

# LIVE THEATRE, LOVE ENGLISH

*VIVE EL TEATRO, AMA EL INGLÉS*

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## ABSTRACT

The main goal of this Final Degree Project is to propose a new way to use drama as an educational resource. Although it is focused on foreign language teaching and learning, this proposal can also be applied to other fields and subjects. Drama can become an extraordinary and valuable asset, thus applying its playful and creative dimensions to draw on complex issues closer to children whilst improving their English skills. By introducing a moral dilemma, it is also aimed to involve the students in their learning process.

**Keywords:** theatre, foreign language, skills, moral dilemma.

## RESUMEN

El objetivo de este TFG es abrir la puerta a un nuevo concepto del uso del teatro como recurso educativo. Pese a centrarse en la enseñanza de lengua extranjera, veremos a lo largo del artículo que la propuesta ofrecida puede emplearse en diversos campos. El arte dramático llega a convertirse en una herramienta extraordinaria. Este proyecto sugiere el uso de sus características lúdicas y creativas con el fin de acercar a los niños a temas complejos a la vez que mejoran sus habilidades con el inglés. Introduciendo un dilema moral, se pretende además implicar a los estudiantes en el propio proceso de aprendizaje.

**Palabras clave:** teatro, lengua extranjera, habilidades, dilema moral.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

If it is obvious that, in the long-term, the control of a second language has a positive impact on the personal development of the students to integrate into the labour market, it is also relevant the important repercussion the learning of a foreign language at early ages has on the cognitive level. Several probes seem to confirm that the acquisition of communicative skills in a foreign language in Primary Education provokes an improvement in other fields' competences, such as Maths or Art. Likewise, it has been proven that the study of other languages boosts the auditory memory and listening capacity. Finally, in a deeper scale, it is widely agreed the beneficial side effect that the apprenticeship of foreign languages has over the increase sensitivity about diversity. (Boletín Oficial del Estado, 1 de marzo, 2014).

English is the most international language nowadays. The quick technological development in English countries has made its language become essential for corporate field. English and globalization go hand in hand and English is currently the key to international communication. Whether it is for business or just for tourism, it is vital to catch up with this language.

Unfortunately, we are far behind other European countries where English has been taught since long time ago. This can be experienced when one travels abroad. Speaking English is incredibly useful to communicate with others and crucial when asking for any service. In Spain, despite of lagging behind other countries, we are making a huge effort to solve this drawback. And the best way to fight against this problem is inside the schools. Educational systems are adapting their curriculum to these new circumstances and different subjects are being taught in foreign language. Spanish teachers are required higher levels of English and the tendency is to set up more bilingual schools.

Furthermore, dealing with children, everybody knows how important it is to prevent them from getting bored. New educational strategies come up to make it easier for kids to learn. The learning of English through theatre is a subconscious process. Children do not notice they are acquiring a new language and they are simply focused on being able to express themselves. This leads to conversational fluency whilst using the language naturally. Using drama, the students are not aware of the rules they employ to speak in English, they cannot describe them or explain how to utilize them, they have just internalised them, without even realizing it.

Employing theatre when teaching English means to draw upon the Communicative Language Learning (CLL) method, since learners work in teams and they themselves star their own apprenticeship. The plot totally absorbs the students; they really want to understand what the characters tell and feel what they feel. They can even try to think by the characters. What would they do if they were in that position? Thus, the children feel motivated to enrich their vocabulary and learn new grammatical structures. Through drama it is

also possible to bring the real world into the classroom. Theatre can be used to introduce new concepts or a different culture through stories and customs. Likewise, it is feasible to make what is learnt memorable, due to direct experience and emotions help children learn quickly.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DRAMA IN EDUCATION

### 2.1. Views of Education

In the twentieth century, there were two contrary views of education which were in continual conflict. The traditional view considered education as the simple transmission of knowledge. That was carried out by passing on culture from one generation to the next. The *empty pitcher* image reflects perfectly this view of education. Something external to the child and valued by the teacher is *poured in* to the passive open vessel. The teacher would be the one in charge of pouring, while the students would play the role of the vessels.

The contrary assumption about education derives from the Romantic emphasis on the uniqueness and importance of the individual. According to Rousseau (1762), the child should be *held in reverence* and be allowed to grow naturally, in goodness. The mission of the teacher is to encourage this natural growth protecting the child from interference from the sinful adult world. The main factor is the respect for the child, which is even more important than any external knowledge. There is a very suitable metaphor of Froebel that reflects this idea: “A seed tended by a caring gardener, the teacher, who must patiently wait for the blossom that was always within it” (cited in Bolton, 1984, p. 4).

Those two extreme versions seem unlikely to have been put into practice in a pure form. As Bolton asserts (1984, p. 4), A.S. Neill’s, 1964, Summerhill, is maybe the best example of intent to move away from knowledge-centred to child-centred education. Nowadays, in the twenty first century, our world is blatantly changing. Consequently, our children need to be prepared for this new environment. Educators must help students connect with the world and understand the problems they face. Teachers have become less instructors and more orchestrators of information. The intention is to cultivate the children’s interest by showing them how knowledge applies in the real world. It is crucial to increase student’s curiosity and their eagerness to learn, which will help them become lifelong learners. If teachers provide children with the appropriate tools to keep learning outside the school, the progress will keep raising and it will enable children to be self-sufficient learners.

This concept is linked to the idea of becoming agent in one own apprenticeship and being engaged with issues and dilemmas in a way that values one’s voice and opinion.

## 2.2. What is Theatre in Education?

After the Second World War, the city of Coventry rebuilt itself instead of sinking in the aftermath of the war. This progress can be seen in different realms. The quick expansion of its car manufacturing industry meant an economic improvement, a new cathedral was built alongside the ruins of the old one, and the Belgrade Theatre was opened in 1958. It was the first theatre built in Britain in over twenty years. Alongside these civic renewal, a change in the education system took place. Not only did this transformation affect educational structures but it also affected the way of teaching and learning.

Therefore, Theatre in Education, TIE, began in Britain in the mid-1960s to cover the needs of both theatre and schools. Several pilot projects were carried out at the Belgrade Theatre in 1965. They proved that theatre was a very efficient educational method that achieved engage the audience in the learning process. It was a child-centred and experiential tool which searched to involve young people with their humanity, not just skilling them for a future job.

The influence that pioneers have had and still are having on the Western world is fairly considerable. We can find a lot of English drama specialists who emigrated to Canada and Australia during the post-war years in teacher-training and university posts in those countries. South Africa and Scandinavian countries have drawn upon British sources for guest lecturers over many years. By September 1966 a new company was in place and it intended to help drama become embedded in the curriculum. The company's work did not simply have an effect upon children and young people in Coventry. It turned into a national phenomenon and the Belgrade TIE company was seen as the roots and basis of other companies.

When we talk about TIE we should think about programmes rather than just *plays*, and this is the main characteristic that differs them from other kinds of theatre. In a TIE programme, the audience participates before, during or after the performance itself. A follow-up session, led by the teacher, a discussion after the performance or a subsequent workshop, are some of the possibilities. The aim is to make children be involved in the story and let them be part of the apprenticeship.

Currently, Theatre in Education is widely used in western countries. It is a very useful tool to improve classroom educational experiences. These theatre experiences are focused on educational outcomes. Theatre is used as a medium whereby a dramatic learning process for children is created. When using TIE programmes, there must always be situations of dramatic conflict. The reason they are set up is that we want to help children explore universal problems and relationships. The major intent of TIE is to furnish students with a learning experience that is both challenging and entertaining.

### 2.3. How is TIE beneficial to schools?

The use of drama in education provides multiple benefits for children. The first advantage we could highlight is that TIE is an enjoyable way of learning. People who work with children do know how important it is to avoid them to get bored. If they do not feel motivated, curious, or excited, they usually lose interest easily. That is one of the pros we find in these educational programmes. A TIE programme can approach extremely serious issues with fun and humour, making an otherwise boring topic seem exciting.

On the other hand, teachers can develop different children's skills through this resource, such as social skills, language skills or drama skills. As they can participate actively in the play, they will likely recall the content for many years. Furthermore, TIE programmes let work relevant topics in depth, with a touch of improvisation and adventure, what immediately grips children.

As for language skills, TIE lets kids acquire and practice new vocabulary and grammatical structures. One of the most important facets of using drama in the English classroom is that the students are learning the language while they are practicing it with communicative activities in a real context. Expressing and understanding is the main core of drama. Furthermore, it is far easier for students to understand and appreciate the culture of the target language. Self-esteem, spontaneity, reduction of inhibitions or sensitivity to rejection are worked concurrently. Here there are some of the main benefits of theatre education (2016, Act too players):

- Self-confidence.
- Imagination.
- Empathy and tolerance.
- Cooperation and collaboration.
- Concentration.
- Communication skills.
- Problem solving.
- Fun.
- Trust.
- Memory.
- Social Awareness.
- Aesthetic Appreciation.

In a nutshell, using TIE in school fosters children to engage in the drama. These programmes let students interact with the actors and actresses at times, physically or vocally. Hence, children feel empowered given that their opinions are considered and valued. They can be involved in decision making or taking on roles, therefore, they become parts of the drama. Consequently, they could actively influence what happens or even affect the ending of the play.

Theatre in Education can be a priceless asset to enhance the students' learning because of its lively and interactive nature. Children respond to the high energy of live theatre and they can remember what they have experienced in a TIE show for a very long time after the performance. Moreover, this tool can be advisable to teach about issues that are either taboo or socially tough to deal with, for instance, bullying, fate, death... Humanities subjects are the most commonly used. TIE helps teachers explain concepts that are not easy to learn from a whiteboard.

## **2.4. Dramatic activity**

### ***2.4.1. Creating a learning situation***

It is still commonly believed that the appropriate way of teaching is through a *body knowledge* approach. However, there is another method to transmit knowledge, being involved in knowing rather than just knowing by memory alone. It involves also to take and test decisions instead of accepting what others decide, to use their own expertise and compare it with others, and finally, to behave with responsibility.

This teaching philosophy does not state that the body of knowledge is unimportant, only that it comes best after the trial of one's own thinking. According to this proposal, teachers should avoid giving answers beforehand. Conversely, they should withhold their expertise at first to facilitate the children opportunity for struggling with problems and trying to deduce solutions. The intention is to enable students to reach an answer or face a crisis before they come to the teacher's knowledge.

This teaching technique demands that teachers must rely on what they are, on where they are in their thinking, and on how they communicate their knowledge, rather than rely on their memories or information. It could be seen as a rule-breaking method since it differs from the traditional one based on verbal interchanges which have been part of our schools and colleges for ages. Nevertheless, it is an interesting alternative to teach children different fields or knowledge realms, included foreign languages. Using TIE, teachers have the opportunity to design their own programmes utilizing those themes and vocabulary they want children to enhance.

Drama has become accepted but, unfortunately, many head-teachers still think of it as watered-down theatre. Perhaps because they have only done theatricals in their own time in school or maybe because of ignorance. It seems reasonable and sensible that if there is a way of making the world simpler and more understandable for children, we should make the most of it. While dramatizing, it is possible to compare two events or isolate one. We can deepen our experiences by looking at others' ones, feeling them within the safety of knowing that just at this moment it is not really happening. At the same time, we can feel those emotions as real, though, since drama uses the same rules we find in life. Nevertheless, what does a teacher have to do to fulfil our goal to teach English while using TIE?

“The teachers of English tend to think of their subject from three different but related points of view: as a medium of communication, as a means of creative expression, and as a literature embodying the vision of greatness” Sinfield (2013, p. 145). Teachers of English are worried about the use their pupils make of the language and they all try to some degree to stir ‘the use of imagination’. This asset is truly important when working with children since they often need to be entertained to keep focused on the matter. Letting creativity and imagination come into the class implies enabling students to be involved in the first person, running away from the usual and often boring activities. Combining acting techniques and theatre workshops with the teaching of foreign languages may have a very productive result.

#### **2.4.2. Drama structure**

The essence of the drama structure consists in moving from one dramatic experience into another without losing children's attention. The keystone is to achieve children get gripped on the plot or storyline. We could take an example to fathom it properly. If we had a TIE programme titled *Rural exodus* for pupils in a primary school, the lesson could have the following sequence:

1. The teacher shows a map of the way some group of people must take to go from their villages to big cities.
2. The teacher holds a discussion on why people might choose to undertake that risky trip and go away their families or homes. There could be a brainstorming about all the objects they think those people could need for their journey and what kind of jobs they could find once they arrived in the big cities.
3. In pairs, one partner assumes the role of any one of the people who are going to move to a huge city and tells the other why he is going to do it.





This could be an overview of the specific objectives of this dissertation:

- To demonstrate that children can improve their understanding about the contents through drama.
- To prove that students can enhance their skills in the foreign language through theatre in education.
- To prove that moral dilemmas or crisis touch primary students reinforcing their relationships and developing their ethical principles.
- To show that TIE can help children improve their communicative skills when they need to reach an agreement or persuade their classmates about any idea.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this thesis is clearly artistic. It merges the use of drama with the transmission of contents and the practice of English. The intention is to create an artistic environment in which children can immerse to the extent of being part of it. Students are encouraged to live the life invented through the drama.

It is also an interactive method considering that the students must participate and negotiate every decision. In other words, it is a plan that maximises participation, meaningful engagement and helps create an inclusive learning agreement. This proposal prompts children to take part actively in the play which means they should adopt an attitude towards the plot and characters of the story.

Finally, it must be pointed out that this is a qualitative methodology since we are using data non-quantifiable, exploring social relationships and skills. Why and how are the key questions in qualitative methodologies.

### 4.1. Choosing the topic

It cannot be underestimated the importance of choosing a strong topic. It is necessary to *hook* the children into the work. When the action is stopped to examine the situation between the characters in a moment of high tension, children are encouraged to learn and reflect. We need to supply a strong matter to create the tension we need and keep the kids locked into the drama. Meantime, they will analyse what are often complicated and demanding areas.

Given that we are working with children in Primary Schools, we will use drama as a stimulus for working within the curriculum. The proposal before us addresses an issue related to History and links it with the

comprehension of social features. It focuses around the outbreak of Industrial Revolution and its consequences, especially the impact on the society inasmuch as hundreds of people had to emigrate to big cities looking for a job. Once we have the matter clear, we need to think how we might dramatize the topic. That means, we have to look for the moments of change in a situation, the moments when people make choices. The goal is always to work in an inclusive way which respects and builds on the impressions and imagination of young learners. The play must take kids on a journey into inventiveness exploring themes difficult to delve otherwise. Those topics usually entail social or taboo features.

## 4.2. Procedure

Drama and story are closely interlinked. When working with drama, one can decide to use existing stories. In those cases, theatre can supply wondrous opportunities for learning giving the participants the responsibility for acting out. If the children can make key decisions, the probability of learning is far greater than if the story is read out loud for them. Nonetheless, one of the drawbacks of performing a known story is that the students already know how it ends. It means not only that we do not flesh out the learning, but also that we can lose the dramatic tension of not knowing what will happen next. To compensate this disadvantage, other tension must replace the lost one.

This dissertation suggests a proposal that does not have that problem. There is no final for our story, at least not a predetermined one. The kids will take charge of deciding what should happen next. It is obviously an open-ended end, which lets the students discover the events little by little. There is no risk of boredom since they do not know what they are going to watch or what is going to happen.

While working with this sort of theatre, the practitioners should consider the following items:

- What are you teaching? Why? The aim must be set from the very beginning. The teacher must be aware of what he wants to teach and the reasons.
- Key organising question. The moral dilemma, which takes place in the moment of highest tension -the climax-, can be outlined with one bare question. That question must be clear and should be the core of the play.
- Components:
  - *Play*: The whole performance. From the outset, when the first objects are showed to the students as introduction, until the end of the play, including the following post-activities.

- *Workshop*: The acting of Freeze Frames. The part of the play where some scenes are frozen to let the students examine what is happening.
- *Teacher's pack*: The detailed explanations about the performance. Materials, dialogues, sections, roles, objectives, development... The complete process must be specified in the Teacher's pack. It is a sort of reference manual about the work.

## 5. DEVELOPMENT/ RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Any social topic could be useful to work with TIE. This sort of drama refers to a style of theatre which brings young people face to face with the actors in an interactive theatre piece created around the investigation of a specific idea. TIE usually takes on complex topics such as oppression, drug abuse, discrimination, bullying... but it is also used to bring history or literature closer to the students through the story in role.

The teacher will be in charge of leading this adventure and he will be part of the play as well. This workshop proposes a plot based on Rural Exodus and Industrial Revolution. Using drama, we are going to show the students how people from small towns or countryside had to move to big cities in order to find a job and get some money to survive. Concurrently, we will exhibit a more complex matter: the gender inequality and child labour. It is targeted at eleven or twelve-year-old children, in other words, at the sixth course of primary.

In the middle of the storyline, an event will take place and a moral predicament will arise. Children will have to discuss about it and discover what is happening. Theatre in education is especially effective because it is interactive. TIE produces performances whose audience is involved and participates on some level; hence this encourages an emotional connection to the work, making it more personal and memorable. In whatever form, TIE workshops employ the drama to engage the audience in the central dilemma of the storyline, often leaving them with the task of reaching conclusions by solving a problem or deciding.

When working with this style of drama workshops, the goal is to let children investigate and discover. They must feel themselves part of the process and free to ask questions that help them find out what they are looking for. There are no wrong or right answers. The teacher in role should pretend to be as lost as they are. He must guide and help them in this way but he should feign to be discovering the plot along with the pupils.

## 5.1. Pre-workshop

When the students come into the room, there will be an open old suitcase on the table. One can see some clothes inside, a bar of soap, a comb, a pair of gloves, an eyewear glasses, a family picture, and a map drawn in a folded sheet.

First of all, children will be asked about the suitcase. They will be allowed to check the contents and talk about who they think it belongs to. Who could that person be? Woman or man? Where is she or he going? What for? What about the map?

Many children are fascinated by maps. Maps represent an abstract idea, and they can be very useful for children to understand and interiorize the learnings. They can even become a decisive part of the reflective process.

**Figure 1.** Old suitcase with personal belongings.

*Source:* Beauté Pacifique, 14 de julio, 2017.



## 5.2. Workshop

A pregnant woman dressed in a beige long dress comes into the room. She seems nervous and unsettled. She walks from one side of the room to the other searching for something while she wrings her hands. She seems to be looking for something. Suddenly, she starts speaking aloud to herself.

*“Where is that map? I should get there on time. I can’t miss my train... Oh! There it is!”*

Freeze! Now the teacher in role can ask the pupils about the brief scene they have just seen. As they have more information now, they can hit on different ideas about who the woman is, where she is going or why she is nervous. Action! The lady rummages in the suitcase, takes the folded paper with the map and puts it into her pocket. She closes the suitcase, holds it, and leaves the room. There is another space in the same

room, separated by a folding screen, with a wide desk. There are different objects on it: a table lamp, an open book with some figures written on it, a quill, an inkwell... Soon thereafter, a jacket-clad man appears in the scene. He addresses the students and talks to them.

Welcome everybody to my textile factory. This is one of the most productive and profitable factories in Barcelona. As you will see in a while, we have a novel system of looms that let us weave fabric for different clothing very quick and efficiently. We have a big number of employees and all our workers are evenly treated. You can walk around the factory and have a look at our outstanding machines. I really appreciate your attendance, because I know you are very busy investors, but I can assure you that this is a worthwhile industry. I hope we can start doing business as soon as possible.

The children, who are supposed to be investors, will see the surroundings and roam around the factory. They will be able to ask the workers whatever they like, such as how much they earn, how old they are, if they are happy or not working there... They will realize that there are children working in the factory, that women earn less money than men for doing the same job, that they all work long hours... and so on and so forth. The goal is to let children find out all the information we want them to know. But they must do it themselves; they must investigate to discover as much as they can about the characters and the factory.

Setting: The plot is set in Spain, during the Industrial Revolution, which took place here later than in others European countries. As a result of the breakthroughs related to the industry, a new working class appears. Those people live around the factories in deplorable conditions. The business owners, blinded by ambition and greed, intended to have the machines working day and night as long as the industry was fruitful. They hired men, women, and children whose work days lasted from twelve to sixteen hours, day and night. When there was a slump in the sales or economic difficulties, the entrepreneurs did not hesitate to get rid of their employees. They fired a lot of workers, since there was always a long queue of people waiting for being hired at the factory doors. Whenever the owners of the factories decided to put the machines into operation, there were always plenty of people ready to work. If the employers wanted to increase their production, they made their employees work harder, or they hired temporary personnel for some weeks or months in return for a miserable payment. The work day was extremely long, which exhausted the workers. All these facts are taught to children transversely. Likewise, they will learn specific expressions and vocabulary related to the topic. Some examples could be the next ones:

- Salary.
- Endless shifts.
- To do extra hours.

- Child labour.
- Gender inequality.
- Worker exploitation.
- Industrial Revolution.
- Rural exodus.
- Loom.
- To make ends meet.
- Prices decline.
- To hire/ Dismiss/ Fire.
- To be penniless.
- To starve to death/ Die of hunger.
- To weave.

It is worth noting that they are listening to a play in English, thereby, they are also practicing their listening and getting used to the pronunciation unconsciously. In tandem with the use of English they ask questions to the characters or discuss in the foreign language about the plot. This technique is truly helpful. Children will be encouraged to deploy the expressions and new words they have learnt in following activities to consolidate the knowledge.

Once the students have talked to the actors and seize upon the opportunity of obtaining information, the facilitator will freeze the scene anew. All the characters will remain still while the teacher-in-role negotiates with the kids what they have discovered. He will try to make them share that information and muse over it. Given that we are working with no script, since the actors must improvise the answers, the workshop can be led to different spots, depending on the children. That does not mean that the performers do not prepare their characters. On the contrary, they must ready their roles and know all the characteristics of their characters, such as age, origin, lodging, family, salary, or illnesses, among others. Nevertheless, the children will influence the story development or rate. It is an open system that lets the kids interact with the characters and modify the story somehow, because even if the workshop is done ten times with different groups, it will never be the same.

Action! The performers act out afresh. They keep working in the factory, doing different labours. There are workers carrying coal with wheelbarrows from the coal cellar to the chimneys, others preparing the wool to

spin it, some using the looms... everybody is busy and focus on their jobs. Among the employees, there are children and women. One of those women is the one who was seen in the first scene with the suitcase. She seems to be at a loss to handle the loom. The woman next to her tries to help her explaining again how to use the machine. They have been working long hours and everyone looks outright exhausted. The overseer walks steadily along the plant, examining the proper functioning of the looms and ensuring everybody is working. He does not look friendly whatsoever.

Suddenly, an overpowering noise is heard followed by somebody's shriek. It appears to come from the pregnant woman. She grasps her right hand while wincing. Everybody crowded around her to know what is happening. The overseer jostles the workers to know why the machine is not working. When he sees the injured woman, he stares harshly at her and seize her sane arm to shove her forwards.

*"What happened?"*

The pregnant woman claims immediately and with conviction:

*"The loom got stuck and grabbed my hand, sir..."*

The woman who was trying to help her use the loom looks at her in bewilderment. The overseer stares her and asks:

*"Is that true? Did the machine fail?"*

She has no time to answer. The owner of the factory comes in the working room and goes to the place where the accident has occurred.

*"Why is the loom stopped?"*

*"Sir, this woman assures that the loom failed wounding her."*

*"All right, you two, go to my office and wait for me there. We will discuss about this in a while."*

*"Everybody back to work! Now!!"- shouts the overseer at the employees with curtness.*

The two women go to the boss office and sit down in front of his desk. They start talking in a whisper. There is nobody else with them yet.

*"I told you not to grasp the fabric as you did! It was your fault! The machine didn't get stuck. I saw it..."*

*"Please... do not say anything... I need the job. My husband and I came from our small village to work in the city but he is very ill now. We live so many families huddle together in the same*

*apartment that he was infected. You see, I'm pregnant. We need my salary... Women just earn a small wage in comparison with men but we do need those coins... It's our only livelihood!"- exclaimed the woman.*

*"Schhh... they could hear you... But I could lose my job if they found out I am lying... If they realize the loom doesn't fail, we both will be laid off!"*

*"Please, I beseech you!"- The woman begged, shuddering in desperate."*

The lady looms down at the pregnant woman's belly thoughtfully.

Freeze! We have reached the point where the moral dilemma takes place. The woman is afraid of losing her job, but she wants to help her, actually. The children are asked about what they think is the real situation of the daily life in the factory. How do they reckon the workers are treated? What do they think the factory owner will do with the pregnant woman? Do they deem fair that women and children earn less money than men for the same job? What do they think about the long hours they all work? How would they feel if they had to leave their hometown to look for a job far away and in such harsh conditions? And the most important question, what do they think the woman must do? Should she help the pregnant girl? Should she take the risk of losing her job for helping someone who has just met or should she blurt everything out and keep with her life?

Different opinions and ideas will sprout in our kids' heads and they will start drawing their inferences about the life during the Industrial Revolution and its consequences. Concurrently, they will have to think in English to share their standpoints and what they feel. It will lead them to seek for the suitable vocabulary and use the new words they have just learnt.

When the children go back to their classroom, three characters will be seated waiting for them. Two of them are the pregnant woman and the lady who witnessed the accident, and the other one is a child who was working on the factory too.

### **5.3. Hot seating**

#### **5.3.1. What is hot seating?**

It is a method utilized to develop a role in the drama lesson or analyse a play post-performance. It lies in asking questions to some of the characters of the play. These characters are sitting on a chair in front of the group of students, who are arranged in a semi-circle. The characters are questioned individually, in pairs or small groups about their background, behaviour, feelings or motivations. The group asks them freely



but it is advisable that the facilitator or teacher-in-role guides the questioning in constructive directions. In this asset, it is more relevant to concentrate on personal observations than facts.

**Figure 2.** Old suitcase with personal belongings.

Source: Wise Guys, n. d.



### **5.3.2. Factory Hot Seating**

The children will take a sit around the characters and ask them questions. The objective is to get information about what they feel and their personal background. As the story already grips them, it is probable that the questions come up naturally, but the facilitator will pay attention to the questioning at any rate.

Hot seating is an amazing technique to develop knowledge of a character's attitude, motives and behaviour, and makes the students more aware of the complex nature of human reactions. As we are working in a foreign language, the teacher will give the students some time to think about the questions they want to ask. They will gather and prepare a list with the main information they want to obtain, and from then on, they will be able to ask as many other questions as they can. The characters will answer honestly in order to share their fears, emotions and background to the kids. That will let them make a choice properly.

### **5.4. Drama and language development**

"Learning is so deeply ingrained in man that it is almost involuntary" (cited in Fleming, 2003, p.38).

It is inarguable the role of drama in language development. Many authors have acknowledged its relevance, since drama provides an array of diverse context for language use. Hence, if we ask children to take the roles of knights, Vikings, kings or villains, the language demands will change accordingly. Depending on the context, the vocabulary and the expressions differ.

It is understandable that pupils should extend the linguistic registers at their disposal, even if we are working with a foreign language. Nowadays, the goal in Spain is to help children become bilinguals. And that involves being able to adapt themselves to different contexts and their requirements. One effective way to teach spoken English is using drama. Drama provides situations that widen students' use of language and, because of its fictional nature, protect them from feelings of linguistic incompetence.

Only working in creative contexts embedded with feelings, emotions and motivation, one can appreciate how efficient these learning experiences are. Most of the language used in education is altogether different from the natural and spontaneous language used by children in real-life situations. Sometimes it is really complicated for them to move to a remote context which reflects thoughts or human reactions difficult to understand. Drama brings kids closer to unfamiliar but real situations. Furthermore, if the play is well planned and developed, elements such as speaking or listening can be encompassed and enhanced.

## **5.5. Post-workshop**

Once the workshop has finished, the pupils will develop several activities to consolidate what they have just learnt. The performance should have awakened their imagination and supplied numerous details for discussion and ideas when they are asked for dramatizations.

Drama activities can be very varied. They can range from the simplest one to the most sophisticated and complex. We should always bear in mind the students' English level. Choosing an excessive demanding task, we could make them feel frustrated and the result could fall short our expectations. It could be an absolute disaster, indeed. On the contrary, if the proposal is extremely bare and easy, children will lose their interest and get distracted or even bored. Thus, it is essential to find the balance and select the convenient exercises depending on the language level. Sometimes, the simplest activities can serve as warm-ups to the more challenging ones.

Classroom management is one of the main concerns when working with drama. An efficient way to approach drama activities consists in identifying some of their basic components, keeping in mind the question, what will this activity require my students to be able to do? The following two columns show drama components listed depending on their difficulty. The components in the left-hand column are commonly considered easier than those in the right-hand one. (Beall, 1992, p. 3).

### **5.5.1. Debate**

After the play, the pupils will answer the question "who of you think the lady should help the pregnant woman?" They will raise their hands to let the teacher know who is in favour or not. They will be divided

into two groups, then. Those of them who think the lady should help her and those who think she should not. Each group will work together. They will write down reasons to support their decision or the important points to be reported, and they will discuss about it with the other group afterwards.

In a debate, children argue opposing points of view. The teacher will act as moderator trying to give them the floor in turns. Now and then, he will interject to boost the children somehow. Comments such as “Oh, interesting idea”, “Fair enough” or “That sounds reasonable” can be added by him.

The objective is to make children mull over the choice they would make if they were in that position and try to think about the consequences of such decision. They will explain their motives to the other team and share their standpoints.

### ***5.5.2. Working in pairs***

The students will work in pairs trying to re-enact any of the scenes they saw during the performance. The scene will be chosen by the teacher and all the pupils will play the same one. For instance, it could be the part in which the two women are talking while they are waiting for the boss. One partner assumes the role of the pregnant lady and asks the other for help. They will have about ten minutes to prepare and practice it, and then, the teacher will ask some of the couples to take the stage and perform it in front of the class.

This activity, easier than the next one, will help them warm up and get them ready for a more challenging dramatization.

### ***5.5.3. Dramatizing a scene***

Upon the previous exercise, the class will be split into small groups. Every four kids will form a different group. Firstly, the teacher will provide the students with a list containing the main words or expressions they learnt. After reading it, they will prepare a subsequent scene of the story involving two or more characters. The dialogues must include at least five of the listed words, therefore, they will deploy the new vocabulary as they enact the scene.

This activity is doubly useful because the players are encouraged to say the dialogue in their own words, but at the same time, they must insert the new expressions and vocabulary they have heard during the play.

#### **5.5.4. Storyteller - Improvisation**

Teacher-in-role starts a class improvisation as if they all were working in a factory and had had to abandon their homes to move to a big city in search of work. The group will be divided into teams of six or seven. Taking turns, every group will be onstage. One of the children will be the master, and everyone else will be employee, but the storyteller. Such storyteller will make up a plot or story so that the others will act it out as he is telling it. It should last about five minutes and when it finishes, the actors will tell how they felt and if they would like to have lived in that period or not.

#### **5.5.5. Writing an article**

The students must investigate about rural exodus surfing the net, searching for books, and using what they have learnt in class. They will have to write an article or overview about it in English. It should long roughly about 200 words. That involves that they will have to draw upon English sources to find the information they need. It is an efficient method to get them used to using the language while working or researching. Concurrently, they will have to peruse the information to summarize it, precluding the facts they consider not interesting and selecting the important data. This work will help them to future jobs in which they will need to be used to using the foreign language and probing. It is a bare activity that means a step forwards.

### **5.6. Results and discussion**

“The drama process is multi-faceted. It works through a variety of media and at a number of levels. As a result, there are a number of ways in which drama can be used in education” (McGregor, Tate and Robinson, 1977, p. 24).

This means that the use of drama in education has a wide range of possibilities. Teachers just need to consider what they want to achieve with their students and to organize the drama work accordingly. It has already been explained in this dissertation how theatre can develop and improve certain skills. Language skills are some of them.

There are obvious advantages to be gained by using drama as an aid to language acquisition” (Watkins, 1981, p. 92). This author explains in his book *Drama and Education* how fruitful and enjoyable was the use of drama to teach French once he wanted to try out some dramatic techniques. He went with other ten or eleven colleagues to a multiracial primary school where none of the students spoke French. All those children were not familiar with him and neither with the other strangers. Watkins greeted them in French and thanked them for their help. The children looked puzzled and uneasy.

“Then, he explained to them he had been told they were French speakers. The answer was unanimous: “No!”, they exclaimed with eyes wide open with amazement. Then, his colleges who spoke no English throughout the visit, moved in to work with small groups of children. They taught each student a sentence using exclusively a vital mimetic communication. Phrases such as “Comment allez-vous?” or “Je bois du café” were learned and then reproduced by the kids. All were also introduced to “Êtes vous Français?” and “Oui” or “Non”.

Thereafter, the children were gathered and asked whether any of them could think of a situation where as non-speakers of a language they might need to pretend as natives of that foreign country. Watkins already knew they had seen some contents related to prisoners recently. Therefore, as he supposed they might, children suggested to be fugitive prisoners. And that is how they set up the scene; a French café with a French girl as the Patron. The desks became tables around which the colleges were sat with the students (*prisoners* now), practising different sentences just in case. In that moment, two helmeted soldiers with guns appeared and said in English that they were looking for escaped prisoners. In order to check if everyone was native, the soldiers dropped on several people. “Êtes-vous Française?”, they asked. “Oui, monsieur.” To go further in their test, they even beckoned a boy, “Venez-ici”. He got up and went closer. “He’s not French” said one soldier to the other, “let’s really test him”. “Quelle heure est-il?” “Deux heures et demi”, he replied. “He must be French. Asseyez-vous”, said with a disdainful wave of his hand. The soldiers left the café and the whole class showed its relief and prowess.

According to Watkins, this theatrical anecdote was very fun and absorbed the class entirely. The kids were surprised at how entertaining the experience had been, since their older siblings had told them about how boring learning a foreign language was. Indeed, a year later some of them would still greet Watkins with the sentence they had learned. He holds that the teacher must establish the language from the relationship, whereas so often it is from the exchanges in language that we create interpersonal relationships.

But he is not the only practitioner who asserts the relevance of drama for language development. “Through drama the child is given the opportunity of using language to cope with and respond to a number of situations. He can become aware of the different linguistic demands placed upon him when put in various social roles” (McGregor, Tate & Robinson, 1977, p. 33). These authors state that acting-out draws an immediate reply from others and it demands that the interlocutor responds quickly as well. As one child told when she was asked what she thought of the activity, “It teaches you to think on your feet”.

According to Byron (1986, p. 126), as human beings we tend to become absorbed in an “as if” world, so that it starts to feel real. It does not mean real in the sense that it is actually happening, but real in the

sense that the problem faced matters to the participant or spectator. And because it matters, the participants are challenged to find the language which met their purposes within the “as if” context. They do not attend primarily to the language itself (they do not exercise their language skills), but to the needs of the situation in which they find themselves. This author considers that language development is probably to be most rich in drama work, when both students and teacher are more focused on the demands of the dramatic situation rather than on the language being used. This is not to say that teachers cannot set specific language targets in drama work, only that having decided those objectives and a suitable drama form, they must try above all to get the children involved and cared about the issue. The best plan for language development through drama will not succeed if the problem does not matter to the kids, because they will not make the effort to meet the challenges it offers.

The proposal exposed in this dissertation has not been put into practice yet, thus it is not possible to talk about proved results. Nevertheless, I also had the opportunity to use drama in the classroom last semester. One of the Modules I chose at university was precisely Drama in Education. We were split into small groups and entrusted the onus to design and develop a workshop that included a moral dilemma. The result was more than successful. I can assure that all children seemed to be captivated from the very beginning. As they are asked about what they think is happening or what they infer is going to happen next, they need to pay heed to the performance; and they feel completely engaged when they are asked about their points of view or ideas. The objective was not to improve any foreign language, though, since it was developed in Britain. But they are speaking and using the language at all times when using drama. Then, why not make the most of it and use it to enhance their English skills?

## 6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation was to prove how Theatre in Education can be used in the classroom to help children improve the foreign language while they are learning cross curricular subjects. The analysis of every specific objective is the following:

**To demonstrate that children can improve their understanding about the contents through drama.** If topics are selected painstakingly and a well-organized plan is used, as well as some interactive following tasks, the results can be astonishing. Some issues are complicated to understand for kids, but theatre has proved to enable children to comprehend them.

**To prove that students can enhance their skills in the foreign language through theatre in education.** English can be practiced and progressed through drama. One of the features of children is their never-ending

Tenergy. As a result, teachers try sometimes to look for activities that let children move and interplay, since they seem to be more interested when they can be part of the procedure of apprenticeship. Using drama students are engaged easily and quickly. They can cooperate, they can play, they can learn, and they do all this whilst using English. TIE becomes a mighty tool to practice the foreign language then, not only listening to it but also speaking when developing the post-tasks. They can resort to using the vocabulary they have just learnt or practice what they already knew, but the goal is always practicing the foreign language. This aim will be succeeded when discussing (oral skills) and when doing the task or the article (writing skills).

**To prove that moral dilemmas or crisis touch primary students reinforcing their relationships and developing their ethical principles.** In Primary Education, drama makes children get closer to real problems and hits home with some difficult or controversial matters. As they become aware of the problem, they are able to empathize with others and share their points of view, which leads them to be more sensible and reinforce their relationships.

**To show that TIE can help children improve their communicative skills when they need to reach an agreement or persuade their classmates about any idea.** TIE gives children the chance to debate and discuss different options during the cooperative activities. Obviously, that helps them improve their speaking skills, since they must convince the rest of their own opinion when they are at odds over any decision. Even though they do not achieve to persuade them, they will have to expound their ideas and try to reach an agreement.

Therefore, after finishing all the project, we can hold that TIE is an advantageous asset to teach children certain contents and to enhance their English at the same time. It is especially useful to cope with complex topics, such as social or moral issues, but it can be also deployed with simple subjects in Early Years. As it is very dynamic and visual, it turns out to be a practical alternative to teach even the youngest.

It is true that kids are distracted with ease, but they are enthusiastic too. Using TIE, we can keep them attentive for long time and they do love participating and realizing creative labours. The main concern must be the previous organization about vocabulary, topic selection and following tasks, precisely to forestall any possible havoc. If all those premises are fulfilled, children can be gripped all the while.

However, offhand twists will take place in between as well. Improvisation and spontaneity are also two of the advantages of this proposal. The schedule or program must be scrupulously coordinated, but when children accomplish the activities, there is place for off-the-cuff tasks. The facilitator must guide them, but kids will surprise him or her with answers and ideas that may make him feel awestruck. Those notions will change the course of the session lightly. It appears as though they are making decisions in some way, and

they love that.

In conclusion, those who are loath to employ TIE in class should give it the opportunity since it could take them aback. It does not mean that you are losing control over children's learning, but it means allowing students to take part in the process of understanding and letting them practice English naturally.

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