

EXPLORATION OF TEACHING EL STUDENTS USING THE ARTS WITH THE FOCUS
ON THEATRE ARTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Education has become a revolutionary field in which constant change and diversification of students in the classroom has sought for much differentiation in lessons and instructions. One of the popular forms for differentiation is that of drama or theatre techniques. Theatre has been used in many forms for fostering education. One of the elements from ESL teacher's experience is using theatre in the English as a Second Language classroom or EL class to aid students in learning English.

The study focused on the influence theatre arts components have on students learning English as a second language. The study focused on my ability, as a teacher, and how I was able to utilize theatre strategies in the classroom. While teaching theatre and an EL class, I conducted an in depth study using theatre with students who are at various levels of English. The study focused on a very specific lesson that relied on theatre as a tool for learning. In the class that I used for this study, there were both students taking a Theatre Arts course and those who were not enrolled in the Arts class, at the time.

I proposed to present a detailed look at the influence of taking a theatre course for the EL students, as well as, using Theatre in the Language Arts classroom. I intended to incorporate observations and evaluations throughout the process to measure the level of English. Data from the evaluations was used for the analyzing of improvement or lack thereof English.

Throughout this process, a number of research questions drove the research. Examples of these questions are the following: what were the most helpful techniques used to help further the education of these EL students? How did theatre in the classroom positively influence the

learning of these students? Depending on the students' level, how influential was using drama/theatre for the students?

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

CELA- Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment

EL- English Language Learner

ELD.K12.EL.LA.1- English Language Development. Grades K-12. English Language Learner.
Language Arts.

ELD.K12.EL.SI.1- English Language Development. Grades K-12. English Language Learner.
Language of Social and Instructional Purpose.

ESL- English as a Second Language

FSA- Florida Standard Assessment

HMH- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

RL.1- Reading Literacy

SLA- Second Language Acquisition

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As educators, there are many challenges that arise throughout our careers. For young teachers, the challenges are greatly increased due to new position, classroom management, assessment decisions, curriculum questions, lesson design, standards to be applied, handling of parents, discipline and reward system, layout and functionality of the classroom, differentiation with learning styles, standardized tests, and evaluations. To me, the most challenging part came when I had to teach a grade level curriculum to English Learners (ELs). I had the responsibility of making sure my students were receiving the “same” curriculum and instructions to align with the regular Language Arts classes while teaching them the basics of English so that they were able to function in their new country.

I had taught many English Learners throughout my schooling and career, but I was not prepared for all of the extra challenges this job brought forth in teaching students who were trying to learn English in a public school setting. My position was unique in that I was teaching a Theatre Arts class, while also teaching a Language Arts class for ELs. The theatre class was composed of an overview of Theatre. The class was broken down into four quarters they were: the beginning of theatre, acting, playwriting and directing, and technical theatre. I had the ability to monitor some of my EL students who were taking both my Theatre class and my Language Arts class. I found that there were many advantages to being able to teach some of these students in two very different areas. I knew that there were many theatre techniques I could use with these specific students, which would help these students succeed in some way while trying to learn English. On the other hand, there were also many challenges that came along; one of

those challenges was that in my theatre class the number of students was upwards of thirty. The higher numbers in the class made it very difficult to add the extra focus to my EL students in the Related Arts class.

There were many questions that ascended when I decided to take on this project of using my background in theatre to help these students learn English to a higher degree: How was I to use theatre techniques to help the student in grasping any of the areas needed for learning a language? Depending on the student's level of English acquisition, how influential would theatre/drama be for this student? How did the integration of theatre positively influence the learning of these students – or might the added stress of reading, writing, speaking, and listening in theatre negatively influence the students' experiences? How might the students' individual cultures impact how I needed to approach the students?

I knew this would be a very trying and difficult school year because of the task that lay ahead, but I was excited that I would be able to have the opportunity to show the students they have the ability to use different techniques to learn English. I wanted the students to learn English, but also to learn life skills that might help them to communicate better, considering the language barriers. I also wanted the students to be able to perform in front of class and the school in plays or scenes. I tried very hard to be sure that their pronunciation, or limited language proficiency, would not be a reason to not participate in class. The other students, which were native English speakers from various grade levels in the theatre class, were a major factor in making that idea clear. The native speaking students contributed to making the EL

students feel comfortable, by always encouraging the EL students, knowing they were conscious of their accents and pronunciation.

I was an EL student myself, which made this project close to my heart. I know the struggles that came with being in a public school setting and not being able to communicate with the teachers or other students. Ironically, I never had theatre in school; I feel I missed out on the benefits I could have had as a child learning English. I did find solace in music class, which is why I have chosen to include a section on the research of using the Arts in education. Music was the only place where I felt a part of the community, because I learned the same way as all of the other students. I found theatre later in life and learned all of the worldly benefits that came with it. I believe in theatre and what it can do for students struggling in school or life. The following chapter is devoted to the research behind the needs of EL students. In order to be effective teachers for these students, there has to be a look at the needs when dealing with this special population. In the following chapters I introduce various studies that have proven the benefits of using the Arts for language acquisition. I also explored the ways I have used Arts in the classroom.

CHAPTER TWO: THEATRE AND TEACHING EL STUDENTS: ISSUES CONCERNS OR TOPICS THAT COME FROM THE NEED.

As an EL teacher, I observed that there were many different needs that had to be addressed in order for these students to become successful. This chapter focuses on the needs of EL students and the barriers we must overcome to make students comfortable in the classroom and still be more effective educators. As an educator, we have to be aware of students' needs to be taken into consideration when the student population consists of EL students. How do we know how to teach the students if we do not know what they need? How do we know which approach to take to serve our EL population? And lastly, how do we differentiate to fit the needs of these students within the theatre arts parameter? The exploration of using theatre took place through a practical application in the classroom. The most notable of strategies that were used were Reader's Theatre and Role Playing, after the anchor text had been read.

According to drama practitioner and researcher Sharon Grady, in *Drama and Diversity*, teachers need to know where they stand on certain issues before they begin teaching the EL population. It is unfortunate to note but bias and stereotypes play a large part in the classroom, and teachers need to know what they are outputting because that in turn may or may not interfere with the students' views. We, teachers, have to let go of any assumptions of what normal is because what is normal to us is not normal to these students who come from different countries and cultural backgrounds. For the sake of the students, we have to be willing to accept that differences do exist and acknowledge those differences. Grady observed that "assumptions about what is 'normal' tend to gloss over these differences and have an enormous impact on

what we enable young people to learn and how mindful we are of their diversity” (Grady 3). In other words, our assumptions will blind us of the differences that come with the EL population and we may treat everything as normal when it may not be the case. These students need to rely on the teacher’s ability to treat them with no assumptions, so that they may get to the root of their educational needs.

In my first year teaching in the public school system I assumed that all of my students (EL students) knew how to count money. I thought that it was normal for these kids to be able to count the currency used in the United States. Something as normal as money should have been easy. However, I had to have a whole lesson on the name, the value, and the look of each coin. Because each student came from a different country, they were unable to keep track of the currency they were now presented with at school. These kids had issues in the lunch line, because they were unable to give the correct money amount, and so to save themselves the embarrassment they would just skip lunch. The lack of food would then lead to less concentration because all they would focus on is how hungry they were during class. Teachers have to stop making assumptions about these students, except for the assumption that every student has the ability to learn and potential to bring something new to the classroom.

Stereotyping and bias is another need that teachers have to fight against. We cannot take everything taught to us as fact and stereotype our students according to those ‘facts’. Grady discussed an interesting lesson where she taught an upper level education class. Grady’s students, who were in the process of completing internship hours by working with an elementary classroom, came up with using Thanksgiving as the theme of the lesson. During the middle of

the lesson, the students were confronted with an actual Native American who happened to be on school grounds that day, and had to backtrack because they felt their depiction of Native Americans in the lesson would insult the Native American (Grady 23). That lesson should have been a lesson to everyone involved in the learning process. If the ‘teachers’ were worried about their depiction of Native Americans, perhaps the best thing to do was to not follow the stereotypical depiction and researched the correct information. In society, we encounter stereotypes and biases. It is a common issue, because we become so comfortable in our stereotypes that we do not realize what we are projecting for our students. The media, movies, books, and society are constantly reminding us what these stereotypes are and how we should treat them; it becomes very dangerous for a teacher in the EL classroom. We have to educate ourselves and recognize our own cultural positioning/biases in order to not fall into the traps of stereotypes and biases about cultures. Our students need to feel that they are not being stereotyped and are free of judgment in the classroom.

Our classrooms are full of diverse students, from cultures to learning styles to personalities. As teachers, we have to accept and adapt to the idea that diversity will come into play when having discussions while watching a movie, short video, or when listening to a song. These simple tasks we take for granted become part of the teachers’ responsibility in the classroom and are diversified based on the students. We also have to take into account that, while diversification is great in the classroom, it can bring up sensitive topics for many students. I remember a presentation that took place at my school. The Critical Thinking Class had compiled many different presentations that had to do with disabilities. I was invited to bring my classes to serve as audiences for these presentations. Many of my EL students were very upset

because it is not something that is discussed in their culture, and so they weren't knowledgeable of options and opportunities that people with disabilities may have in this country. One example of a positive thing for the disabled students is the perseverance and willingness to work harder that is instilled in them. It felt that many of the stories that were shared were of children trying to live a normal life and to not be crutched by their disability. It was a difficult day, and we had to slow down the presentations in order to achieve the end goal that was for that lesson. We also had to explain to the students that it is a good thing to learn about the disabilities in order to help those in need. As educators, we need to be able to make the adjustments based on the student's behavior or reactions.

In her research, Grady made a very powerful observation in regards to race and ethnicity. Grady remarks that these multicultural students have a mindset coming into the country that we have to break down in order to reach the students. The observation was in regards to the white race and how others see it in this country and the privilege that comes from being born white in America. Although I am not white, many of my foreign students thought the same thoughts that followed. I was taken aback, because I was put into this category for being born in America. The students had a certain mindset and did not consider me the same race because of my birthplace. I had to breakdown this barrier because it seemed to create another layer between the students and myself. It took me a long time and a lot of patience, in order to get the barrier to be removed. I had to explain many things to the students about myself, so that they could relate to me. I also had to make sure I gave each student a voice and the ability to express themselves fully. I used a lot of interactive journaling for communication: it is a great way to have an open

line of communication with the individual students. These students felt inferior because their mindset was not that of the 'white race' mindset.

We have to know our students, such as their likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, and abilities. We have to be able to pinpoint the most important necessity and hone that skill that is lacking. We should be able to define what teaching is for ourselves, to implement effective strategies and goals for the students. Grady says, "Teaching is not just about pedagogy and method. To be truly effective, teaching involves a heightened awareness of the context in which one is teaching or working. In the broadest sense, context can refer to a nation, region, city or general neighborhood" (Grady 5). I feel this is especially true with regards to English Language Learners. We have to be very careful and aware of our students' backgrounds and living situations. I had a lesson that I was going to teach close to Mother's day that involved writing thank you cards for the students' mothers, but retracted. The reason I changed my mind was because I realized that many of my students did not live with their mothers, as they were still back in their native country, and the students were staying here with other relatives. The students would comment on how much they missed their parents but had to be strong to succeed in their name. I did not wish to bring them more grief in the classroom, as they were already struggling with the idea of not being with their parents.

The last important need of an EL student is the need to communicate. According to university professor and theatre artist Meryl Goldberg,

In a class where some students speak English, others Spanish, and yet others Cambodian, verbal communication can at times be challenging. Yet those students can find common ground in painting, music, drama, movement, sculpture, photography, and so on. (Goldberg 67-68)

The need to be able to communicate becomes the most basic need for EL students. It is heartbreaking to see a student become frustrated when they are unable to articulate their thoughts properly, due to not having the right words in the target language. Theatre and the Arts becomes a neutral place where the students can “express deep understandings without having to rely on words they are just becoming accustomed to using” (Goldberg 203). Due to acquiring a language by most ELs, they are unable to fully communicate a deep understanding of a subject, therefore assessing the student with standard reading and writing is not valid because the student may be able to use theatre as a form for expressing the knowledge learned.

A great example of a time when an EL student was trying to fight against her need of using her native language was that of Mary, my highest EL student. Mary had a moment of not being able to communicate in English. There had been frustration, because she did not have the right words to truly express her thoughts. We were having a discussion about a character in a play, and she was becoming agitated because the words were not coming to her and she refused to use her native language as a means to articulate her thoughts. She used a pantomime because she really was focused on using the target language. I asked her why she did not just say it in Spanish, a language I can speak, and she responded that she does not want to become used to using her native language because she wants to keep practicing English; I was very proud of her. The reason for incorporating this example is because I made the mistake of using the native language as a crutch, when clearly Mary wanted to only use the target language. I made the assumption that she did not have the means to communicate, but since she was in theatre she used her instrument -- her body. This is a good example that demonstrates how I have fallen for the same trap: not considering the unique needs of the EL students. As educators, we have to

create awareness and sensitivity for our students' needs, so that we may better serve them in the classroom.

CHAPTER THREE: ELEMENTS OF TEACHING THEATRE AND THE ARTS TO EL STUDENTS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following section a review is conducted of the research that exists for using theatre and the arts in the classroom. Some of the questions that are explored are How has theatre been used in the classroom effectively? What were some successes with using the Arts and Theatre? What role does Process Drama play in the classroom with English Language Learners? What other strategies were used in the classroom? There are also some accounts of students and their experiences with using drama for learning English.

Arts in Education

Although the focus is on Theatre and its benefits with second language learners, it should be noted that all areas of the Arts has been used and has had positive and effective results for teaching and learning English. Before exploring the use of theatre or the Arts in the classroom, there must be a look into what has happened in the classroom to have teachers look for differentiation. The focus questions are how language learning is acquired? What are the factors that influence language learning? What are some benefits of using the arts in terms of language skills? What is the success in using Arts in the classroom? How has Drama Pedagogy been used in the classroom?

According to the scholarly study conducted by Lai-wa Dora To and her co-authors, Yuk-lan P. Chan, Yin K. Lam, and Shuk-kuen Y. Tsang, all drama educators in Hong Kong affiliated with the learning of English through Process Drama, “Some research suggests that

Asian learners are reluctant to participate in classroom discourse, unwilling to give response, do not ask questions, and remain passive and over-dependent on the teacher” (To et al. 517) although this research is targeting Asian, as a culture, it is not limited to just them. There are many instances in which students in a Second Language Acquisition environment behave the same way. Other factors that may influence this type of behavior in the classroom are “unsuitable methodology and lack of required language proficiency” (To et al. 518). This is where the role of the teacher becomes vital.

Language learning is very complex and involves two sides of the domain: “the cognitive, the mental side of human behaviour, and the affective, the emotional side” (To et al. 518). The mental side will not function without being able to make the emotional connection to the learning process. The idea of making a personal connection is a crucial theory in terms of learning a new language, or any material for that matter. In terms of teaching, we teachers have to be aware of both sides, as all students will have different styles of learning. Knowing these styles will help in differentiation toward the students’ needs.

“Drama pedagogy has the potential to extend language and literacy education both in mainstream language classroom and in the second language classroom beyond traditional forms of literacy, with its focus on both verbal and non-verbal modes of communication that exist in real life” (Ntelioglou 597). Theatre is unique in that it has the ability to extend to other subjects. This is especially important in terms of learning a second language because the students are not only focused on the target language, but must also focus on the material itself from their mainstream classes. Drama gives them the ability to see the meaning in most of their learning

and make it applicable to their lives. Another thing to note about drama is “that it combines different kinds of concrete signs with the abstract nature of text: students create the meaning of text through their words both written and spoken, kinesthetically through the motion and positioning of their bodies, visually through their stance, artwork and observation of others, emotionally through their feelings often expressed in gesture, music or writing, interpersonally, as they create shared meanings by reacting, and responding to dramatic actions of others” (Ntelioglou 597). The following table shows the benefits that using drama in the classroom adds to mainstream subjects. Drama covers all aspects of standards, speaking, listening, reading, writing, and differentiation.

Table 1 Drama and all Language Aspects Covered

Verbal Mode 0	Drama Performances/ embodied mode 0	Verbal mode (post-performance reflection)	Modes and literacies used in this unit	Unit
Reading a folktale individually	Drama performance/tableaux creation process:	Audience feedback (from peers and the teacher)	Written language: reading and writing _ Oral language: listening and speaking	1
Answering comprehension questions	Discussing answers to comprehension questions in groups		Other modes of representations: visual, audio, gestural, tactic, spatial	
Identifying difficult vocabulary	Then, in groups, deciding what parts of the folktale they are going to focus on in the series of tableaux they will create	Written journal reflection _		
Reading a conflict situation and transforming it into an improvisation (pair work) 0	Drama performances: Improvising the conflict presented (pair work)	Audience feedback (from peers and the teacher)	Written language: reading and writing _ Oral language: listening and speaking	2
Reading aloud a short script in groups	Role-play creation from an existing script (group work)	Written journal reflection _	Other modes of representations: visual, audio, gestural, tactic, spatial	
Reading a multicultural folktale	Drama performances: Story-telling (individual presentation)	Audience feedback (from peers and the teacher)	Written language: reading and writing	3
Culminating Reading newspaper articles, poems, stories about experiences of Canadian immigrants	Script-writing and role-play creation in groups about challenges newcomers experience	Written journal reflection _	Other modes of representations: visual, audio, gestural, tactic, spatial	
	Tableau creation in groups of the triumph and successes of the 'New Canadian'			

The activities used from the chart are all activities that can be very operative in having active participants rather than passive participants in the classroom. The class and I performed a folktale reading in the class. The activity turned into a performance, as I encouraged the students to explore building their voices for their characters. We then used an interactive journal for reflection and feedback. The students discussed the folktale in groups and even translated to those students that did not understand. The folktale was very close to the hearts of many students, as it involved slavery -- a concept many are trying to escape in their countries of origin. In that aspect the students related to the story and, as a result, became more involved. We then went on to talk about folktales that represented each other's cultures. Many of the students became very interested and engaged because they were excited about the idea of sharing something that showed their own roots. It was a very enjoyable experience for all.

Theatre in the Classroom

Theatre has many components that can be applied to learning across the curriculum. The most popular form is that of role-playing. Role-playing gives the student the ability to remove his or her own personal fears and insecurities, and to represent someone completely different. The idea is to foster the self-confidence to utilize the language, even if it is through the thoughts and voice of a character. Many of the skills necessary for portraying a character are the same as those needed to portray one's self, the most important of which are speaking and listening. In order to learn a second language, one must be comfortable with and have the ability to listen and speak.

The other important skill necessary for proper role-playing is that of interpretation. Interpretation is key for being able to properly convey meaning and subtext. Although it sounds very complex, the levels of complexity will greatly depend on the age and level of the students' language acquisition. More probable, the more advanced students will be comfortable with higher level of role-playing, in which they must use higher level thinking skills for deciphering and portrayal. The lower level students would be more comfortable with portraying more simple characters that require only to learn lines and recite, allowing them to focus on correct pronunciation and expressions.

Another great technique used in theatre that can be applied to the English Learners' process is that of Pantomime. Pantomime is fun and inspires the creativity of the learner who is tasked to act the phrase/word that the group must guess. This format has been very popular in much of my personal teaching. The students enjoy the variety of learning in a different manner, plus they must be able to say the phrase/word properly in order to win in the activity of pantomiming, much like charades. The idea of using simple body expression to portray a phrase or feeling has always been a more comfortable thought for many ELs. Meryl Goldberg notes that "Representation is a major focus of early learning. Through dramatic play, children develop language and communication skills" (Goldberg 68). In this instance the use of theatre is being referenced as a form to develop the skills needed for acquiring a language. Theatre uses body language as a major means of communication, and therefore through the use of their body for expression the student will eventually develop the skills for speaking in the target language.

Pantomime avoids having students speak, if they feel they aren't ready, but a teacher is able to note where the student is as far as comprehension is concerned. The depth of the response will tell a teacher how much comprehension is actually grasped by the student. If the student gives a simple response, then the student may still be at the early stages of comprehension. Pantomime is a great way for everyone to succeed, in that the student can still communicate comfortably and the teacher succeeds in engaging the student in the lesson. It can also be used to teach specific points in grammar or just for vocabulary review. Pantomime is a great way to tell a story without having to use actual words. The students can express themselves creatively, but still be clear in their meaning for the others to interpret. Pantomime gives students that ability to use nonverbal communication to communicate.

According to To et al., the difference between a 'normal' class environment and that of a theatre class environment is that in "traditional SLA classrooms rarely account for nonverbal means of communication. The use of Process Drama brings back alternative means of expression that help students understand, remember and share ideas more easily" (To et al. 259). More importantly the students noticed the importance of using this form of language for communicating in the second language acquisition classroom. To and her co-authors described their responses:

Student C: We made many gestures as we spoke, and got a stronger impression of the words...It became easier for us to remember the new vocabulary. I used to find learning English very difficult. In drama lessons, I found it much easier. I didn't have to memorize the vocabulary mechanically. I studied the words 'through thought' [relating the words to gestures] and it was easier for me to remember the words. Dictation tasks also became easier. (To et al. 259)

Student C has used the strategy of pantomiming through Process Drama, pointing out the necessity of having another form to be able to communicate if the words aren't available.

Research into drama, which is used in theatre, and second language learning suggests that drama provides a range of benefits in: the contextualization of language; the motivation, confidence, and enthusiasm that drama promotes; the encouraging and safe atmosphere of the drama classroom; and the shift in power from teachers to students (Stinson 28). This shows the many benefits that theatre gives to the power of learning. Drama is a form of theatre and, therefore, without this form, the students are unable to gain the benefits of it being used in the classroom. The most important benefit of using theatre is the power shift between students and teachers. Drama gives the students the ability to take control and possession of the material and make it meaningful. Drama no longer relies solely on the teacher to teach, but rather on the students to access the material. It is a powerful tool indeed to have the ability to allow control of the lessons from the students, while still maintaining the target language as a goal.

Another successful life skill that develops from incorporating theatre/drama in the classroom is that of collaboration. From personal experience, I have seen the students collectively gather responses and work together to create situations. The result of collaboration is a group that has trust in one another's abilities. It also allows for the more advanced students to work with the less advanced students without the feeling of negative competition or shyness. In interviews conducted by the research in Hong Kong, a student mentioned, "I have a classmate who speaks very softly...we taught her how to speak more loudly, and she finally was able to speak a bit more loudly. I think she is very timid, so I encouraged her to be braver. I felt that I

had become ‘a big sister.’” The students feel more accomplished that they are able to help other students, and feel achievement when the other students do well. Most importantly “collaborative learning can foster a non- threatening learning environment in which learners’ self-esteem and motivation are enhanced while inhibition and anxiety are reduced” (To et al. 525).

In a study conducted by B. Yaman Ntelioglou in Canada a student commented that “I learned that we have to be enthusiastic, respectful, creative, cooperative and very patient because everybody is different and sometimes we do not react in the same way... Working with people from different countries can be hard but I think we did well and we have matched each other” (603). Nothing compares to the power a student’s experience has with drama. The quote is that of an actual second language learner, as is evident based on some of the linguistic mistakes. As the quote indicates, the student was excited about using theatre in the classroom, even though the student was older and came to the classroom with years of previous education in their native country. Drama facilitates the barriers to go down and encourages students to collaborate with those who possess different cultural and linguistic experiences. Furthermore, it encourages students to use their own background and skills in the class. The ability to work with different people in the class is also a benefit to using drama in the classroom. As another student observed in a journal entry, “I like the co-operation and patience of each of us. We gave each other feedback. This group was completely different then the last group” (Ntelioglou 604). The above-mentioned quote shows the powerful observation made by the students about the benefits of using theatre in the classroom.

The fear of making mistakes is perhaps the most common fear in a Second Language Learning classroom. The students do not wish to become the object of ridicule, and so choose to become passive participants avoiding to make mistakes out loud. The teacher then becomes the only speaker in the classroom and the students do mere listen and repeat drills. With Process Drama, this fear is removed from the classroom because of the trust that is built among peers. The collaboration in the classroom is key in providing that trustworthy environment and the buildup in self-esteem.

From the interviews conducted in the Canadian study referenced above, a student observed that “usually we were reluctant to answer the teachers’ questions. We were afraid of making mistakes. In [usual] English lessons, we were very passive. In drama lessons, however, we became more active. We spoke English spontaneously and we were speaking the language from our hearts” (To et al. 526). A teacher then went on to observe that,

They are more confident in giving their own answers. Students were used to asking for model answers, like, in grammar. Now, they have more room for creating their own ideas. I found that learning has become less stressful for them, especially in writing. They would add new elements to a story. They completed their task books beautifully, and would even decorate their task books with pictures, colours and some even tied ribbons on their task books. I think it showed an ownership of their writing ...my students were willing to spend more time on finishing the writing tasks. (To et al. 26)

This is a great observation because it shows a shift from the speaking and listening portion of language learning, to the reading and writing. More importantly though is that the students were taking ownership of their tasks. One of the most meaningful observations made by a student was that drama gave the students more chances to express themselves and be able to communicate with others (To et al. 527). This is exactly the goal of using drama in the classroom; we want our students to be able to express themselves and communicate in the target language, but more

importantly for the students to just want to communicate. It cannot be stressed enough how drama gives students the opportunity to be creative and to find their own voices in the classroom. The added stress of learning a new language makes it even more difficult for the students to feel comfortable in being able to respond to actively. The teachers from the research even noticed that the students are able to work together to generate more ideas, and because everyone in the group has a key role, there is contribution from all (To et al. 528), adding to the importance of working as a unit.

The relationship between the teacher and the students is another important factor in language learning. In the normal classroom setting, teacher talk ratio is higher than the ratio of student talk. Using theatre creates a lower teacher talk ratio and a higher student talk ratio. The students even noted that the atmosphere of the classroom was more relaxed and allowed for interaction and exploration; the teachers became nurturing to the students (To et al. 528). The dynamic of the relationship between teacher and student changes drastically because the students feel the teacher is on an even playing field with them. One of the teachers noted, “The barrier between students and us was broken. We had more interaction with them and our relationship became closer. They used to think teachers were prestigious; but in drama, we took on roles together. A sense of humour was instilled in the classroom. Students will laugh when they see us get in role, but at the same time, I think they also respect us more since they find that their teachers are equally engaged in the drama” (To et al. 528).

Most teachers, do to demands from administration and curriculum teaching, do not get a chance to work on building a good relationship with the students. The more positive experience

the student has with their teacher, the more enjoyable and more motivated the student becomes in class. The student then feels the classroom is less threatening and is more willing to actively participate in the lesson. One of the teachers in the study noted that “it may sound naive, but I think what students like about drama is watching their teachers’ demonstrations. Maybe when teachers could smile more in class, use more gestures, or ‘please’ the students more... I think students would appreciate these... If you smile more and are happier, the students would like you more...The teacher student relationship is determined by whether the teacher is friendly. If the students like you, they will naturally become more interested in your lessons” (To et al. 528). The students like to see their teachers show that they too are experiencing the tasks they ask their students to complete.

Within the discipline of theatre, there is music. Music is another great technique for teaching ELs. In theatre, Musical Theatre represents a play that has interjections of songs and dance for the audience’s enjoyment. Music is a great tool for learning a second language that can be used with any age, level, and comfort level. For the younger students, using Disney songs for recognitions of words or phrases is a great way to get the students involved. Disney is more child-friendly and has simpler words, which is attractive to teachers and students. Music can be found in any culture and language, and therefore becomes very easy to relate and recognize.

Thanks to technology, music can be shared easily making it widespread and easier to have accessibility for both teachers and students. The secret to using music is choosing songs that are on a high interest level, in order to have the students stay focused. When teaching specific and more complex grammar points, music may not be as effective. Students that are of lower levels,

however, can use songs with lyrics for finding simple things as prepositions, nouns, adjectives, etc. For higher-level students, music can be used for finding meaning, interpretation, and higher grammatical structures.

According to a study done in Taiwan by Lih-Wei and Cheng-Fang, musicals were a great form for students to learn English. The students felt motivated, accomplished, and creative while learning the language. The study consisted of two groups, a controlled group and a non-controlled group, both learning English. One group learned English as a passive learner versus the other group who became an active participant in learning. The controlled group was kept to learn English through lectures or videos played for them in a large classroom. The non-controlled group was given the task of learning a musical in English, and later performing the musical in the form of a competition, in which the best group would be televised. The group performing the musical had the better results at the end of the study (Lih-Wei and Cheng-Fang 207).

Interviews and surveys were conducted after the study and some of the responses were: “Before doing this, I often felt frustrated with English. I don’t understand it at all. In English class, I even intentionally threw my textbooks away. Now I realize that there are so many ways to learn English. I think it’s really cool” and “Singing in English is very nice. It’s different. Sometimes when the lecture is unbearable, it would be really good to start from listening to English songs. Participating in this activity helped me with my English grade” (Lih-Wei Lei and Cheng-Fang Huang 208).

This study, completed by Lih-Wei and Cheng-Fang, has also found the importance of the effects of drama on second language learning. Four important points the study concluded were

that the students were able to find motivation in their learning; self-esteem was high for a student who was learning a second language, who usually has low self-esteem; students developed a sense of empathy in being able to understand feelings and thoughts of others; and students had lower fears of rejection (Lih-Wei Lei and Cheng-Fang Huang 2009). One of the biggest obstacles to overcome in trying to acquire a second language, as I discussed previously in this paper, is the fear of being ridiculed or rejected for not being able to speak the language properly. A main issue found in the classroom is that of not having volunteers, for fear that the target language will be destroyed or just not having the capability to communicate properly. Again, drama was used to aid in being able to overcome and learn the skills necessary to acquire a second language. “The use of drama activities in second language learning helps the learners to be more imaginative, creative and less frustrated as they become more confident in the process of learning English as a second language” (Lih-Wei Lei and Cheng-Fang Huang 2009).

Drama becomes a visual and auditory tool that the students can use as a means to express themselves. In many of our role-playing activities in class, the students have flourished because they took on the character being portrayed and became that person. The students were able to truly experience the role in a critical thinking manner and they used that time to explore. It also fostered further awareness of other students’ backgrounds and cultural perspectives because, had it not been for that play, they may have never been able to experience the mindset of a different person.

Process Drama

Process drama can be defined as the process of using drama for the teaching of a subject or facts. The main idea of using process drama is that of the personal experience the participant goes through. When the student is able to connect to the material personally, the material is learned in a more effective way. The actor or student develops a sense of self-awareness due to the process of becoming and living the role that is being recreated. The reason Process Drama is being introduced is because of its success in teaching a specific subject. This method allows the student to use their imagination and activate their prior knowledge. Another great benefit of using Process Drama is the standardized knowledge that is acquired. In a world where students are held to curriculum standards, this fact becomes very important. Process drama carries the potential for rigorous, standards-based learning to occur. Students not only explore the dynamics, relationships, and conflicts that shape a given situation, but also acquire factual knowledge related to the topic of the drama.

Process drama “is a whole-group drama process, improvised in nature, in which attitude is of greater concern than character” (Bowell and Heap 62). The students also experience a sense of the challenges and the possibilities facing the society in which they live. The students can focus on the experience and not the end result of a production. They experience the topic from a variety of perspectives. Due to everyone’s different upbringing, beliefs, moral compasses, and ethics, there are many perspectives that will come to light when discussing a specific point or idea. The most interesting thing to observe is when those points become controversial, which brings honest and engaging conversations in the classroom. Process drama creates “an experience of intensity and significance from which we emerge changed in some

way. [...It gives] us a vision of our humanity and a sense of the possibilities facing us and the society in which we live” (O’Neill 151–152).

Process Drama “involves all the students all the time... [With] collaboratively co-created texts, which draw on the lived experiences of the participants to add veracity to the dramatic text” (Stinson and Freebody 29). One of the best reasons for using Process Drama is that it forces the students to collaborate with each other. It also gives the EL students a form of using communication in the target language. From personal experience, a student peer activity--students working with students--is sometimes the best form of learning. Process Drama allows for the students to create a comfortable environment.

According to Stinson and Freebody, both Drama Education professors and researchers, there are seven steps necessary to make Process Drama successful in the classroom:

Step one—Creating a framework is essential for the classroom. The framework creates a connection to the real world context. The framework also creates clear goals and a clear path for the students to be able to follow.

Step two—Providing the ability and motivation to have a voice and a reason for saying their opinion. The students feel more connected to the work if they are being heard during the process creating that environment, which creates the confidence needed in second language learning.

Step three—Using the ‘as if’ terminology to practice and rehearse real life situations. This approach encourages students to make more meaningful connections to their life experiences.

Step four—Allowing for multiple answers and the idea of ‘rightness’ of communication. This technique is important because it becomes more of a trial and error situation. The students are able to act out different situations and see which action would be fit as a reaction. The target language is constantly being used and questioned appropriately.

Step five—Allowing the use of imagination and tapping into previous knowledge for the students to use. This is where we also use the creative side of the students. The old school way of say and repeat learning style is changed, and now the imagination is used thus creating more meaning and purpose for the students learning.

Step six—Suspending the status relationship of the role of the teacher, and allowing students to become the teacher. The idea is for the students to take ownership of their education, and so creating the role of teacher for the students becomes essential. The teacher becomes a facilitator in the classroom allowing the students to become their own teacher. The teacher aids in tapping into the creative side or aids in articulating certain thoughts, if the language is not fully developed, but the students are set to find the solutions by themselves.

Step Seven—Making sure to give the opportunity for the students to involve themselves intellectually and emotionally in the learning process. The passive way of learning is thrown out of the window using drama. The students become active participants in their education. They are able to make connections and tap into different parts of their brains in order to compensate for their lack of language. The lessons become more important and the students are emotionally involved. (30-31)

In my lessons, I have used all of these steps described above for Process drama. The lesson in chapter four demonstrates the use of the steps in more detail.

The Kennedy Center defines Process Drama as not using any of the familiar theatre devices such as lights, stage, scripts, sound, etc. In process drama, it's all in its name—this creative instructional method offers teachers and students the *experience* of an event, a place, or a time period through improvisation rather than rehearsing and presenting a final performance. The classroom aims to create an imaginary world and work to address challenges or events through dramatic improvisation.

In theatre, the role of the teacher is very important since the teacher becomes the director leading the group on to a final performance but in Process Drama the teacher “**takes** on a role in relation to the students and participates in the improvisation. It is common that the teacher’s role establishes the environment, shapes sequences and improvisation, models behavior, and generally supports students” (Kennedy Center Web).

Success in the Classroom

Let us continue by looking at the success of using the arts in a classroom setting.

According to many researchers, using the Arts as a way of learning a second language has been successful in many cases. The idea is not to focus on grammar construction or rules of the language, but rather on the achievement of a comfort level with some use of the second language. Not only should a comfort level be achieved, but also a sense of achievement is celebrated even if the progress is minimal. After reading research on the use of the arts in the classroom and based on my own experience, I have deduced that the Arts has a way of building the self-confidence needed to learn and more importantly needed to use the target language. The Arts also have a way of creating a sense of ownership for the students, in order to take more interest in their education. The integration of these methods that are embedded in the nature of the Arts requires commitment as well as a personal involvement.

When it comes to language learning, we have to be able to utilize other forms of communication because the target language has not yet been learned. As a result of lack of language, the art of creating is very appealing to language learners. There is no better form of learning or acquiring a language than when someone is trying to communicate something that is very personal to them. The idea is that the students can use their own experiences and express them through some sort of art form, but still communicate using some or most of the target language. To reiterate, the personal connection is the best way to have the student involve themselves in their learning of the language and to become responsible for their schooling.

From my own personal experience as a student and a teacher, I have observed that a large part of learning is relating. There is also the notion of connecting to the material. How do

the students feel about the topic that is being taught, with regards to the language learning? While learning a language, most of the material that is used is not relevant to the students, specially the younger students. Many feel that with the arts, the students can make their own connections by choosing something that is of interest or something that is personal to themselves.

Working with students, I would say that one of the most important reasons for using the Arts in the classroom for me is that it allows for the learning environment to be an engaging experience. Most of the time the fun part is forgotten and so the material is also forgotten. Students remember when they have fun, and creating and experimenting is enjoyable and unforgettable. The objectives and goals are absorbed through making connections, relating, creating, experimenting and having a unique creative experience. Are the strictest forms of the language always learned using these methods? No, but these artistic measures aid in having the students achieve success in their learning of a second language process. As they uncover meaning, students gain confidence as both intellectuals and creators. “They also acquire the ability to persevere for long periods of time, giving them a sense of ownership of the learning process and help them become lifelong learners. The process is even joyful” (Nathan 353).

According to an EL teacher who taught in Puerto Rico, her students were having a hard time connecting to the material and being disinterested in learning the target language, English. “I decided we would do a play, all in English, about how the U.S. Navy attacked the great fortress, Castillo San Felipe del Morro (El Morro), in 1898, thus beginning U.S. rule in Puerto Rico. Since none of my students had ever been to this historic site, we decided to perform our play on the great lawn outside of El Morro so that parents could come and watch (and perhaps

some tourists, too)” (Nathan 351). Nathan found that performing a play about the students’ own culture, which they wrote and performed, “built everyone’s excitement. Students’ pronunciation improved and their vocabularies exploded with new words” (Nathan 351).

The students wanted to take an active role in the activity, and because the activity required the students to use the target language, the students immersed themselves in it and were able to progress in their learning of a second language. To further reiterate the power of theatre, Nathan observed that “the opportunity to perform a story that was both exciting and connected to real life gave my students a sense of themselves as meaningful actors in their own history, with ideas and words that mattered. Perhaps more important, I had learned the power of theatre to engage students in their own learning” (Nathan 351).

Another successful moment in the classroom came from a teacher in Texas teaching an ESL English class in high school, June Straughan was able to successfully read Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (Straughan 52). Straughan used many strategies for providing background information, before tackling the actual play (Straughan 54). Straughan was then able to read the play and used role playing with the EL students. The students were very proud they were able to read a text that was meant for a higher-level English class (Straughan 53). There are certain types of texts that teachers think may too difficult for these students to grasp, but it is a mistake to not allow the opportunity for the students to try. The teachers have to be able to provide the tools the students need to succeed, and trust that they are able to accomplish the task.

Penny Bernal, a high school teacher from California, has also used drama with her ELs as a form of learning (Bernal 26). Bernal used drama as a form of teaching the students social

interaction (Bernal 26). EL students arrive in America having different customs, cultures, and social interaction with no knowledge of how to behave in a new country. Because theatre represents life, it seems like a great form to have the students gain the social skills necessary to fit into their new home.

In using drama in the classroom, Bernal focused on a few items for the students to be able to remove barriers when performing; Toning, acting out stage directions, ball game, and simulcasts (Bernal 27). Toning referred to how the lines were said in a play. Bernal had to teach the students how to say the lines, because the students became unnatural speakers, when saying the lines in their second language (Bernal 27). The teacher chose an important line from the play and had the students say the lines in different emotions, in order to hear and see the body language that went along with the words (Bernal 27). The activity is also meant to allow the students the ability to show and express personality through a character. Acting out stage directions teaches the students to act out the lines, based on the stage directions given by the playwright (Bernal 27). The stage directions also create great dialogue, between the students, about the customs of each other's culture (Bernal 27). Ball Game is a fun way to introduce theatre to students. The game increases concentration and has the students pantomime the size of a ball, as it is passed around the circle of students. The students are to react to the weight, shape, and form as it is passed around, while making eye contact with each other (Bernal 27). The last strategy that is used by Bernal in the classroom is that of Simulcasts. Simulcasts is a unique exercise that has the class perform the scenes in order, but divided by groups. The grouping allows for the students to find their own interpretation of the scenes and discuss the text (Bernal

27). Bernal experienced success while using theatre, and has continued to incorporate it into her classroom with her ELs.

In contrast to only using Theatre in the EL classroom, the performance aspect of theatre can also be used in classes, that wouldn't normally be thought of as having a performance base. An Anthropology professor Mark Pedelty decided to use theatre in his Anthropology class, while learning about the culture of Mexico. Professor Pedelty taught three Anthropology courses that were meant to develop student activities into a full blown performance, by the time the third course came along (Pedelty 244). Although the professor had no way of knowing if the students learned more through performance or lecture style classes, the professor was able to deduce that the quality of learning was better when incorporating the performance aspect to the courses (Pedelty 245).

There were a few imperative goals the professor had on the agenda when deciding to incorporate drama into the class; to engage the students, to help students gain a more intimate understanding of the cultural behavior and diversity through the adaptation of character roles, and to help student's gain new understanding of themselves through comparative reflection (Pedelty 244). These goals explain the positive outcomes that can come from using theatre in the classroom, and having it be effective. The proof of its positivity and engagement came in the form of feedback, course evaluations, and papers, where the students showed they were immersed in the tasks and delved more into the research that came along with the learning of the new culture (Pedelty 245). The students were able to fully submerge into the culture, and see themselves in their character's world. It also gave them a deeper understanding of why those historical figures, which they were studying, were painted in a certain light and made the choices

they had to make (Pedelty 246). This type of performance is closely related to Process Drama, in which the students were to recreate the world of the historical figure, and be in that person's world. The success of using theatre in a college level anthropology course should be motivation for K-12 teachers to incorporate this type of approach to their social studies classes.

Another great proof that the performance piece was successful in the anthropology class, was that the students each became an expert on their piece of history and took ownership of the work they produced (Pedelty 247). The students would use their performances and research and orient the lower class students on the information. This outcome is a teacher's dream, where the students take so much interest that they themselves become the teachers. Through these demonstrations, the teacher is then able to learn even more about the student and their views on the content. Pedelty, was able to self-reflect on his own teaching methodologies and noticed that even he was able to learn more about the students when using theatre, rather than using a traditional seminar and lecture style class (Pedelty 249).

From working with many teachers, the most popular forms of an artistic environment in the classroom are that of drama, music, and pictures. Under the umbrella of those three art forms, there are a wide variety of tools that can be used in the classroom. Granted, there are many factors that will indicate which ones to use, but ultimately some form or other will be used for the students based on their needs.

Vocabulary building is an intricate part of an EL's learning plan. I have used pantomime as a form for students to learn basic vocabulary. The student that seemed to do the best with this was my lowest level student. He would not get up in front of the class and perform any of the activities, but during a quiz or worksheet, I could see him doing part of the gestures the students

were given in order to learn the words. For most this may seem like a minor victory, but for me it was a great moment. I was able to see the skills applied and it was a skill that was done through performance.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LESSON

Some of the countries that were represented in my classroom included El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Cuba, and Haiti. According to Insight Crimes, a site that reports on crimes, El Salvador had the highest rate of murder in 2015 by gang members or police (Insight Crimes). In Guatemala, the Overseas Security Advisory Council mentions that Guatemala is one of the most violent countries of Central America due to the poverty level (OSAC). The Overseas Security Advisory Council also reports that Mexico, due to the large drug issue in the country, has become very high in all types of violent and nonviolent crimes. The Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook reports that in Cuba, people trafficking, drugs, and the government are all issues that have devastated the country. My Haitian students mention that the poverty level is very high in Haiti and that is one of the reasons for leaving the country. These were just some of the things that my students were dealing with, besides being in a new country, not knowing the language, living with other family members, while their parents were still living in their native countries in the midst of the violence. As their teacher, I had to focus on teaching them the curriculum, teaching them the language, and teaching them American life skills, while helping them to overcome their issues.

One of the units that must be taught for eight grade Language Arts is based on The Holocaust. The standards associated with this unit are: ELD.K12.EL.LA.1: Language of Language Arts: English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Language Arts, ELD.K12.EL.SI.1: Language of Social and Instructional Purposes: English language learners communicate for social and instructional purposes within the school setting, RL. 1.3: Analyze how particular lines

of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision (Collier County Public Schools). There are times that I am hesitant about how to approach this unit, as I think many of the students are running away from countries that are in war or turmoil. While it is not a good thing to bring these memories to light for these students, it may be good for these students to have an outlet on the situations suffered at home.

One of the anchor texts provided by the HMH collection textbook, is a play on *The Diary of Anne Frank*. I knew that I wanted to use this text, but I had to frontload the background information before the story was read. By the end of the lesson, I had to be sure that the students knew the vocabulary terms associated with this unit, the concept of what occurred during this time, identify plot points of the story, and be able to reenact a scene from the play. The following table shows a breakdown of one of the lessons by minutes.

Table 2: Breakdown of pre-reading lesson (One week long)

Title	Duration	Activity
Start-up	5-7 minutes	Students write the agenda for the day; including the homework assignment, if any.
Introduction	15-20 minutes	Vocabulary Word sort with visuals.
Vocabulary	20 minutes	Go over the vocabulary as a whole group instruction.
Background Information	30 minutes	Use visuals and charades to present background information, before reading the play.
Reading	15 Minutes (or any leftover time)	Begin reading the play with the class. For the rest of the week finish reading the play.

The lesson began with the students writing the agenda of the day in their planner. The idea was to teach students to be organized, to inform them of the lesson content, and to notify them of the goals of the lesson for themselves. The goals were written in 'I can' statements, so that the students can easily identify what they can do by the end of the lesson. The next activity was the introduction activity with a word sort. The activity was meant to give the vocabulary necessary for the lesson, as well as to provide a visual for the vocabulary term. Table 3 represents the format and instructions for how to conduct the word sort activity. There is preparation that needs to take place before the vocabulary is introduced, and for the students to stay organized and on task.

This activity taps into another area of the arts, which is the use of visual aids. The vocabulary also begins to provide background knowledge necessary to read the play. The vocabulary was then taught as a whole group instruction, in which the students checked their work and took notes on what was the importance of each term. Once the vocabulary was explained, then the vocabulary was used in a form of charades. The students were to demonstrate the vocabulary term using their bodies, while the other students tried to guess which vocabulary word was being demonstrated, from the lesson. The students performing the charade may be given a vocabulary term or the act around the vocabulary word. This activity seemed to be an enjoyable and an engaging activity for all of the students. After all of the words had been acted out and the background information had been given, the students were ready to begin reading the play. The roles were dispersed among the students, so that everyone got a chance to read for a part. This was the best part, as some students really found themselves acting with their voices. I always try

to encourage the students, to not just read the lines monotonously but to look at the punctuation and see how the phrase is meant to be said: put feelings and emotions behind the words. The students really become engaged, even if they do not fully understand the whole phrase.

Table 3 Sample Lesson Plan of Word Sort Activity

Subject	Language Arts
Grade	8 th
Duration of lesson	45 minutes
Key Vocabulary	Holocaust, Hitler, Genocide, War, Jewish Communities, Swastika, Concentration Camp, Arrest, Plot, Diary
Materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Worksheet with the vocabulary words, and a space to write in the definitions. 2. 2 Sets of Index cards (one with the vocabulary words, the other with the picture of the vocab words) 3. Timer 4. Power point presentation of the vocabulary words and the true definitions with the matching picture.
New Florida Standard(s)	<p>LAFS.8.SL.2.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.</p> <p>LAFS.8.SL.1.1:Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.</p>
Lesson/Instructional Objective(s)	<p>Students will master the vocabulary necessary for successful reading of the play and for understanding of the unit.</p> <p>Students will identify the different parts to a story.</p> <p>Students will be able to develop the skills necessary for reproducing a scene.</p> <p>Students will be able to define Holocaust terms.</p>
Assessment	Students will be asked to take a short matching vocabulary quiz.
Hook/Anticipatory Set	Word sort activity. Write definitions on an index card. Place a picture of the vocabulary word on separate index cards. In groups, have the students match the vocabulary word to the term, before the instruction.
Procedures (Do not forget transitions)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare the index cards with terms and pictures. 2. Prepare vocabulary worksheet for students. 3. Prepare power point presentation of vocabulary words. 4. Divide class into five groups 5. Give a worksheet to each group member, once in the group. 6. Explain the process of a word sort. 7. Pass out the index cards, making sure not to have the term and definitions next to each other. 8. Give the students at least 20 minutes to match the terms to the definitions. 9. Once the time is up, call a vocabulary term and have students share their definition for that word. 10. Be sure to show the power point presentation, as the correct definition is given for each term. 11. Each student should write the correct definition on their worksheet. 12. Have students return to their seats.
Blooms Questions and DOK (Depth of Knowledge) activities	-Identify and Define the terms given. -Categorize terms through the word sort activity.
Closure	Students are to use charades with the vocabulary terms. Begin the process of reading a play.
Accommodations and Modifications for ELs	<p>Levels 1 and 2: Tutor read aloud the terms and definitions.</p> <p>Levels 3 and 4: Given a dictionary to help with the term</p> <p>Visual Aids are given to both levels of EL students</p>

Table 4 shows the breakdown of the lesson after the play has been completely read. This lesson can be expanded for longer than two weeks, if needed. Again, the lesson began with the students writing in their planners the agenda, goals, and homework (if any) for the lesson. Following the agenda writing, the students were to begin the cartoon drawing task. This activity asked for the students to use the arts in conjuring the five most important events that took place in the play, in sequential order. A recap using charades then followed the drawings to be sure that all students understood the important events and why each moment was significant to the play. After each group had presented in the activity, I asked them to explain what the moment meant to the play.

Once students had finished explaining the important events, it was time for the journaling question. At least twice a week, I had students respond to a question in their journals. The journaling gives the students writing practice and the act of expressing their thoughts in a more private manner. The topic for the journaling is the hypothetical ‘What if?’ The students were to write a possible outcome, had the main characters made different choices. The other ‘what if?’ outcome was for the student to place themselves in the situation and write about what they would do differently, if they were there. The idea of the assignment was to allow the students to think about the situation fully, in order to change the outcome. The students’ choices also had to match the character’s personality; it could not be something that was completely out of the ordinary for the character. The other idea behind this task was to have the students personalize the characters, and place themselves in the situation in order to entirely engage in the play. After everyone had written their situation, I gave them all a chance to share with the class. Some felt that it was too

personal, while others wanted the class to have a discussion about their choice. Because of the different levels of language acquisition, the sharing was different for every person.

The last step of the lesson, before the performance assessment, was grouping the students and having them rehearse for the performance. The students were grouped randomly. They were to choose a scene, which they would like to perform, designate the roles, create the necessary props, memorize the lines, and perform for the class. The students had three scenes from which to choose for their performances. The first scene was the moment between Anne and Peter, the second was the dinner where Anne dirtied the coat, and the third was when Anne was having nightmares and needed the consolation from her father. The most exciting part during the rehearsal process was to listen to the conversations that took place amongst the students and their interpretation of the lines. The students had deep discussions about movement in the scene and the pictures they were trying to portray to the audiences. In my opinion, these conversations could not take place until the important moments had been thoroughly understood by the students, and they had placed themselves in the shoes of their characters.

Table 4 Breakdown of Post Reading/ Pre-Rehearsal Lesson (One to three weeks long)

Title	Duration	Activity
Start-up	5-7 minutes	Students write the agenda for the day; including the homework assignment, if any.
Review	15-20 minutes	Draw a cartoon sequence of events representing the five important moments from the story.
Charades	20 minutes	Use important events from the story, to present charade scene.
Journaling	20 minutes	Use a journal to write about the 'if then' situation.
Rehearse	15 Minutes (or any leftover time)	Begin rehearsing the scene with individual groups. For the rest of the week, finish rehearsing the scenes.

Strategies/ Role

An aspect that affects language learning in the classroom, and that I focus on building, is the environment that is created in the classroom. Creating a safe and judgment free environment is an essential part of being sensitive to the needs of the students. It also allows for the ability of the students to feel comfortable in expressing themselves and practice tasks that are geared towards the target language. To and her collaborators found that:

Setting up a classroom environment to improve learner performance and satisfaction is also regarded as an essential factor for the success of SLA. Eysenck (1979) has suggested that it can be done by easing tension and reducing the demands of the cognitive processing space. In order to construct a less disruptive learning atmosphere, Finch (2001) advocates the promotion of a non-threatening learning environment in which anxiety and inhibitions can be reduced and learners' motivation and self-esteem can be boosted. (To et al. 518)

Before the rehearsals and the performances, it has to be noted that pantomime plays a large role as a strategy that I used in the classroom. The students, even though they are middle school aged, are more comfortable using their bodies for communication than words. The pantomime/charades is one of the most effective strategies to get the students engaged in the lesson. According to Goldberg, the use of kinesthetic in an English-language learner's environment improves their vocabulary and is a perfect activity for ELs (Goldberg 74).

Using drama was the main strategy that I strived for with this lesson. I taught the students about character development, subtext, action and reaction, and theme. Because it was not an acting class, I could not focus on all the theatre points and I tried not to overwhelm the students. Goldberg points out the benefits of using drama as a form of storytelling: "Drama is a powerful tool that can open an awareness in children by bringing them to experience something they may have never experienced" (Goldberg 74). While my students had experienced some of the things presented in the lesson, I believed in the power of drama. Some students were able to leave the country before things became very rough for them and so they did not have the experience the way Anne did in the play. Other students had family that may have experienced the same situation as Anne, so they were able to empathize with the characters.

Goldberg also states that using drama "enables English- language learners to practice language without being self-conscious because the child's language is that of their 'character' and not their own" (Goldberg 74). One of the last steps for an EL to learn is speaking. Speaking becomes very difficult because the students are extremely self-conscious of their pronunciation. In class, I used a lot of repetition for vocabulary and dialogue. I even used echo reading, in that

the students repeated the words they heard as they read along with me. The beauty of a play is that the words are already provided for the students. All the students had to do was practice, memorize, and say the words. The frustration comes from not having the words to speak for themselves. From my experience, the students are more likely to speak out loud when the dialogue is given to them, rather than answer a question in the target language. In my few years as an EL teacher, I have learned that the best form of achieving speaking in the target language is for the students to be able to say something that is already written or created. This provides the confidence in both lower level students and the students that are overwhelmingly shy, to speak on their own.

Adrienne Herrel and Michael Jordan, professors from California State University, state in *50 Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners* that “story reenactment provides a unique opportunity for teachers to observe and evaluate their students’ comprehension of the stories reenacted and the students’ use of unique vocabulary and sentence structures” (Herrel and Jordan 119). In my case, story reenactment was the performance of the short scene by the students. While studying the play and the scenes, the students further developed their understanding of plot, language, and structure. These are part of the English Language Arts standards, which must be met by the students. Evaluation is an ongoing process that teachers must do in the classroom, both for student monitoring and to guide the lessons. I used the process of performance as a tool for observation and evaluation. The rich conversations that took place at the beginning stages of rehearsals allowed me to look in and see the student’s level of understanding of the reading. I was able to evaluate the student’s comprehension, based on how the dialogue is delivered.

Another strategy, which is something that actors should also be using for their craft, is journaling. I used journaling in an interactive format. The students wrote their reflections in their journal, and I wrote a personal response to that reflection. The journal became a dialogue piece between the students and myself. It was a place where they felt safe with their thoughts. The idea was to get the students comfortable with writing in the target language, but more importantly to build rapport and learn the experiences of my students. I did not make any corrections to their writing, but I made sure to respond in way where I addressed the errors I found, without being blatantly obvious about the correction. Hopefully, the student saw the 'correct' form and started to mimic the format in their own writing or speaking.

As clearly outlined in the lesson, Role Playing was the last strategy that I applied to my lesson, especially the lesson based on the play *The Diary of Anne Frank*. As stated in the lesson section, the role-playing occurred when the students created the hypothetical situations in their journals. The thought process was that the students placed themselves in the situation and became the character in order to properly respond to the scenario. Depending on time, I sometimes had the students write a scene of their hypothetical situations to act out in front of the class. Similar to the situation in Puerto Rico, when the students realized they were going to have their scenes presented, they paid extra attention to the details and the dialogue that they were using in their scenes. One of the reasons I believed that theatre was a great form to use with these students was that when they knew they had to present a scene, they always tried their best.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION/REFLECTION

The Journey between Drama Practitioner, Teacher and Researcher

Throughout this process there were several roles I had to undertake. I was being a drama practitioner, teacher, and a researcher. There were many moments where I saw the roles interchange in the classroom, even as the lessons were developed. There were moments that I wanted to only be the drama practitioner that used drama in the classroom and nothing else. Unfortunately, the teacher in me had to fill the other responsibilities, which sometimes stifled the artistic side of me. Coming up with the lessons and noting the progress of the students, were the moments that the researcher would come into the process. I had a hard time with giving each role its proper time and commitment, and would be confused as to which role I had to use for certain moments.

As a drama practitioner I used the many theatre games and strategies to help the students. I also tended to want to use more plays in the classroom. I knew that I couldn't use too many plays, because the content would be either too difficult to read for my ELs or too immature for the audience that I had in the Language Arts class. Luckily, some of the students were taking the Theatre class and I was forced to use more drama techniques with these students. I noticed that the students were naturally using their artistic side in some of the lessons in Language Arts, and it was thrilling to watch. As a practitioner, all I wanted to do was encourage the students to see the value of using their artistic abilities.

During the theatre class I filled my EL students with as much from drama, as I possibly could, without overwhelming the students. The interactive and engaging activities that the students did, in the class, always turned out to be positive experiences. The hardest units the EL students had were the playwriting and directing unit in the theatre class. Because the EL students that I had in both my theatre and language arts class were a higher level, I was able to challenge them in class. The challenge, I feel, paid off for them. I had the students writing plays that were five scenes in length and directing other students in small scenes. Both of those tasks were difficult for them because of the amount of communicating and articulation of thoughts that was required to fulfill the task. As a drama practitioner, I kept pushing the students never letting them give up on their task. I felt that I gave them the tools they needed to communicate, should words fail them.

Teacher is a role that came naturally to me. I felt that I had been teaching my whole life and I enjoy being able to help students succeed. The challenges came trying to be a teacher in the public school system. I had to follow a curriculum with my lessons. I had to focus on the Florida Standards and be sure the students were able to complete the task given in the standards. I also had to have evaluations completed by administration, to be sure I was teaching effectively and following the curriculum map given to us by district. I also had to focus on standardized tests and know that a portion of my salary and my job depended on how well the students did on these standardized tests. I had to be sure I was disciplining students properly and documenting everything, while also dealing with student's parents and conferences.

Currently, the pressures put upon a teacher take away from the actual ability to just teach. The most important tasks I had as a teacher were to teach life skills and English to students. I felt those tasks were not being accomplished to its full ability, because everything else that was placed on me as a teacher. I felt I had to stop teaching the skills I thought the students needed, and teach the skills that are found on the tests to have the students do well. I also felt my students were having a hard time focusing on the skills set up by the standards, because of the greater issues they were facing. Examples of those issues are their language skills, their living situations, their families not being with them, their citizenship issues, and of course their social interactions with the rest of the students. These students are also facing the way society has labeled and sees them. I take into account all of these factors and try to wear the hat, which best suits their needs.

The researcher was a role that I never stopped being. I was always researching lessons, activities, manners of engagement, reflecting on what worked and why or vice versa what didn't work and why. I would always think about the length of time an activity and how that affected the outcome, which I would use the researcher hat to define. As a teacher, I am always researching ways to better my craft, and as a practitioner the researcher hat never gets taken off.

I didn't realize but the one role that was constant, and still is, was that of the researcher. In society, we are always being a different role but there is always the underlying role of a researcher; because we, as humans, watch how our role affect others and what we can do to change the situation, should the situation call for it. I saw myself in this role throughout the whole process. I was always reflecting and learning on the whys of student's responses and behaviors.

Reflection/Conclusion

In order to note if the lesson was successful, I must take the time to reflect on the different points of the lesson. The first point of reflection is on the vocabulary word sort. The beauty of the word sort is the collaboration that had to take place in order to succeed. Some of the students even used language dictionaries, even though usually they would shy away from their use. The students wanted to be sure that the work be done correctly. As a teacher, I am a facilitator and as I facilitated the activity I saw that the students were willingly trying to get the information correct. After we went over the vocabulary on the power point, there can be seen the processing of information and the students trying to make the connections between the words, definition, and visuals (as the play was read, there were moments when the students would bring up the vocabulary that was learned).

On the learning aspect of the vocabulary word sort, there was the new vocabulary that was learned along with the concept associated with the words. The students were able to point out the different terms. Granted, they weren't able to fully learn all of the words at one time. But, the students were exposed to all of the terms and once reminded, could talk about the term. There was also the ability for the students to make some real life connections, to the vocabulary that defined feelings. I felt the reason they were able to connect, was that they themselves had felt similar feelings in their countries.

The next point to reflect on is the charades activity. Charades was one of the most engaging activities for the students. It was interesting to note how creative the students were in trying to come up with a way to act out the term or concept. As a drama practitioner, this was the most exciting to watch. The students would form pictures with their bodies, trying to get the

concept across to their team. As a teacher, it was great to see that the students would go back to their notes and research the terms, in order to guess correctly. In my opinion, charades was a very effective activity for engagement, vocabulary review, and full class participation -- a teacher's dream.

The *What if* was an activity that I was able to get to see the way my student's thought process occurred. I was also able to see a few more intimate thoughts, which they normally wouldn't share with the class. Some students surprised me with their thoughts, in that they came up with something out left field. It also showed me what students would fight on the front lines, while the others would come up with ways to escape with their families. At the time, I thought that many chose to say they would find a way to run away and either come back for their families or take them together at once. I also thought that their responses were based on their own personal experiences.

One of my students, which did not get to experience much hardship from his country, because he was too young to remember, said he would fight and not hide. Another student, recently new to the country, said he would try and escape with his family in a quiet manner. There was a large discussion, which I had to break up, because it turned into name calling and belittling on both parts. I had to interrupt stating that there was no 'right' answer, as each situation called for a different resolution. I remember how passionate the discussions were, and how some students refused to take part because they felt it was too personal. In a small way, it was a triumph as a teacher and a practitioner due to the level of discussions taking place and the

difficult conversations that came about. On the other hand, as a human, I felt sad for those students that had already lived through so much at such a young age.

The last step of the lesson reflection is that of the scene work. I was very excited about this process as a teacher, drama practitioner, and researcher. I wasn't sure what would happen, if anything at all. As previously mentioned, the conversations that took place during the rehearsal process were unbelievable to hear. The students were discussing lines, meaning, interpretation, pictures, punctuation, and body language. Some groups needed more help than others, but once the scene objective clicked the students blossomed with the scene work.

Right away I saw that the students, which were also in my theatre class, took over the group as directors. They tried to teach the students how it 'should' be done. I was very proud, and was surprised by the types of questions these students were asking in order to bring the scenes to life. Most of my lower levels seemed to immerse themselves more into the scenes than my higher levels. I assumed the reason was because they felt more confident to speak, due to them having concrete lines to say. On the other hand, some of my higher-level students were more self-conscious about the presentation. Reflecting, I can't come up with an exact answer but I think it's because they were unsure of their characters. I wish we had spent more time on this portion of the assignment. I think that if we had more time, there would have been even more of a positive outcome with all of the students.

I knew that taking on this project of measuring the effectiveness of theatre in the lesson would be a very difficult task. I realized that I was going to have to grade and judge my efforts as an educator and theatre practitioner. I came to the conclusion that I had to face the possibility

that all of my efforts may not necessarily be successful in the classroom. I was cognizant that theatre was not going to be the only tool I could use in order to teach my ELs the basics of learning English, but I wanted them to have something to fall back on, should words fail them. The irony was that I used reflection in all of my Theatre Arts classes, but this was one of the few times I was able to truly reflect on my techniques and teaching methodology

To truly reflect on one's own practice, the mistakes must be evaluated. One of the first blunders that I made is a mistake that I urge other teachers not to make. The error was to make assumptions. I assumed that some of the material the students were not ready to handle, or it would be too close to their personal lives to be able to open themselves up to that opportunity. I should trust that as long as I threaded carefully and respectfully, the students would follow my lead. I tried very hard to create a space that felt safe and open, clear of judgment. Due to that effort, I knew that my students could handle serious content matter.

Another mistake that I sometimes caught myself making, was that of treating my students as if they weren't able to handle the tasks asked of them to complete. Sometimes I did not take risks in higher-level content matter for fear that the students will not be able to work independently. I had to keep myself from always holding their hand or giving them a crutch to lean on me. I felt I was doing a disservice to these students because there are no crutches or hand holding in real life.

It took me almost the whole year to be able to find the composition of the lesson in chapter four, to the degree that it was accomplished. I was having a hard time finding a way to engage all of the students, while still maintaining the target language in mind. In previous

lessons, we always used Reader's Theatre, but the way I structured the background lessons, really made it more effective for the students' engagement. Throughout the units, I was having difficulties with connecting the texts and vocabularies to the EL students. I felt that because of the context of the lesson, it was the easiest form of connection for the students that felt hardships in their own countries. The structure of the introduction of the vocabulary was also more effective, in that it began the process of true collaboration between the students. The 'magic if' moment with the reflection, also was a moment of true engagement with the text. The students discussed their decisions and debated the hypothetical decisions made by the students.

The most common error that I found myself making in the beginning of my teaching career was that of moving too fast. At times, I forgot that the students need those moments of thinking or process times in the lessons. I would speed through the lessons, thinking that the students were on pace with me, but more than once that was not the case. I would feel that I needed to accomplish in a very short time span, and so would rush through the content. I had to stop myself and think about the actual goal, which was to make sure that the students were successful.

I believed that theatre played an important role in many of my students. It provided a safe space that gave them comfort when using the target language. The most gruesome and difficult task in theatre came when the students were asked to write plays. My students were excited about the opportunity because they had so many stories in their heads but were afraid the words would not be expressed properly. When the dialogue is provided for them, it helped to overcome that hurdle for the students. It turned out that with the hypothetical situations, the

students were able to write short scenarios and successful ones. The student creators became very excited to see their short scene performed by other students.

I tried to assess all of my students with using this technique, but I noticed that the students who were in Theatre Arts and Language Arts with me became more engaged in the Language Arts class. I deduced that it was because they felt that many of the things we did in the Theatre Arts class were being used in the Language Arts class, and had built a comfort level with those techniques. These particular students who were in both classes became more confident in reading out loud and would add more of a personality when reading a character role. As far as reading and writing skills, I did not think the lesson was enough to become very specific in targeting certain necessary skills for writing, but the journaling did help with the comfort level of writing in the target language. I knew and saw that the students' speaking skills had improved, and other teachers noted the differences in their own classes. A personal victory came in the form of having other teachers mention that the student was much more different, in regards to confidence and creativity, since being enrolled in Theatre.

I once had a very low level student who came from Guatemala. In the beginning, I wasn't sure if he would willingly participate in the activity but the opposite took place. The greatest moment for me was on stage and seeing this low level student take the script/role and bring it to life beautifully. This particular student memorized his lines and acted. He also gave the class his hypothetical situation on his character's destiny, had he chosen a different path. To me, it was the best form of engagement, considering the low level of my student.

I would like to think that I helped this student in a small way, but I knew that he had many other factors affecting his ability to learn English, in addition to relying on theatre. I felt that I had many small successful moments, but they may not have been enough to make a huge impact for him. I felt that I gave him a different way to learn vocabulary, but unless he had someone explain the term he may not have been able to succeed on his own. I would also like to think that I gave him the confidence that he needed in order to be successful for the rest of his schooling years. I am not naïve to think that he will be on stage performing and volunteering all the time, but if there came a time when he needed to present a role or character, he had the tools in his back pocket.

Assessing my strengths, I build relationships very well with my students. As previously mentioned, this is one of the most important aspects of teaching that teachers need to focus to be effective with the students. I try very hard to know all of my students and address the areas of interest, in order to make more connections with the students. I'm great at setting expectations for the students, and pushing them to those levels. I am clear about what the goals are at the beginning of the class, and where the students should be by the end. Another asset that I bring as a teacher is my ability to communicate well and clearly with my students. The students have to be able to understand everything I say, in order to do what is expected of them.

In order to properly continue the reflection point properly, the questions that arose throughout this process need to be addressed separately. What were the most helpful techniques used to help further the education of these EL students? How do I use theatre techniques to help the student in grasping any of the areas needed for learning a language? I found that the most

helpful techniques were that of role-playing, pantomiming, designing, Reader's Theatre, and reenactment. These techniques adhered to many different learning styles and also gave room for differentiation amongst the students. Those students, who were not comfortable with speaking, found pantomime to be comforting and still allowed for self-expression. Role-playing allowed the students to think critically of a character and its situation. Designing and drawing gave the students the ability to use pictures for expression, while articulating the reasons for the choices made. Reader's theatre gave the students the words as well as the ability to focus on pronunciation and character development. The latter of the techniques was very successful with my lower levels, in terms of speaking.

How does theatre in the classroom positively influence the learning of these students? This question was perhaps the most notable in terms of seeing fast results. I had to work extra hard to give my students a safe space, even harder with my EL students. I think using theatre created a place where they did not feel like they were doing the same things as they did in other classes. The students felt that they were able to use their bodies for communication, not just words. Theatre in middle school should be very positive. I believe that all classes need to create a space for positivity, to help the students engage themselves more in the lessons taught. I used a lot of encouragement and positive reinforcement in order to maintain a place of positivity for learning.

Depending on the students' level, how influential will using drama/theatre be for the students? This is the most challenging of all questions. It took a long time for me to be able to really figure out how to approach my lower level students with theatre. I knew that my higher-

level students were able to read a play and analyze out loud the parts of the play, but with my lower levels it was different. I do not know that I truly found the answer to this question. As stated previously, I tried different approaches but I do not know whether it was truly influential. I did not have a way of measuring the influence; I could only go by the moments where the students seemed to flourish in class. I had no way of knowing if that success was taken outside of the classroom.

Did the students' culture have an impact on how I approached the students? The answer to this question was, yes. Grady mentioned several instances where she had to modify exercises because of the particular culture of the students and the role gender played in that culture. I felt it was the same in an EL classroom in the United States. I had to be very careful about using a specific material, subject matter, and pairing of students. Most of my students shared the same language, but not the same beliefs. There was more than one time that the class turned into a discussion of how things were done in each other's countries and which is the correct way. I could not just shut off the discussion because theatre is a reflection of life and these were real moments for them. The discussion also created amazing dialogue and interaction for all of the students in the class. The discussions led to strong reflecting moments as well.

In conclusion, I felt that my efforts in using theatre for EL students were for the most part successful, but I am aware that there are other factors that were involved. I felt that in order to really measure the results, the students needed to spend more time with me exclusively using the techniques I offered to truly note if there was success. I did feel, however, that there was an

overall success for the goals I was trying to accomplish with the students, and that there were many moments of light and clarity we created together with the help of theatre and the arts.

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