that are possible to adapt.

-”The Odyssey of Homer” by K. Cavander. There are some acts which are difficult to carry on stage because some elements belong to a fantastic world created by the author. Therefore, it would imply several changes.

-”The Merchant’s Tale by Ruth Mills: this kind of play is interesting to read but it is complicated to perform it before a public, because the language is difficult and teachers should change some pages to understand it.

-“A Tale of Two Cities”, by Hilary Patrinós: this play is very interesting and there are many characters, but it has 78 pages and continuous changes of scenes between two countries, Londres and Paris.

- It is important to speak about Shakespeare's plays because they are very popular, but they are inappropriate to represent because the language is very difficult to students and even adaptations contain a high level of language, so they would not understand text and they include a great number of pages.

An example of the high level appears in "Romeo and Juliet" when she is speaking to him in one of the most famous scenes of the play, the balcony scene. She says:

*O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?*

*Deny thy father and refuse thy name;*

*Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,*

*And I'll no longer be a Capulet. (Act II, scene II).*

Another important Shakespeare's play is "As You Like It" a comedy about the delights of love and the differences between the life in country and in the city. The language is very difficult as shown in the next quotation in where Duke Senior establish the pastoral mode:

*'This is no flattery. These are counsellors*

*That feelingly persuade me what I am.'*

*Sweet are the uses of adversity*

*Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,*

*Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;*

*And this our life, exempt from public haunt,*

*Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,*

*Sermons in stones, and good in everything. (Act II, scene I).*

-There is a play that can be performed due to its advantages, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight", whose author is David Self, an important author. It has 25 pages and many characters, though there are parts that must be changed. The plot is interesting and the most important topics are "the nature of chivalry" and "the letter of the law" and they can play some instruments in groups to become it more original.

### 2.3.3 Theatre for native speakers in England.

This theatre is directed to students who are in high school in England and it is clear the enormous difference that exists between English students and Spanish ones related to the content and the linguistic level. In some cases in England there are authors who write without taking into

account the problems of the stage because of the expensive set and clothes, so public schools have difficulties to represent them. Moreover, the language is colloquial and some characters speak in dialects what is unsuitable in theatre because students should use dialects when they are in their environment. Some plays of this kind are:

- "The Spinning Machine" by Roger Dataller: the dialogue between the main characters is boring and it does not motivate students, these characters use a colloquial language which results very complicate to students and there is no possibility to introduce a local character in order to create the situation in which characters speak in two languages.

- "The Cinderella Story" by Kenneth Lillington: many children know this story and this is a great advantage, but it is complicated to represent two old sisters. The language is so easy in some adaptations, there are several characters and the plot is interesting, so teachers could make some changes to carry on stage. At the beginning of the story a reporter would speak in Spanish and then, the rest of characters would speak in English to create the conflict between the two languages.

#### 2.3.4 The creation of an original theatre.

All these kinds of theatre are related to the problems of England, but they do not deal with the needs and resources of Spanish students, so teachers should create a new type of theatre that includes the general rules proposed by Torres Núñez and it also should provide a learning which is close to the students' environment to get amazing results. Next, there are two plays created by Torres Núñez and their correspondent analysis.

##### a) "The Spanish Revenge " by Torres Núñez

The play is based in another one called "An Inspector Calls", written by Priestley who is considered an important writer in the 20th century English theatre.

- Plot

The protagonist of this play is a Spanish girl called Pepa who goes to Canada to work as a maid in a wealthy family. One day Mrs. Goddard's daughter, Sheila is celebrating her engagement party with her boyfriend Bruce and Pepa has to prepare all the details needed to it. When they are eating, an inspector called Mr. Smithers is interested in Pepa due to her beauty and asks her some questions about her life, but there are some conflicts between them because they speak different languages. However, Bruce translates everything what they are saying until they can understand to each other. Then, Mr. Goddard calls to say

that the grandmother is dead and they must go there, so they have to interrupt the dinner and everybody goes out, except the mother who decides stay at home because she is very tired. When Pepa is in her room she listens a big noise in the house, so she goes to know what is happen. She discovers that Mrs. Goddard has been murdered and she feels very shocked, but in that moment Mrs. Goddard's son, Arthur enters to the room and thinks that Pepa has killed his mother. Finally, they think that she is the true killer of Mrs. Goddard, so Pepa decides to take revenge on them.

- Analysis of the main characters

Pepa: she is a humble girl who lives in Spain and she is going to marry to her boyfriend, but they do not have enough money to celebrate it, so she decides to go to Canada in order to work as a maid in an English and wealthy family. She does not understand them because she does not speak in English and this is the reason why it is created some conflicts there. Moreover she is an unambitious person because she earns her money in an honest way, therefore she neglects all the things that the inspector offers her.

Bruce: He is Sheila's boyfriend and is the first who arrives to the party engagement. Although he is an American person he speaks Spanish, so he is the one who can understand Pepa and to establish a conversation with her. He seems very friendly and honest when he is talking with the family, but then we realize that he wears an imaginary mask which hides his real personality.

Mr. Smithers, the inspector: the family's friend is also guessed to the party in where he is fascinated by Pepa's beauty and decides to speak with her without taking into account that she is a simple maid. In that conversation he is able to give a lot of money and jewelries to her in order to get Pepa's love, though she is not interested in him.

Arthur: he is Mrs. Goddard's son and is accompanied by his girlfriend, Caroline. During the dinner he does not speak very much, so there is very little information about him, but then this character gain importance when he discovers Pepa in his mother's room and thinks that she has killed her. Bruce does not listen to Pepa and he quickly calls to the police, so he does not help her.

- Topics

### 1.Revenge

“Spanish Revenge” suggests that revenge is an inherent and destructive human quality and it is represented in the main character, that is, Pepa. At the end of the play she feels desires of revenge because she has been unfairly accused by Mrs. Goddard's murder and the robbery of her

jewelries. When Arthur finds her in his mother's room, he immediately accuses her without giving her the chance to explain the events, though she tries to tell what has really happened, there is a confusion caused by the difference of languages. Then, the inspector and policies accuse her too, so she thinks that she will not get back to her country and decides to kill them because of the revenge.

## 2.The confusion of the languages.

From the beginning we can see the confusion that exists between Pepa and the rest of characters because they speak in English and she is a Spanish girl who knows some common words in that language, so they find several problems to communicate between them, though Bruce is the one who speaks Spanish and can understand her. This problem of communication is not important because they can also use gestures to express themselves in a better way, but then, it becomes in the fundamental cause that provokes Pepa's revenge because she does not get to explain herself correctly.

- Elaboration of the text.

In this play of intermediary level the teacher has found less difficulties to elaborate the text because students know better the language than the rest of courses and they also have a better pronunciation. The elaboration of the play is divided in two phases: in the first phase, the teacher comments the play "An Inspector Calls" and they get information to elaborate their own text and characters. In the second phase the teacher recommend some readings whose level is lower than the students' level, so they can understand them without problems. The readings are "Inspector Thackeray Calls" and "Inspector Thackeray investigates" by K. James and L. Mullen, and another play called "Inspector Thackeray Arrives" by K. James, that are easy to read. They start to create the rest of characters and practise the English accent of Bruce when he is speaking Spanish, they also treat the topic of the play and the different cultures. Therefore it is a very interesting process.

In each scene the teacher revises the vocabulary and discovers that students do not know the meaning of some new words, but it is usual and they contribute to the acquisition of new vocabulary. Some difficult words to them are: gorgeous, sweetie, sunshine, breadwinner,

slaughtered. They also learn new expressions when they practise new situations that are created and to represent different moods.

- Instructions to prepare the set

In this play the teacher and students participate in the preparation of the set using very simple materials, such as tables and chairs that are found in the classroom, they also bring other materials that they have in their houses in order to save money. Moreover, they paint many paintings based on a free topic and then the teacher chooses the better ones to be used on the stage. Therefore, students are the main protagonists of the set and they can see the excellent result of their own effort working as a group.

#### b)"Pam Am Flight 964" by Torres Núñez

- Plot

In "Pam Am Flight 964" the crew of a plane composed by the captain, the copilot and flight attendants, plan the hijack of it during a travel from Chicago to Almeria. At the beginning, they invent that a Spanish man, who are in the plane at this moment, has hijacked the plane to demand a great amount of money and a parachute, so when passengers know it they are very nervous and worried about the situation, but they take off in Washington following an order supposedly given by the man and then, the plane restarts its travel, but only with the crew and the man in it. Later on, it is discovered that the captain and the flight attendants are the true responsible for the hijack and they become to divide the money between them, though there are some problems and one of the flight attendants kills the captain.

- Characters:

We can realize that there are many characters in this play, so students have more opportunities to participate in it. The characters that are involved in it are the following: the captain, four flight attendants, a copilot, a Spanish woman and her husband, the control tower, policies and a lot of passengers. Some characters speak more time than others, for example, the captain and a flight attendant, who translates everything what the captain says, are speaking a lot of time during the play. These characters are from different countries, so it facilitates the creation of a conflict between characters who speak in different languages and the need to translate everything.

- Topics.

#### 1. The hijack of a plane

It is a very interesting theme that motivates students to read books related to the topic, to give suggestions which serve to create some characters and to participate in it. In this play, the crew of a plane which goes from Chicago to Almeria thinks about a detailed plan which consists on hijacking the plane in order to get a lot of money.

#### 2. The ambition of money

It is also a relevant topic in the play because the captain decides to hijack the plane to become in a rich man and imagine a very detailed plan to get his purposes with the help of his flight attendants. He gives too much importance to money and to reach his aim he is able to do everything, even to kill a man who was in the plane, so he was totally mad and he did not mind the consequences of his acts. Moreover, the flight attendants are ambitious people too and they want their correspondent quantity of money.

- Elaboration of the text.

The teacher has used a theoretical book called “Developing Strategies” (1980) in which students have revised and learnt expressions and vocabulary that are useful to understand the play. At the beginning, they read a sketch, “Airport”, from L. Spaventa (1980: 48) and started to imagine the main topic of the book: an air hijack. Then, the teacher recommended two books to learn the basic vocabulary related to aviation needed to create the text and students were divided in different groups and they also read other books, such as “Hijack” by Charles Wells (1972) and “Hijack and other short stories” by L. Peterson and S.Wilie (1981). It is very important the information about Washington that the teacher added to the play. Finally, students practised the pronunciation of some new words, the creation of several feelings like to show fear, and to speak using the microphone.

They acquire new vocabulary, for example, “bumpy weather”, “starboard side”, “crew”, “temperature”, “flight”, “river”, south coast”, and new expressions like “we have you on track”.

They improve their pronunciation because of the continuous rehearsals. They did not pronounce the “l” in words like “half” and “would”, or the pronunciation of verbs in past simple.

- Instructions to prepare the set

Students can use their chairs as the seats of the plane and they can also add seat belts to them to create a more real situation. In the door they can put a cardboard which includes the word lavatory, then, they paste several cardboard paintings in the wall to make the windows and they can also bring some reviews to put them in a box, so it imitates in a perfect way the basic elements that can be found in any plane. Finally, they can wear a simple skirt, a white shirt and a red handkerchief to get the flight attendant's uniform, so they can create a very economic performance.

- Personal comment

As we can see these plays are written according to the general rules that the author has created, that is, they are very original and each of them includes one or more characters who speak Spanish, so there is a conflict that cause the translation of languages. Moreover, they are related to the students' environment and students have used very simple materials to create the set. Each student has participated in the play adding some suggestions and creating the characters, so the teacher has got his aim through theatre because he has motivated students to learn the English language and its culture. Therefore, this fascinating experience has a lot of advantages like the improvement of the pronunciation, the acquisition of vocabulary and the reinforcement of students as a group.

## CONCLUSIONS

This project shows that theatre has an enormous didactic potential in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Throughout this innovative method learners become in the protagonists of their learning by using an everyday language and creating real situations. It is tested that traditional activities that teachers usually do in classrooms produce artificial dialogues and students have to memorize long vocabulary lists and linguistic structures to communicate in a right and appropriate way. As a result, students are unmotivated and they do not get to express themselves with fluency because of the lack of vocabulary.

Theatre encourages students and it also provides many advantages to them, such as the improvement of the communicative competence, the acquisition of new vocabulary and new expressions because students read a lot of books to create a play, the improvement of the pronunciation caused by the continuous repetitions of rehearsals, they also get to overcome the shyness because they have to speak before the public, and it also reinforces the relationship between teachers and students. Moreover, the dramatic activities practised during the course and the final performance of a play develop students' imagination and creativity, so this method provides them a full language learning.

However, many teachers do not use this educational tool in their classrooms and one of the reasons could be the lack of knowledge, in other words, they do not have clear ideas about how to realize several dramatic activities in an English class or about what are the adequate materials in order to create a play. Regarding the existing material, we can observe that the most part of the plays have many disadvantages to be performed, for example, the high linguistic level and the great amount of pages, though there are some plays that could be adapted if teachers realize several changes. It is relevant to highlight the creation of a new and original theatre created by teachers and students and it must be written according to general rules.

To conclude, theatre as a didactic resource is a very useful method in comparison with traditional ones considering that it provides many advantages to students who develop themselves both personally and professionally. Therefore, theatre is an ideal means to English teaching because students can learn the language and other aspects related to it, such as the customs and its culture.

## CONCLUSIONES

Este proyecto demuestra que el teatro tiene un enorme potencial didáctico en la enseñanza de idiomas. A través de este método innovador los alumnos se convierten en los protagonistas de su aprendizaje, utilizando un lenguaje cotidiano y creando situaciones que ocurren realmente. Está comprobado que las actividades tradicionales realizadas en clase producen diálogos artificiales y los estudiantes tienen que memorizar unas largas listas de vocabulario y estructuras lingüísticas para comunicarse de una forma correcta y adecuada. Como resultado, los alumnos están desmotivados y no consiguen hablar con fluidez porque les cuesta expresarse debido a la falta de vocabulario.

El teatro motiva a los estudiantes y además aporta muchas ventajas a los alumnos, como la mejora de la competencia comunicativa, la adquisición de nuevo vocabulario y expresiones debido a que los estudiantes se tienen que leer muchos libros para crear una obra, la mejora de la pronunciación causada por las continuas repeticiones de los ensayos, ellos también consiguen superar la timidez porque tienen que hablar delante del público, y además éste refuerza la relación entre profesores y estudiantes. Además, con las actividades dramáticas realizadas durante el curso y la representación final de la obra los alumnos desarrollan su imaginación y su creatividad, así que este método les proporciona un completo aprendizaje del idioma.

Sin embargo, muchos profesores no utilizan esta herramienta educativa en sus clases y una de las razones puede ser la falta de conocimiento, es decir, ellos no tienen ideas claras sobre cómo realizar diversas actividades dramáticas en clase de inglés o sobre qué materiales son los adecuados para crear una representación teatral. En cuanto al estudio del material existente, podemos observar que la gran mayoría de obras presentan varios inconvenientes para ser representadas, por ejemplo, el alto nivel lingüístico y la gran cantidad de páginas que poseen, aunque algunas de esas obras podrían ser adaptadas si los profesores realizan grandes cambios. Es importante hablar sobre la creación de un teatro nuevo y original creado por profesores y alumnos y que esté escrito de acuerdo a las reglas generales.

Para concluir, el teatro como recurso didáctico es un método muy útil en comparación con el método tradicional, considerando que proporciona muchas ventajas a los estudiantes que se desarrollan tanto personal como profesionalmente. Por lo tanto, el teatro es un medio ideal para la enseñanza de inglés porque los estudiantes aprenden el idioma y todos los aspectos relacionados con éste, como las costumbres y la cultura.

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