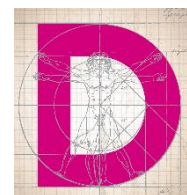


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## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM: A TEXT DRAMATIZATION EXPERIENCE IN GALICIA**

### **LENGUA INGLESA EN EL AULA: UNA EXPERIENCIA DE DRAMATIZACIÓN DE TEXTOS EN GALICIA**

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#### **Abstract**

Learning English as a Foreign Language has become a key objective to be achieved over the last years. In Primary Education schools in Spain, they are many the teachers who direct their efforts to this issue. From Galicia, a dynamic, entertaining and inclusive educative response in the English classroom has been proposed. The experience has been based on a text dramatization.

**Key Words:** Bilingual Education; Dramatization; Wizard of Oz; Case study; Attention to Diversity; Transpodidactics; EAL; TEFL.

#### **Resumen**

El aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera se ha vuelto un objetivo clave desde los últimos años. En las escuelas de Primaria en España, no son pocos los docentes que dirigen sus esfuerzos a este respecto. Desde Galicia, proponemos una respuesta educativa dinámica, divertida e inclusiva basada en una experiencia de dramatización de textos tradicionales en el aula de inglés.

**Key Words:** Educación Bilingüe; Dramatización; El Mago de Oz; Estudio de caso; Atención a la diversidad; Transpodidáctica textual; DLE.

## 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

They are many researchers who defended and have demonstrated the efficiency of text dramatization in the classroom as an educational tool in last decades (Escudero Pando, 2005; Jouini, 2008; Bochaver, 2010; Couto-Cantero y Fernández Maceiras, 2011; Couto-Cantero, 2011; Dervishaj, 2012). Among many other qualities, drama is a highly valued strategy to foster the Communicative Competence in a natural and spontaneous way, interacting with other individuals as it happens in real life contexts. Therefore, it can be considered as an extremely useful technique for teaching and learning foreign languages in Bilingual or Plurilingual Schools.

At schools, as in other contexts, this approach can be developed by using different techniques or strategies: improvisation, simulation, role play, mime and theatre. The latest will be the reference for us all along the following pages.

## 2. RESEARCH

The aim of this study is to make an approach to innovative strategies for teaching and learning English in Primary Education. To this respect, our main proposal is to describe, analyse, understand and reflect about a teacher's practice in Galicia, focused on the implementation of drama in the classroom considering literary texts as a starting point.

As secondary objectives, we expect:

- To describe the methodological process carried out along the drama experience in EFL according to a specific context.
- To analyse materials in use during implementation.
- To reflect about teacher's training and its repercussion on the study.
- To examine benefits and limits derived from this strategy.
- To value the consequences of using drama through literary texts as a EFL learning tool for the agents involved: the teacher, the students and their families.

## 3. METHODS

### 3.1. Description of the case study

This study was developed in a second course of Primary Education of a Charter School in Galicia (Spain). This school is characterized for being included in a plurilingual plan where English language, among others, is emphasized. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL onwards), children in this class ranged between six and seven years old should be able to obtain a level of A1 in English Language Learning. As for the teacher, she has got a wide educational formation and has been implementing drama strategies for more than twenty years in this school, so we cannot obviate her relevance for our study.

### **3.2. Data collection**

Data collection was carried out from different techniques and sources as experts in case study research suggest (Stake, 2007; Simons, 2011). First of all, an initial interview was made and applied to the teacher in order to get information about her previous training. Moreover, various observations which were coincident to each of the lessons where the teacher put into practice the drama strategies were developed. These observations were partially based on a 'peer observation form' elaborated by the British Council (2008) including both, descriptive and reflexive notes. Parallel with observations, we worked out on material analysis taking into account all materials which took part in the implementation of the drama strategy (script, storybook, lyrics, etc.). In addition, we created and applied two more different kinds of interview. The first one directed to obtain data related to the process and results of dramatization by the teacher. The other one was aimed to know and understand the point of view of the children about the strategy. In this case we practiced group interviews.

### **3.3. Analysis**

Data analysis were accomplished attending to these phases: reduction and disposition and transformation, following recommendations given by Rodriguez, Gil & García (1996) for qualitative research. In order to reduce the information we handled two strategies, categorization and codification. To dispose and transform the data we created seven axes of categories which will be described below.

### **3.4. Scientificity criteria of qualitative research**

In order to legitimate our investigation in a scientific manner we considered it to be paramount to attend to the proposal made by Guba (1983), who is identified as one of the main exponents of qualitative research. This author enumerates four premises to ensure scientificity: credibility, transferability, dependence and confirmability. In this sense, we applied a series of techniques aimed to satisfy these premises provided by Bartolomé (1992 quoted in Dorio, 2004) among them we may possibly highlight for example: data triangulation, persistent observation, exhaustive description, give information back to participants or delimitation of the physical, social and interpersonal context.

## **4. ELEMENTS OF ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH. THE CASE STUDY**

### **4.1. Teacher's personal data, training and previous experience in dramatization of texts**

The teacher became a graduated in English Language and Literature in 1986 by the Metropolitan University of Caracas, Venezuela. In addition to this, she is a specialist in Early Childhood Education teaching and is also qualified to teach in Primary Education. Her training embraced theoretical and practical contents. It is remarkable the fact that this

practical part consisted in visiting different school institutions where she was allowed to learn several methods and techniques, some of them more traditional and others more innovative. The last ones made her realize that “*students learn by doing*” and this is an aspect keenly appreciated by her.

Despite the fact teaching was not her first option as a mean of living; she felt passionate about it from the very beginning; even when she noticed that the learning process could be much harder than expected. From a social point of view, she firmly believes that the perception of the role of teachers is somewhat negative, taking into account the large amount of responsibility that this job implicitly takes on. Moreover, it is even much more difficult for those English teachers who have to teach children a completely unconnected language to them. Nonetheless, these factors do not have anything to do with her daily labour and she is absolutely convinced of being an educational agent. As for strengths and weaknesses, the teacher enjoys it when the students make enormous progresses in a short period of time; otherwise, paperwork is what she dislikes most. When asking this teacher about the influence of the numerous changes and updates to the educational legal framework over time, she explained that it has not been relevant in her job since her school has always been cutting-edge in her area, for instance in the case of Multilingual Projects. Nevertheless, she argues for more English sessions a week, finding them insufficient.

According to methodological aspects, she advocates for the Total Physical Response method, which fits in a Comparative Approach. Her colleagues’ experiences were also a pillar. The teacher suggested that it is a mix of experience and innovation that makes the difference. Discipline is considered fundamental by her. In the classroom, she was able to balance it with affection, with positive reinforcement present in each interaction with the students. During the communicative process, as support for her oral speech, always in the second language, she provided gestures and mimes in order for students to get an accessible input. She pointed out that the Communicative Competence needs to be the principal element, especially during drama implementation.

Concerning drama techniques, she has been performing dramatizations for more than twenty years in her school centre. First, the plays were carried out in lower levels, in Early Childhood Education. However, as time went by, she increasingly began implementing the strategy in every level where she was teaching so that at least once a year students participated. Therefore, students performed short dialogues for special occasions such as at Christmas or at the end of course celebrations.

Continuous training is another key concept for education professionals for her. In this sense, she has attended to numerous different courses, some of them planned by The Junta de Galicia, others by the school itself, as well as book publisher’s training courses. As for special training about text dramatization, she used to go to England to attend courses related to this issue, specially focused in theatre. In Spain, she assisted another course, that time centred on role-play, dialogue, etc. Among several stories adapted and implemented by her, we can mention some examples: *Three little pigs*, *The ugly duckling*, *Little red riding hood*, *The Billy goat’s gruff*, *Sleeping beauty*, *Snow white and the seven dwarfs*, *Pied piper of Hamelin*, *The wizard of Oz* among others.

## 4.2. Didactic aspects in texts dramatization

### 4.2.1. *Student's characteristics*

We were dealing with a 22 student class in the second level of Primary Education. They have been together in the same school since they were three years old. They present a fairly high level of English at this stage, circumstance that allows the teacher an opportunity to make faster progresses in the class. According to CEFRL they are up to level A1 as it is stated at this age. To a large extent, this situation is possible thanks to the nine sessions of English per week they are exposed to the foreign language, considering both, English Language on the one hand, and CLIL subjects as Arts and Science on the other. The increase of the number of sessions fosters students' interest in English learning.

Five of seven interviewed children pointed this subject out as one of their favourites. Regarding students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), we could only find one of them whose curriculum had been adapted albeit in a non-significant way in all areas. This SEN student receives individual reinforcement outside the classroom, one of them taking place during an English session. Her level of L2 is quite poor, managing just basic personal information. Her participation along the sessions has been absolutely in line with the others, with the exception of a slower level and slower progressions.

### 4.2.2. *Objectives, contents and Key Competences*

On this occasion, curricular aspects are not determined previously as an aim of the dramatization process or as a purpose for our study. Nonetheless, everything related to them, are and will be used by the teacher as a transversal factor to learn and practice appropriate contents at this stage. But, independently to that, previous vocabulary and structures are being reinforced during drama and new tenses, functions and words are approached by students simultaneously as a basis for future learning. It is needless to say that students Linguistic Communicative Competence is extremely enhanced. Apart from that, is relevant to mention that several universal values are emphasized as well, such as: working cooperatively, solidarity, helping one another, respect and love for animals, avoiding being selfish, etc.

### 4.2.3. *The Wizard of Oz: selecting and using material*

#### 4.2.3.1. Storybook

The key when selecting the book is to find that one whose illustrations help students understand the story and establish associations between teacher's speech and images. Normally, the teacher uses personal books for storytelling. However, this time students preferred to use *The Wizard of Oz* from the school library, a book that many of them had already read.

#### 4.2.3.2. Film

It's the DVD of the original film recorded in 1939, starring Judie Garland.

#### 4.2.3.3. Script

The most relevant fact regarding the script resides in making students conscious about functionality of what they are learning in class for real contexts; specially taking into account the artificiality that sometimes the teaching process may present at school. The script presents more difficulty than others that she used to perform at this level: structures are more complicated and it is not much repetitive, hence it is harder for students. Its elaboration is based on students' age and knowledge about the language (vocabulary, structures, tenses, etc.); in this case in present tenses and some past tenses. In the script we can find nine principal characters and twelve narrators.

#### 4.2.3.4. Lyrics

They sing a brief adaptation from the song and they sing it immediately at the end of the performance. It is simpler referring to vocabulary and structures. Singing the song during rehearsals is an activity that students really enjoy. They learn it easily and in a few minutes they are able to recite the main lines of the song. Derived from her experience, it results that sometimes the necessity of changing grammatical structures merged, starting the play in a different way or even change the play completely. Of course, the chant must be interesting and appealing for the children.

#### 4.2.3.5. Colouring pages

Colouring pages related to the literary text, for example about characters and scenes, is a fantastic tool to relax students and come back to the general atmosphere in the class since drama makes them a little bit restless. When those pages are finished, they are used as a part of the decoration for the theatre.

#### 4.2.3.6. Costumes, props and setting

Official funding is not provided to the teacher, so all the materials needed are supplied by the school and families. Last ones prepare costumes are made from recycling fabrics and items at home. Despite being the person in charge of the setting, on this occasion it was recycled from a preceding performance of the play. This was when Early Childhood teachers who helped her to prepare the setting. The teacher explains that the main idea is that students prepare the settings to a greater extent, and so was the routine prior to the Cambridge External Examinations. However, nowadays the high level of the school demands more time devoted to prepare the English external exams. Nevertheless, students always contribute to some extent in arranging the setting, with either their drawings or colouring pictures.

#### 4.2.4. *Evaluation*

A continuous evaluation is carried out by the teacher during the implementation of these techniques. It is not an evaluation itself as a unit rather a complement for the progress of the students as a whole, for example to improve in grammar or oral expression due to the extra effort that dramatization implies for the students.

### 4.3. Didactic sequence

Having taken into account all data analysed, we were allowed to create a specific didactic plan, which describes the implementation process for the *Wizard of Oz* in the English classroom. Thereby, a methodological sequence divided into three levels and six phases is established step by a step, as it is described below.

|           | PHASE                        | TASKS/ACTIVITIES  |
|-----------|------------------------------|---|
| LEVEL I   | Preparation<br>(teacher)     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Select the film and the story.</li> <li>- Adapt script and song.</li> <li>- Search for colouring pages.</li> <li>- Introduce the students the literary text to perform.</li> </ul>   |
| LEVEL II  | Introduction                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discuss about previous knowledge related to the story (brainstorming).</li> <li>- Introduce characters.</li> <li>- Introduce script.</li> <li>- Introduce lyrics and song.</li> <li>- Read the story book (storytelling)</li> <li>- Picture colouring.</li> <li>- Read the script and explain new vocabulary.</li> </ul> |
|           | Deepening                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guided reading of the script.</li> <li>- Provisional to definitive cast.</li> <li>- Viewing of the film (un-dubbed version).</li> <li>- Continue picture colouring.</li> <li>- First rehearsals.</li> </ul>  |
|           | Consolidation                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final cast.</li> <li>- Rehearsals.</li> </ul>  |
|           | Improvement                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rehearsals leaving script and lyrics aside.</li> <li>- Costumes preparation</li> <li>- Rehearsal on stage.</li> </ul>  |
| LEVEL III | Representation<br>(students) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Performance of the play in front of the families.</li> </ul>   |

Fig. 1. Didactic sequence in texts dramatization in this case study

#### 4.3.1.1. Level I

- Preparation

In the first level, the teacher designs the different tasks and materials needed to carry out the dramatization. This work is made at home, which involves spending free time outside school. The teacher highlights it is essential to get yourself immersed in the story. So, her job is in first place is to select the text. From that, she elaborates the script and adapts the lyrics. The drawings for students to colour are selected as well. Once the materials are ready, the teacher introduces the students the story. Then, it is the moment

to move forward level two, which is the central element since it implies a wider range of phases.

#### 4.3.1.2. Level II

- Introduction

Here, the teacher tries to request how much do the students know about the story by introducing the text to them and developing a brainstorm and a managed discussion so that she is able to analyse their previous knowledge. In this case, she discovered that students have been finding out about the story a lot by themselves. They chat a long time about main characters and the plot of the story. Next, storytelling takes place. As the book selected by the children was not in English, the teacher did both reading and translation simultaneously. This activity is developed outside the classroom, in a huge space in the school that connects primary classrooms. During the reading, the teacher seats in a bench and the students form a semicircle around her on the floor. Therefore, students start making their colouring pages about the characters or scenes that appear in the story. To put an end to this phase, the teacher handles the script and the lyrics to students.

- Deepening

First of all, the teacher makes a whole class reading of the script where she explains any doubt concerning to vocabulary and they also practice the song as a choir. At this point, motivation is increased at its highest degree. Children are expectant to know which their roles would be in the performance. In order to come to a decision for roles designation, what the teacher does is to try out different pupils in different characters by means of a guided reading of the script in small groups. She listens to them and helps them to correct natural pronunciation errors at this stage. Then, she establishes a provisional cast. The criterion selected is the level of competence of the language although other factors as shyness, for example, are considered. It is relevant to explain that, meanwhile the teacher is dedicated to this task with a reduced number of pupils, the rest of the children spend time continuing colouring pictures. When the characters are assigned definitively, it is normal that some of the students feel upset. However, they rapidly come back to enthusiasm. First rehearsals start with the provisional cast and the aid of the script. Another activity to develop at this phase is watching the movie. They watched the original version in English (1939). They were looking forward to face this activity, having asked the teacher about it daily since the implementation begun. They watched it on the digital board, seating some of them on their desks and others on the floor. They paid attention and the teacher introduced some questions such as “*Who is she/he?*” All the questions were answered correctly and all the students participated in the oral interaction. Watching the film dividing sessions into parts together with other activities takes about four sessions. As long as they are interiorizing the story through the rehearsals, they enjoy the film more and more since they get to connect with the plot. According to the teacher, this phase is the most difficult part during drama implementation. However, the students quickly enrol themselves in the play.



- Consolidation

Progressively, rehearsals are developed with a minor presence of the script as long as students assimilate their roles.

- Improvement

Students leave script and lyrics aid aside completely. Rehearsals take place with the scenery and families start to participate in the preparation of the costumes for the performance. As they really love dressing up, during the previous days they want to do final rehearsals with their costumes on and the teacher allows them to do it. This is the favourite phase for the children.

#### 4.3.1.3. Level III

- Representation

Finally, students do the performance and show their parents all the things they have learnt during the experience. Of course, the teacher and the children receive recognition for their work. The teacher underlines that it is fundamental to feel enthusiasm during the whole process, since it is magic that constitutes the key for things to come by themselves.

In terms of time, the duration of the first level takes around three or four hours. Second level lasts three or four weeks but not dedicating exclusive time to the play during the FL sessions. Third level takes just a few minutes (just considering the performance on the scenary). However, this is the most exciting moment for everyone. It is a moment for feeling and being aware of the effort which implies using this kind of techniques by all the agents that intervene in the process, stressing the teacher and the student's roles.

#### **4.4. Dramatization of texts from students' perspective**

As the teacher always work under a Comparative Approach method, the difference in class from students' perspective is given by the type of activities carried out. In the EFL classroom, pupils describe that they are used to work with their English textbooks. Moreover, they also make vocabulary notes and memorize them for exams and play games in the blackboard and digital board. All interviewed students were coincident in pointing out playing games as the most interesting activities, whereas writing was the less favourite one for them.

Children in this class have been doing drama since they were five years old. All of them enjoy doing text dramatizations. Their preferences in drama spin around being the star of the performance, rehearse the play, singing songs, watching the movie, making drawings and dressing up. On the contrary, they don't like being a main character, because they feel a little bit embarrassed during the play and memorising all the script. According to data, storytelling seemed to be the least impactful activity. Despite of those dislikes, they all established their preference for learning English through drama in contrast to ordinary English classrooms. Therefore, students conclude that they would like to keep on learning English through drama and also other CLIL subjects as Mathematics, Arts or Science.

#### 4.5. School-family relationships during dramatization process

In general, families are not heavily involved in the activities developed in the English classroom because the teacher prefers that students work just during class time. However, through drama parents have the opportunity to participate further in the learning process. Relevance of family participation is especially necessary in Perfection Phase, just before performance and their implication is related to the preparation of costumes. Coordination between teacher and families takes place in spontaneous conversations at school specially when parents pick their children up.

We can imagine multiple ways where mothers and fathers might intervene during the process, for instance making decorations and props for the performance, but the teacher is more interested in getting an impact on the audience. So, she thinks is more rewarding and surprising for families in the way she does.

#### 4.6. Advantages and disadvantages in the dramatization of texts

Every methodological strategy that we introduce to students presents a series of advantages and disadvantages to be considered. Implementing drama is just another one among the *spectrum* of strategies in Foreign Language Teaching.

Regarding to advantages, the teacher in our case study research states that, from her point of view, everything around dramatization is good. She explains that benefits in drama specially go in the line of improving oral expression, arguing that drama helps students to overcome reluctance to speak in a foreign language. Therefore, this strategy is a tool through which children lose their fear of acting in front of an audience and their sense of being ridiculous. However, dramatising texts is not only about oral skills since another advantage of texts dramatization is that students incorporate new structures, vocabulary and language functions. Consequently, the general learning of the target language is increased. Furthermore, these concepts are learnt significantly, so they last in time in children's minds and students are capable to extrapolate them to other contexts and learning situations. Moreover, kids who learn English through this strategy have the ability to learn new contents and fulfil objectives more easily, because they have comprehended the way to make relations between what they have learnt in both ordinary and drama sessions. Additionally, at the same time they are learning daily expressions from different materials *-realia-* as stories and movies that probably they would have not had the chance to learn in the ordinary English classes.

The teacher finds a huge difference comparing dramatization to other non-active methodological strategies, for example those which are based on the traditional textbook. This belief resides on the fact that using drama allows children to interact. The textbook provides singing simple chants or preparing brief dialogues, but can ever produce the same interaction as dramatizing real literary books scenes does.

One more benefit of texts dramatization is the motivation and interest students present when facing this strategy. After a twenty years' experience implementing dramatization, the teacher could never find a student who did not want to participate in one way or another. Even in the case of those shy children it happens, according to her,

that they are given a shorter dialogue for them to feel comfortable, and when the implementation is reaching to an end, they ask for longer dialogues because they feel able to overcome their shyness. Besides, it is absolutely necessary to point out that text dramatization is a very useful strategy to deal with different learning styles and rhythms in the EFL classroom. Therefore, this can be put into action in any class at any school level. In the case of theatre, the teacher has confirmed that those children who present any sort of learning difficulty, not only have they been included in the strategy as one more member of the group, but also this situation has reinforced their own self-esteem.

On the other hand, the teacher numerates as possible disadvantages when doing dramatization of a text for example, the lack of time for a specific child, or that it requires extra homework for the teacher. She explains this could be the reason why this strategy is not accomplished in the class commonly. It also happens during drama activities that it is more difficult to maintain discipline. However, for the teacher these are only little issues comparing to all the benefits that the implementation of this strategy provides.

#### **4.7. Achievements, limits and satisfactions derived from the dramatization of texts**

Apart from all the advantages we have just numerated, implementing dramatization of texts contributes to provide other benefits to the three agents involved: teacher, students and families. Definitively, parents are jubilant because they enjoy with this kind of strategies, children are really excited and the teacher feels that her work has been completely developed and fulfilled. In her opinion, the happiest instant of the process occurs when children are dressed up for the performance, because she considers that her objectives have been achieved. As a curiosity, we have to mention that after the performance, parents surprised her with a gift. To a certain extent, it is the way they are saying thank you for the extra work she is doing with their sons and daughters.

With respect to the limits, as we said before the only one the teacher finds is the lack of time in the schools to carry out this type of strategies, which require an extra dedication. Particularly, the teacher would like to have more time to prepare decorations and to be able to offer help to some children individually. All these satisfactions produce, in the teacher a desire of going on with this experience as long as it is possible for her.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

Every piece of research must consider a time for reflection. During the next paragraphs we are going to analyse the results of this study, as well as its limitations and future lines of research regarding the following four core points.

### **5.1. Teacher training**

Fernández Cruz (2010:4) points out that a significant and positive correlation between teachers' quality and students' academic achievement exists, emphasising that this is the most relevant intra-school aspect when explaining pupils' performance.

Considering this fact, is necessary to look into the teacher's training since it may have positive influence in the results of our study.

Teacher's training is absolutely complete, being she qualified for any school level. Her mentors practiced methodologies where students were the centre of the process and played an active role, an approach that she has continued putting into practice. The Total Physical Response Method allows students to participate actively and frequently. Besides, a complementary formation (which has a great deal related to dramatization) was received, thus her motivation and disposition to implement this strategy in the classroom and the excellent results she gets. Beyond her curricular studies, she opted to continue studying, so she was able to approach and to discover new learning strategies that nowadays she carries out.

We can appreciate this inclination in education where teachers teach as they were taught. Fortunately, this teacher's lectures were quite far away from traditional master classes. Otherwise, what would had happened? Would the teacher become a book adept? Would she ever dramatise texts? From our point of view and according to Fernández Cruz (2010), the role of the teacher in this case study is essential, particularly now when students' exigencies are harder. We can firmly state that by using drama in the classroom, the teacher gets really positive results.

## 5.2. Methodological process

As we exposed previously, implementation of dramatization in the classroom spins around three main levels, each of one consisting of different phases. We have labelled them depending on the tasks and activities that were carried out. We consider relevant to provide a brief resume as showed below:

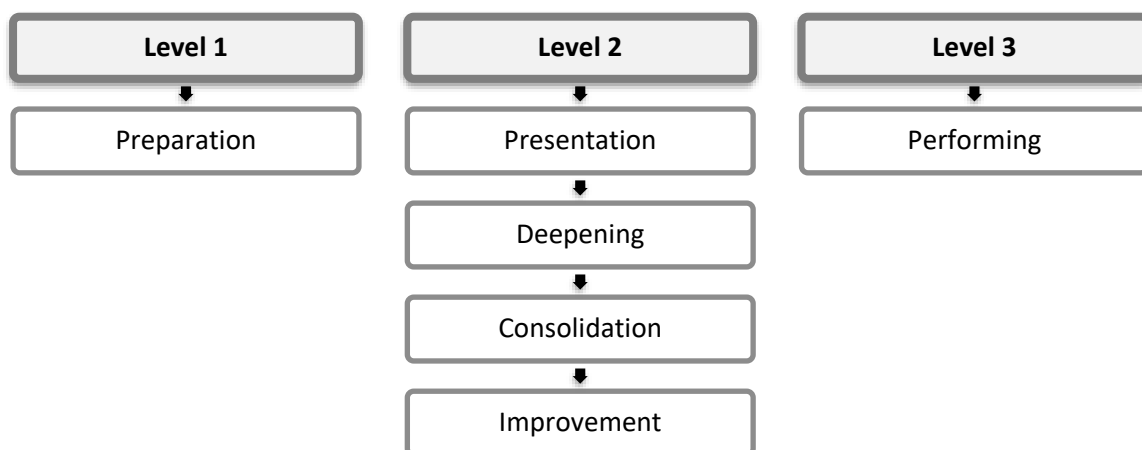


Fig. 2. Methodological sequence in our case study (own elaboration)

Let's compare this structure with the one described by Scott (1987), an exponent in communicative aspects in didactics of foreign languages.

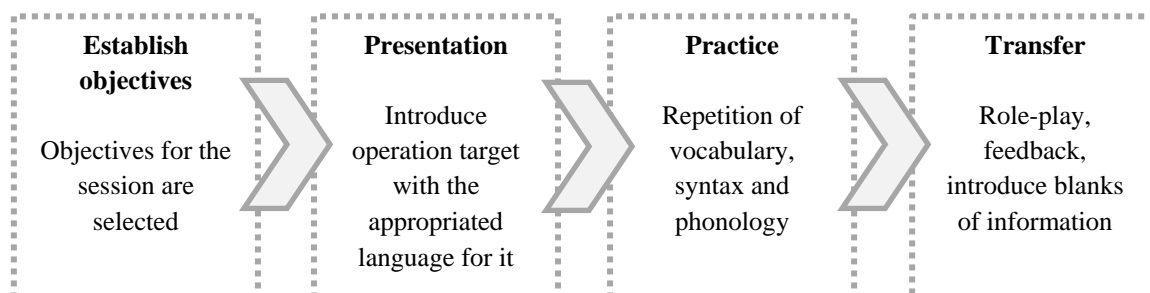


Fig. 3. Methodological sequence in a foreign language class by Scott (1987)

From a Communicate Approach view, this sequence which is based on four phases: to establish objectives, to present objectives to students, to practice and to transfer offers a direct correspondence with the one described by the teacher in our research. Therefore, when comparing foreign language sessions during this drama experience with recommendations delivered by Maley and Duff (2005), we observe similarities:

- Selection of the text.
- Make the text public to participants.
- Try out different participants in different roles.
- Relaxing exercises.
- Rehearsals.

Bearing all this in mind and considering what a didactic sequence is, we may agree that they are mostly coincident with the proposal of our study. Consequently, we might also conclude that the process developed by the teacher during this drama implementation is totally in accordance with those above described by the professionals. Therefore, the methodological process designed for this research is completely valid and effective.

### 5.3. Materials and type of activities

If we focus first on materials, the CEFRL establishes the need to use original texts and others elaborated for a specific purpose. From the use of the storybook, the lyrics and the script, the teacher in this study is completely fulfilling this aim. Besides, through data analysis, we have confirmed that the text adaptation of both the script and the lyrics have been developed following the standards cited in Pérez Cabello (2009), an expert in this topic. Hence, we value positively all materials used during the implementation.

- Simple vocabulary, clarity.
- Grammar: check tenses, structures, and syntax to make the story accessible to students.
- Text organization: revise sentences length, connectors, etc. to make the text understandable.
- Pragmatic elements to enlarge grammar and vocabulary.
- Reduce length: minor number of characters, sentences, scenes.

Regarding activities/tasks and thanks to data collected in interviewed groups we can state that the most attractive activities for children during drama implementation were

watching the DVD and rehearsals. As for colouring pictures, they really enjoy colouring the characters of the story, besides it is a very good strategy to make students calm down after a more restless part of the session. Concerning costumes and props, they are mainly the only manner in which families are called to participate in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, families gain a major implication in dramatization and they feel more involved in the education of their children. It is essential to underline that there was no activity they disliked at all. As for the ordinary English sessions, it is easy to appreciate that their favourite one was playing with the digital board and they did not like doing writing tasks or doing exercises from a textbook on the contrary.

Comparing both teaching and learning approaches, we can confirm without any doubt that drama is the most motivational hands-on technique in this study, being students much more stimulated than when being in their ordinary foreign language sessions.

#### **5.4. Repercussions resulting from using drama techniques**

As it is widely demonstrated, motivation is one of the most important factors in the teaching-learning processes. Henceforth, the commitment of many teachers to include drama in the didactic plan as an extra resource to encourage students to practice a foreign language should strongly be considered, especially when talking about teaching and learning languages, since the school learning context may sometimes suffer from a real significant learning challenge. In this sense, drama allows students to participate in face to face real life situations in a way that other strategies do not, enhancing the possibility to play an active role during the learning process. This is paramount in a Communicative Approach where the use of oral skills is highlighted. Besides, the fact that grammar, vocabulary and language functions patterns are being comprehended simultaneously should also be considered. Furthermore, as a consequence of all the different tasks and activities used all along this methodological process, the four skills of the language (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are fostered. On the other hand, being oral expression stressed, students are less and less afraid to express themselves in a foreign language in front of an audience, so levels of anxiety, embarrassment, shyness and sense of being ridiculous decrease. Thus, dramatization is considered to be one of the most powerful tools for these kind of educational proposals.

Another positive aspect of text dramatization is the high level of participation and cooperation attained among pupils. They help each other to practice and learn the script and lyrics, share and borrow costumes, congratulate each other, reinforcing themselves positively because of their work... From this perspective, the teaching and learning process is being developed around a common project where everyone feels included as in Project Based Learning (PLB). Therefore, it is conceivable to affirm that this strategy is based in Cooperative Learning (CL), being conscious of the advantages resulting from it, especially those ones focused on interpersonal and social skills through communication.

It is important at this point to make a brief mention to the Primary Curriculum in the Foreign Languages area. Taking into account methodological principles stated in the Decree 105/2014, established for Galicia, we easily appreciate a direct contribution of this strategy on numbers 1, 2, 3, 8, and at the same time to key competences 1, 5, 6 and

7. Then, the use of drama in the FL classroom is more than recommendable in educational contexts. Analysing this fact, drama in general and acting in a short school theatre in particular, is a way for students to make relationships between knowledge acquired in ordinary lessons and that acquired during performances, with the plus that along the last one, children incorporate real daily expressions that in other strategies may not have the opportunity to learn and use. Therefore, learners check the functionality of their learning in first person. Equally, the use of dramatization respects different rhythms and learning styles and it favours every student, even SEN pupils.

Beyond what it has been stated, satisfaction of all concerned agents is more than proved. Families feel glad and proud of their small learners, and even miss the experience when sometimes has not been carried out. Besides, they truly appreciate teacher's effort. Children enjoy and feel excited, living the learning process much more than in ordinary lessons: they love wearing costumes, acting, playing their roles... they prefer this strategy among all of the rest. The teacher feels extremely satisfied for students having acquired the established learning outcomes and because of both, students' and her own work day after day, it is not only gratifying but also eventually produces excellent academic results.

Finally, referring to the limits in drama implementation, we could only find two. The first one makes reference to characters. It is not common to find stories with such a big number of them as children are in the class. The solution lies in creating narrators' roles or inventing new characters and adding them to the story, so we cannot consider it as a real limit itself. As it usually happens in education, the second one is the lack of time to dedicate to these kind of strategies in which active methodologies are involved.

## **6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

We expect having explained clearly the methodological principles that sustain our proposal for the foreign language area through the use of fictional texts and its dramatization. We would like to underline that we do not consider this strategy as a unique basis for the teaching and learning process, but one more for teachers to take advantage from in their complex work. Therefore, we have tried to convey that the use of text dramatization as a didactic tool is not only possible, but also effective and strongly recommended. We are dealing with a powerful and efficient strategy which is able to fulfil all of the fundamental aspects in a Communicative Approach for learning languages and the one that is pointed out as one of the best options by experts nowadays.

This case study was carried out with the stringency and systematically which characterize scientific investigation. Despite of this, some factors are out of the researchers' hands on certain occasions so, as we well know, in every research different elements take part. Sometimes may occur, for instance, that the previous design needs to be modified, especially when talking about qualitative research due to these ones possess an emergent peculiarity (Flick, 2004). During our research, we had to decrease the number of interviews that were thought at first to be applied to every child in the implementing of drama in the class individually, as we had previously agreed with the

teacher. Lack of time to participate in the study by the children due to other activities in the school impeded it. As a solution, we decided to direct two group interviews where approximately third of the children were participant.

On one hand, the short and little developed answers to some of the questions we made, despite of the honest and disinterested collaboration of all our participants can be considered a limitation. On the other hand, one of the most important challenges of the study was to find out specific references about text dramatizations centred on theatre for teaching and learning foreign languages. We located many materials, especially on websites, but generally without scientific strictness. We found a large number of publications about literature in EFL, but all of them were implemented in higher levels.

Referring to the future of this study, we assume that any research is carried out in isolation, or is able to be isolated from other studies. We must remember that every investigation is developed to offer answers to one or various questions, that is to say, to solve a problem. It would be strange indeed, that these questions did not bring other questions forward in turn. This is the case of our study. As we advanced in our research, more questions connected to text dramatization for teaching and learning purposes emerged. In this sense, in a near future we consider relevant to design other studies around the following topics:

- Implementing drama and ITC's commonly.
- Gender studies referred to text dramatization in FL.
- Drama for EFL learning for SEN students.
- Create action guidelines for implementing drama.

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