

Drama in extracurricular activities for technical university students studying English as a foreign language

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Abstract. The paper researches the use of drama in foreign language extracurricular activities. Drama fosters learners to use the object language; helps develop communication skills, sociocultural awareness, pronunciation; provides confidence in a foreign language. The paper reflects the authors' personal experience of staging "Romeo and Juliet" which can be used while organizing extracurricular activities.

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Introduction

In recent years, English has become the language of the world's business, international communication, science and online education. High level of English gives the go-ahead for participation in academic exchange programs, Double Degree Programmes, internship; enables international career, promotion, etc. All these new opportunities have led to significant requirements changes to university graduates training in Russia. Modern technical university graduates should not only have high professional competence, creative skills, be interested in lifelong learning, but also know at least one foreign language.

Undoubtedly, language teaching methods give us a wide choice of both traditional and innovative teaching techniques. The choice of the method depends on teaching aims, course duration, students' age and so on.

In our view, teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) often falls short of achieving its goals. Even after years of learning EFL, learners fail to communicate in their professional field; do not gain the necessary confidence of using the language in and outside the class. In most cases, their output in the language is limited to short reading. All this shows that conventional English class is hardly enough for developing foreign language skills and abilities.

Nowadays English is obviously very popular and vital in global communication. Thus the authorities of National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University are placing very important emphasis on its teaching and learning, so that in the long run graduates can benefit from it in order to:

- apply for academic exchange and Double Degree Programmes;
- participate in international conferences;
- work as a part of international team;
- be popular in a competitive labour market.

In our article we want to share our experience of using foreign language drama in extracurricular activities.

Beyond doubt, using drama in teaching English helps motivate foreign language learning, promotes foreign language communication skills, offers the opportunity to use the language under study, results in real communication. In addition, it involves improvisation, atmosphere of enthusiasm, all students' engagement into the action [1]. A foreign literary text provides a good context for listening and expressive language production, forcing the learners to use their language resources enhancing their linguistic abilities [2].

Drama is a powerful teaching tool which encourages students to speak. Drama breaks monotony of a conventional English class and gives learners the chance to communicate, even with limited language. Drama techniques and activities help develop communication skills, master pronunciation, build confidence in a foreign language, raise intercultural awareness [3].

Drama activities improve students' maturity, language learning motivation; develop their emotional range [4]. Drama positively influences learning motivation, oral skills development; encourages foreign literature reading [5, 6, 7, 8].

Drama is a learner-centered approach which greatly contributes to the development of learners' self-esteem and self-confidence; it helps create contexts for different language uses, fosters students' language awareness and brings creativity to learning [9].

The use of drama activities as a foreign language teaching technique helps integrate language skills in a natural way, contextualize the language; fosters self-awareness, develops creativity and imagination [10].

In other words, using drama helps students feel the language and gain the proper confidence to

interact outside the classroom using the target language.

Using drama a teacher should choose relevant material, give clear instructions, roles, monitor the process and help the students if necessary. Choosing a script for drama, a teacher should take into account the language accessibility for the learners, their interests and needs.

Having discussed the subject matter of extracurricular activity we decided to carry out the project of staging "Romeo and Juliet", play by William Shakespeare in advance of St. Valentine's Day.

It was as plain as daylight that our students couldn't stage the whole script of the tragedy. Therefore, we chose the most joyful part of the play (in our view) before and during the ball in the house of Capulet, Act I, scenes 3-5. It is a thrilling part which includes a lot of characters. We found a modern adaptation of this part and started preparation. The roles were given to students who showed enthusiasm and willingness to learn and perform the play. It took time to learn the roles and master the pronunciation and intonation. It was done to make sure that students not only understand the language but also use proper emotions. Moreover, it was necessary to put the play into rehearsal to achieve the unity of speech and acting. The next stage was to think out the costumes and decorations. The majority of costumes and decorations were done by students. In addition, we wanted the audience to be very attentive while watching the tragedy and teachers together with the students created a quiz based on the performed scenes.

To a large extent, we believe that we achieved our aim. Even before the students put up the show they could feel their confidence in speaking English compared to some of their peers.

To sum up, we should note that the main thing in foreign language teaching is to involve all students in activities and drama is a very good tool for that. What is more, it should be underlined that once you intend to dramatize any work with students, the importance of the teacher in the drama performance process can't be underestimated. Teacher takes a great responsibility and coordinates the whole process. In other words, special attention should be paid to:

- modeling true pronunciation, intonation, stress, rhythm;
- understanding of vocabulary, idioms, phraseological units. etc;
- stimulating interest and conversation between students.

Thus it becomes apparent that drama has a

number of advantages as a foreign language teaching technique. It facilitates learners' communicative and intercultural competence; stimulates and challenges learners to take part in speaking and discussions; gives opportunities to experiment with non-verbal communicative aspects of language (body language, gestures, etc.), as well as verbal aspects (rhythm, intonation, etc.); helps master grammar and vocabulary; fosters them to read foreign literature and raises intercultural awareness.

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