

Towards Natural Engagement in Nonexhibitional Dramatic Role-Plays

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Abstract

Modern language teaching and drama have long had a tenuous relationship. Foreign/second language teaching (F/SLT) and Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) instruction often mistakenly associate drama with learning games and role-play simulations. However, these remedial activities, though useful, offer only limited opportunities for natural speech interaction. This article argues that, as a natural dialogical process of cognitive and affective involvement, nonexhibitional dramatic role-play generates authentic meaning through action and personal commitment.

Key words: nonexhibitional drama, dramatic role-play, dialogical process, cognitive and affective involvement, empathy, engagement, strategic interaction

Resumen

La enseñanza de lenguas modernas y la dramatización han tenido durante mucho tiempo una relación poco clara. En la enseñanza, tanto de segundas lenguas como de lenguas extranjeras así como la de lenguas con fines específicos, a menudo se ha asociado erróneamente la dramatización con juegos didácticos, simulaciones y *role-playing*. Sin embargo, estas actividades compensatorias, aunque útiles, proporcionan una oportunidad limitada para la interacción oral natural. Este artículo defiende que, al ser un proceso dialógico natural de participación cognitiva y afectiva, la dramatización cuya finalidad no es la producción de un espectáculo, es capaz de generar auténtico significado mediante la acción y el compromiso personal.

Palabras clave: dramatización cuya finalidad no es producir un espectáculo, *role-playing* dramático, proceso dialógico, participación cognitiva y afectiva, empatía, compromiso, interacción estratégica.

Introduction

For most people, drama means a play that is performed, usually in a theatre. In education, it has long been associated with the study of the works of well-known

playwrights and the staging of playscripts. In modern language teaching, it is often related to learning games and role-plays. A dramatic role-play, however, is not a contest or simulation. It is real cognitive and affective engagement.

In this article, drama is defined as being a natural dialogical process in which meaning is established through action, interaction and personal commitment. Nonexhibitional drama is discussed in its historical context and several methodological varieties are described. It argues that the process of nonexhibitional engagement in dramatic role-plays facilitates authentic communication. Finally, its application to foreign/second language teaching (F/SLT) in general, and to Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) at the tertiary level in particular, is encouraged.

Dramatic Role-Play

When a role-play is communicative, that is to say, not simulative, it is dramatic. On the one hand, dramatic role-playing is “concerned with the examination of human issues in specific social contexts” (Verriour, 1985: 182) and, on the other, it is derived from conflict. In brief, “There must be some kind of obstacle to be overcome by the participants because language is only interesting when the social transaction seems blocked for the moment” (Dickson, 1989: 307).

Many authors have given reasons for using drama in the foreign/second language classroom. While Lindsay (1973: 55) points out that “speaking another language involves acting in that language”, Bird (1979: 293) explains, “I frequently employ the situation of a formal meeting, with a chairman and speakers representing various factions and interests”. For their part, writing about the effective use of case studies, Dow and Ryan (1987: 200) point to “the great potential for some realistic role playing, one of the hallmarks of a good case”. They further indicate that case studies can lead to the performance of dramatic scenes “developed from news items” (p. 208).

For her part, Horwitz (1985: 205) maintains,

For foreign language students who have few natural contacts with native speakers, role-play and simulation activities may afford the only opportunities to experience complex linguistic situations similar to those they would encounter in their target country.

Adding to the list of reasons for using drama not only in F/SLT but also in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, it is my personal belief that drama is an inextricable part of all social interactions. For, as Lyman and Scott (1975: 3) affirm, “Otherwise put, reality is drama”.

What is drama?

In essence, all dramatic activity involves a process of theorising and hypothesis testing. Theory comes from the Greek word *θεωρία*, meaning 'contemplation'. Significantly, Pabón de Urbina (1997: 296) points out that the word in Greek also means “espectáculo o asistencia de espectáculos”. For their part, Lyman and Scott (1975: 1) affirm, “‘Theory’ is derived from the Greek term for ‘theatre’. This derivation suggests that the method appropriate to theorising was, from the beginning, dramatic”. These authors further note that the intention of observing has always been to bring truth to light. That is to say, “The sought-after truth was *aletheia* (literally, ‘unhiddenness’), the truth that was hidden from view but available to those who would take up the attitude of a seer or *theoria*” (Lyman & Scott, 1975: 1).

To a greater or lesser extent, seeking to bring truth to light is not strictly the domain of prophets and oracles but probably comes natural to most if not all human beings.

Implicit in this view is the idea that the everyday world provides situations from which truth might be extracted by those who would take the trouble to look with the attitude appropriate to witnessing human and divine performances: wonder, astonishment, and naive puzzlement. (Lyman & Scott, 1975: 2)

Drama derives from the Greek word *δρᾶμα*, meaning action. In the sense that I am using the term here, drama is natural human action that involves searching for truth and bringing it to light. In addition, drama entails revealing the truth to others. This notion coincides with the fourth definition of the word drama given in the *DRAE* (1992), “suceso de la vida real, capaz de interesar y conmover vivamente”; and with the meaning of the word “dramática”: “Capaz de interesar y conmover vivamente”.

Truth once revealed will more often than not simultaneously engender conflict. Hence, the third definition of ‘drama’ in the *NSOED* (1993): “A situation in which there is conflict; *esp.* a dramatic series of events leading up to a particular outcome”.

The ensuing conflict invariably requires a resolution. Dramatic action is concluded only when a socially determined solution to the conflict is found. Via (1976b), who supports the use of drama in language teaching, refers to this as “Participatory Drama”. Hence, dramatic activity is essentially social interaction: “Drama is communication between people” (Via, 1987: 10).

The Dramatic Dialogical Process

Undoubtedly, communication has become the primary objective of most F/SLT programmes. Porcher (1980: 9) emphasises this fact: “In the school context as for adults, the communicative skill should indeed be the primary objective of learning a foreign language”.

But just what constitutes ‘communication’ in the learning environment has not been categorically established. I sustain that, in the classroom, no matter what the students’ level may be, communication is essentially dramatic. This is in line with McCaslin (1984: 9), who asserts, “Although creative drama traditionally has been thought of in relation to children and young people, the process is appropriate to all ages”. Furthermore, reiterating Stern’s (1980: 82) assessment in “Drama in Second Language Learning from a Psycholinguistic Perspective” that drama develops skills in personal and interpersonal expression, I maintain that drama should be included in the foreign/second language curriculum, even at the university level and in ESP courses.

Dramatic activity, as it is being proposed here, involves a dialogical process of hypothesis testing and resolution of conflict through group interaction. It is, in Vitz’s (1984: 23) words, “a natural outgrowth of the trend towards an interactive approach to second language teaching”.

When students converse in a role-play, they invariably “engage cognitively with the other person” (Kao y O’Neill, 1998: 4). This is also the thesis that Courtney (1990) sustains in his noteworthy book *Drama and Intelligence*. The author maintains that drama is essentially a process of solving problems that are fictionally created by acting “as if” (p. 6). This, he says, responds to “the nature of human intelligence and cognition”.

Courtney (p. 13) further explains,

Being ‘as if’ is the self’s fictional mode of operation. Functionally it is an imaginative-‘enactive’ activity, but modally it is supposition. When we imagine, we think of possibilities. When we take one of these possibilities and externalize it in action, we try to make creative ideas (hypotheses and models) work in the world.

The author submits, “We do this in many spheres of life, not all of which are as obviously dramatic as role-taking or theatre”. That is to say, it is natural for people to hypothesise in an as-if mode of thinking, and subsequently, to test their hypotheses in reality. Courtney suggests that in this way humans naturally “create a dramatic world that provides a valid perspective on the actual world” (p. 50).

The creation itself, of course, can only be regarded as fiction. To a certain extent Searle (1974/1975: 321) is correct when he states that “fiction is nonserious”, and that one who listens to “nonserious illocutions” does not suspend disbelief. It seems to me, however, that because of its semantic implication, “nonserious” is rather an unfortunate choice of words. Naturally, one does not actually believe the words of fictional characters or of actors interpreting roles. Nor would one expect an author or actor to believe the work that is being created. Yet it is not uncommon for parents, students, teachers, business people and politicians to imagine that they are performing different roles in fictional situations. Courtney (1990: 92) considers this to be “rational and logical”. In this sense, fiction is not what Searle (1974/1975: 324) regards as being “pretence” (another semantically charged word) but rather a natural process of hypothesis testing that is conducive to learning.

The applicability of this line of reasoning to dramatic role-play is clear:

Just as professional and amateur actors test their as-if action in the theatre and scientists their imagined theory in the laboratory, so student role-players play their as-if action in an actual frame: the classroom. In this frame, the student player, in tandem with at least one other player, uses logic, personal beliefs, attitudes and empathy when testing imaginings. The subsequent dramatisation is grounded in empathy, identification, association, mutuality and dialogue. (DiNapoli, 2001a: 105)

Dramatic role playing here, then, is not the recitation of memorised texts or the elicitation of pre-taught language functions in simulations of communication strategies. First and foremost, a role-play needs to be made dramatically meaningful by the performers. That is to say, the interactive activity needs to be personal and grounded

more in spontaneity than in structural simulation. At the core is a fictional mode of thinking, involving interactive hypothesis testing. O'Neill (1989: 528) explains,

Of the many teaching strategies which are likely to promote dialogue, the approach which has the greatest potential and yet is the least often used is drama in education—where teacher and students co-create fictional roles and contexts, in order to explore and select on some issue, concept, relationship, or event.

Meaning through Action and Personal Commitment

Dramatic action commences when a character's wants and needs become stifled in some way. It concludes when the problem is resolved. That is to say,

Actions and characters run into obstacles. Dramatic conflict begins when someone wants something but there is an obstacle (a strong resistance, a stone wall impediment, or some other character's action) that get in the way of what this character wants. Then the character will either have to overcome the obstacle, or else the character will not be able to overcome the obstacle and so he will have to try and approach it from some other direction. (Packard, 1987: 14)

Additionally, the more important it is for the characters to achieve their ends, the more meaningful the activity becomes. For example, at first glance a character that wants to purchase gilt-edged or blue chip securities is no different from one looking to buy a loaf of bread. Both activities can be depicted as such in a dialogue or simulation role-play. But unless there is conflict, neither will be dramatically meaningful. Moreover, the importance of achieving the goal gives the activity its intensity. Hence, while in the first case the broker may lose his job, in the second a single parent may be worried about the recent price rise in basic consumer goods.

The meaningfulness bestowed on either of these two scenarios comes from the interlocutors themselves. To be meaningful, their interpretation of the events must be affective. That is to say, there must be an empathic connection between the actor and the character. This requires a compromise on the part of the performer, without which the role-playing of either of these scenarios would not be meaningful.

Jones (1995: 18) defines simulation as “an event in which the participants have (functional) roles, duties and sufficient key information about the problem to carry

out these duties”. Herein lies the main difference between dramatic role-plays and simulations, which are undramatic role-plays whose principal aim is the correct performance of grammatical structures or language functions. If the performing students’ concentration is primarily on form, it is unlikely that they will be affectively committed to the character. And without that necessary empathic link, there is little possibility that the activity will be meaningfully interactive. For, as Gragg (1980: 4), in discussing case studies at the Harvard School of Business, points out, effective role-playing is a “process of active thought and feeling”. Similarly, Hegman (1990: 304) affirms, “The fusing of affective and cognitive components of learning benefits both affective and cognitive components of learning, and both are critical to mastery of L2”.

‘Active’, here, refers to the degree of performer commitment, both cognitive and affective. The performer has what Packard (1987: 14) describes as “a stake” in the character: “If the stakes aren’t all that much, then a character won’t care very much about his action”.

It is hard to imagine a role-play being meaningful if the performers are not committed to the characters they are interpreting. For, as Hegman (1990: 305) suggests, “The fusing of affective and cognitive elements in teaching benefits both affective and cognitive components of learning, and both are critical to mastery of L2”.

Let us take, for example, a situation in which an entire pension fund has been lost as a result of reckless investment practices. This in itself is not dramatic. It becomes so only when there is empathy for the characters involved. For this to happen, the participants in the discourse must be cognitively and emotionally involved in some way. Scarcella (1978: 45) suggests that this logical and affective commitment “obliges students to attend to the verbal environment”, as long as the discourse is “relevant to the students’ interests, utilizing both extrinsic motivation, which refers to the students’ daily interests and cares, and intrinsic motivation, which refers to the students’ internal feelings and attitudes”.

For this reason, Via (1987: 113) holds that performers must first bring to the role-play the “concept of self”, because “It is impossible for someone to be anyone else; therefore language learners need to add their own feelings and desires. In order to do this, Via, suggests getting students to practice “the magic if”. In other words, have them ask themselves what they would do if they were in a similar situation.

Needless to say, stereotyping characters and situations can have an adverse effect on communication. So can immediately prejudging human acts as right or wrong. Barnes (1968: 14-15), observes that interaction “will merit the name ‘drama’ by not seeking to impose a single ‘right answer’ but to contain a complex of attitudes and judgements”.

This is precisely what makes drama a valuable resource in teaching foreign/second languages and LSP courses. It is possibly about as close to real communication on a wide range of subjects that one can get in the classroom.

Drama in English as a Foreign/Second Language at the Tertiary Level

Using drama as remedial tool has long been a subject of discussion in the field. Brand (1979: 19) observed a quarter of a century ago, “Drama in language learning is not a new idea”. More recently, Schewe and Shaw (1993a: 7) indicated, “Tenuous though they may often have been, connections have long existed between modern language teaching and drama or theatre”. Various authors have written book-length studies on the subject (for example, Parry, 1972; Via, 1976a; Nomura, 1982; Smith, 1984; Maley & Duff, 1984; Di Pietro, 1987; Schewe & Shaw, 1993b; O’Neill, 1995; Kao & O’Neill, 1998; Whiteson, 1998).

Dramatic role-playing has been a part of the foreign/second language curriculum at the university level for decades. Tiefenbrun (1972: 855), for example, mentions that at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York in the late 1960s and early 1970s a technique of planned dramatic scenes was used “in conjunction with a rigorous application of the audio-lingual method to the teaching of elementary French”. She points out that “This technique was first attempted at the University of Wisconsin”. Additionally, Walker (1977: 141) observes, “Situational teaching predictably heralded the new approach”. Also, speaking on behalf of the Modern Language Association, the National Association for the Teaching of English (United Kingdom) and the National Council of Teachers of English, Barnes (1968: 6) affirms, “What we are recommending, even at college and university level, is an approach to all education that can reasonably be called ‘dramatic’ in that it deals in complexes of attitudes rather than in simple certainties.”

In addition, Wessels (1991: 230) reports that “Stevenson College in Edinburgh offers an EFL course for upper-intermediate and advanced students which is based entirely

on drama techniques"; and Long (1986: 145) discusses a "model role-play project applicable to adult-, college- and secondary-level second second-language classes". Moreover, Cernyak and Reimer (1986) discuss "The Drama Workshop: A Lab Alternative" for teaching German at the University of North Carolina, and the "German Cafe—Theatre: A Venture in Experimental Learning"; and Semke (1980: 137) writes that for German language courses at the University of Westmar, in Iowa, drama was "an integral part of the curriculum".

For her part, Stern (1980: 77), who announces straight off that the "intuitive assumption that drama in the ESL/foreign language classroom improves oral communication is taken as a given for this study", explains that in the early 1980s drama was added to the English as a second language curriculum at the University of California, Los Angeles. Stern further mentions that a Chinese language instructor at the university also used drama "to develop the students' conversational ability and boost their sinking morale", and it was found to be "highly motivating to her students, reactivating a high degree of interest in learning Chinese" (p. 79).

Empathy as a Remedial Tool

Stern (1980: 81) suggests that drama enhances learners' ability to empathise, "i.e., to partially and temporarily give up one's separateness of identity". She holds that imagining oneself as someone else "fosters empathy in the participants", thereby "forming positive intergroup relations because it permits the individual to understand and relate to the feelings of others" (p. 82).

Similarly, Smith (1984: 6) sustains that learners need "to break down defences that prevent them from being empathic, for empathy is a key to understanding the character to be portrayed as a real, living, feeling human being". The author further holds that empathy "is essential for true communication," and suggests that "taking the other's perspective in a conversation might enable one to continue a conversation in a meaningful fashion", concluding that learners, "need to develop empathic communication skills" (p. 14).

The degree of student empathic involvement in role-plays, of course, will vary in accordance with numerous determinants, ranging from the personality traits of the

participants to environmental conditions. For this reason, White (1984: 596) distinguishes between two types of role-play: “role taking” and “role making”. According to the author,

Role taking is described as the conscious, superficial adoption of a role. Being a largely prescribed, imitative procedure, it involves no genuine participant implication. Role making (role acquisition), on the other hand, is the complete absorption into a specific role at a deep subconscious level.

Cognitive and Affective Involvement

Effective dramatic role-play is, as I see it, a blending of White’s (1984) categories. That is to say, while it involves ‘role taking’, in that the participants cognitively analyse the characters, it also requires the more personal, empathic and affective relationship of ‘role making’.

Emotion has long been considered to be a part of human intelligence. Discussing emotion and the science of sentiment, Evans (2002: 12) points out that in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which lay the psychological foundation on which *The Wealth of Nations* would later be built, Adam Smith considered emotion to be the binding factor in social intercourse and, therefore, an aspect of human reasoning. Evans (p. 47) supports Adam's view that intelligent action derives from the effective synchronisation of emotion and reason. Giving precedence to either emotion or reason, therefore, is counterproductive. Learning depends on the simultaneous reliance of both of these aspects of human intelligence.

Echoing Moscovitz (1978), who also proposed that reason and feeling were inseparably interlocked, Hegman (1990: 302) urges language teachers to adopt teaching methods that “will more likely satisfy the wide range of affective and cognitive needs among individual learners”. She suggests that drama should be included in the curriculum because it “provides students with a creative outlet that can be an important bridge to affective expression” (p. 308). Additionally, Stone (1983: 829), concerned “with the emotional component of learning and with the importance of personalizing the learning process”, affirms that “techniques borrowed from the theater would prove ideal for attaining these ends”. Likewise, in the acceptance speech he gave upon receiving the Andrew W. Mellon Fund Distinguished Lectureship in Languages and Linguistics at Georgetown University,

Di Pietro (1976: 25) recommended that instructors consider the “teaching of languages as a dramaturgical activity”.

Towards this aim, Beutler (1976) proposes a useful model for providing drama practice in language teaching. She divides the skills into two categories: cognitive and affective. Following is a summary Beutler's break down of the two skills into their corresponding subskills:

COGNITIVE	AFFECTIVE
Concentration	Enjoyment
Perception	Group problem solving
Factual recall	Confidence
Classification	Empathy
Summary	
Translation	
Application	
Analysis	
Synthesis	
Evaluation	

Figura 1. Drama practice skills (Beutler, 1976: 3).

It is worth noting that drama has long been used in physical therapy, where role-plays are used to focus cognitively on a physically related problem and to deal affectively with it through group interaction. McIntyre and McWilliams (1959: 276), for example, report that “The Speech Clinic of the University of Pittsburgh has utilised creative dramatics as a frequent adjunct to therapy for several years”. Citing Backus and Beasley, they explain that “creative dramatics” is an effective way of “helping each individual to change behavior in interpersonal relationships” (p. 275). In addition, Stern (1980: 87) points out that “the use of drama in language education, psychology, and speech therapy reveals that despite their differing aims, each employs drama because it facilitates communication”.

Long-standing Precedents in General Education

The remedial benefits of drama in general education were initially explored on a large scale in Great Britain. O’Toole’s (1976: 11) reports,

Largely since the Second World War, a genuinely new concept of drama as an educational tool has emerged. Pioneered by Peter Slade and the post-war breed of local education authority drama advisers, rationalised in colleges and Universities by such people as Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton and John Hodgson, made respectable by an H.M.I. official report, it has above all been practised and refined in the schools themselves

According to Jackson (1993: 1), Theatre in Education or TIE Programme was developed in Britain in the 1960s in order “to harness the techniques and imaginative potency of theatre in the service of education”. Bolton (1985: 152) describes it as the culmination of “a ‘new movement’ in education”, which had begun in the middle of the nineteenth century and received official backing early in the twentieth century when a high ranking government official British Ministry of Education, encouraging teachers to use drama as a remedial tool, declared that “acting is a vital part of the school life of every class, and every subject that admits of dramatic treatment is systematically dramatised”.

Bolton, who has taught at various universities in the United Kingdom and in the United States, is a well-known and highly respected author of three seminal books on the subject of drama in education. They are *Towards a Theory of Drama in Education* (1976), *Drama as Education: An Argument for Placing Drama at the Centre of the Curriculum* (1984), and *New Perspectives on Classroom Drama* (1992).

Bolton defends a nonexhibitional kind of dramatic activity, which he describes as a “dynamic way of illuminating knowledge” (Bolton, 1985: 153). A similar philosophy was earlier championed by Slade (1954), who argued against using drama merely for public display. Years later, Brand (1979: 19), in discussing drama as a remedial tool in F/SLT, also maintained: “This is markedly different from theatre, which is largely concerned with communication between actors and an audience”.

The notion of nonexhibitional drama in education was fundamental to the seminal work carried out by Dorothy Heathcote, who taught at the University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne from 1950 to 1986, where she supervised many doctoral studies in drama education, and whose teaching philosophy is well documented by Johnson and O’Neill (1984). According to Bolton (1993: 36), Heathcote held that “the purpose of doing drama in the classroom lay in its meaning”, which was to be “engaged with” collectively and in a nonexhibitional fashion.

For her part, O’Neill (1989: 528) also stresses the nonexhibitional aspect of a type of dramatic activity as a means of developing interpersonal communication skills in foreign/second language learning:

This kind of drama is a complex, many-faceted process, a shared learning experience.

The process has little in common with the kind of ‘creative dramatics’ which may

focus on individual pantomimes, skills training, the re-enactment of a story, or the presentation of an improvised play.

McCaslin (1984: 9) notes that the term “creative drama” was apparently first used in the United States in 1977 by the Children’s Theatre Association of America in reference to “an improvisational, nonexhibitional, process-centered form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact, and reflect upon human experiences.” McCaslin further explains:

Dialogue is created by the players, whether the content is taken from a well-known story or is an original plot. Lines are not written down or memorized. With each playing, the story becomes more detailed and better organized, but it remains extemporaneous in nature and is at no time designed for an audience. (p. 10)

Methodological Variety

Returning once again to the subject of drama in F/SLT, several methodological approaches have been put forward over the years. Kao and O’Neill (1998: 6) place the more commonly known ones on a continuum of teaching perspectives that runs from “Closed/Controlled”, or highly teacher-controlled activities, to “Open Communication” at the opposite end, with a midway point between the two described as “Semi-controlled” communication.

According to the authors, for Closed or Controlled Communication activities the discourse is scripted and instructional; roles are fixed; tasks are teacher-oriented; and focus is on accuracy in performance. In contrast, Open Communication involves natural and spontaneous discourse; roles are negotiable; focus is group oriented and on fluency in communication.

Closed or Controlled Communication activities include scripted role-play, dramatised story, language games and simulations. Semi-controlled communication involves improvisational role-play; and Open Communication makes use of Di Pietro’s (1987) scenarios methodology and Kao and O’Neill’s (1998) Process Drama. The latter methodology is in line with what O’Toole (1992: 1) describes as “the notion of *process* in drama”, which is known by practioners in the UK, Canada and Australia, and “seems to denote anything that keeps on going, and hasn’t come to something called a ‘product’.”²¹

Finally, activities for controlled communication may be successfully modified for semi-controlled practice. A noteworthy example is the promising research currently being done on the subject of simulation and gaming in ESP teaching at the School of Telecommunications of the Universitat Politècnica de València (see García-Carbonell & Watts, 1997; and García-Carbonell et al., 2001).

Nonexhibitional Engagement

But whether for Closed/Controlled Communication or Open Communication, the key factor in any nonexhibitional methodology is engagement. O'Neill (1995: 81) indicates that students "engage in acting behavior" in which "different kinds of engagement" are experienced rather than displayed. Borrowing from Morgan and Saxton, she outlines five engagement types. They are:

1. Dramatic playing: being oneself in a make-believe situation.
2. Mantle of the Expert: being oneself but looking at the situation from a particular point of view
3. Roleplaying: representing an attitude or point of view.
4. Characterizing: representing an individual lifestyle, which may be different from that of the participant.
5. Acting: selecting movement, gesture, and voice to represent a particular individual to others. (O'Neill, 1995: 81)

These five engagement categories certainly seem to cover the range of role-playing styles that I have observed being used in the F/SLT field, including ESP. In the first category, imagination is called into play, as for example in MacKenzie's (2002: 69) *English for Business Studies*: "Suppose that you were part of the marketing team responsible for the following product concepts".

Regarding the second classification, in which the students remain themselves but consider situations from different points of view, MacKenzie sets up another role-play activity. He has the students consider an application for a business loan from the perspective of a banker, instructing them to "think of questions about the viability of the future business: will they be successful, and why? Or why might they not be successful?" (p. 89)

The third group applies to role-plays in which students are asked to defend a certain position or an opinion as if it were their own. An example can be found in *Market Leader: Intermediate Business English* (Cotton et al., 2000: 52).

One of you is a company employee. The other is the employee's boss. Employee: You think you should have a 10% salary increase. Boss: You think the company can only afford a 2% increase. Negotiate with each other and try to get a good outcome.

This activity, of course, could also be used as an example of the fourth type of role-play engagement, requiring characterisation. In characterising, students depict the lives of people who are completely different from themselves. In order to do so, they need to deal with some of the characters' personal details such as age, marital status, educational background, professional experience, etc.

The difference between this engagement category and that of the first one is a matter of degree. In the first group, the students imagine they are people who are not all that different from themselves in real life. That is to say, depicting a banker or marketing consultant conceivably falls within the experience range of students of business. For the fourth role-play engagement group, however, students take into consideration a character's personal biography. This type of role-play is not unlike the case study suggested by Dow and Ryan (1987: 197-199), in which students are asked to analyse relevant details concerning a cast of characters, while at the same time interpreting unspecified yet pertinent related information deriving from cultural ramifications.

Finally, in the fifth division, concerning gesture and voice, focus is on proxemics and kinesics. Though obviously voice and gesture are intrinsically part of all role-play engagements, Goodale (1998: 20) stresses its pertinence to business presentations in which, the author asserts, body language (for example, posture, gestures, eye contact, hands, etc.) accounts for 55% of the overall impact.

Language as Action

These role-play engagements also accord with Hayes' (1976: 179) notion of drama as "English in action" and with Scarcella's (1978: 44) suggestion that such activities contribute to "the development of discourse strategies. Strategies for attention-getting, topic initiation, and topic change may be developed through socio-drama".

As speech acts (Austin, 1962), utterances expressed in dramatic role-plays can certainly be considered locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. For example, the five illocutionary acts that Searle (1976) observes can be usefully applied in role-play engagements as representatives (e.g., "I'm an accountant."); directives (e.g., "Could you have my broker phone me as soon as possible?"); commissives (e.g., "The purchase will be delivered next week."); expressives (e.g., "We appreciate your doing business with us"); and declarations (e.g., "We declare this agreement null and void").

Certainly in dramatic discourse the illocutionary and perlocutionary interaction is ongoing when Searle's (1969) three conditions for felicity (preparatory, sincerity, and essential) are met. The preparatory condition establishes that the characters have the authority to act as they do, as when a manager gives a subordinate an order; the sincerity condition assumes that the characters are being sincere, as when a customer asks for a particular product; and the essential condition, which essentially "determines the others" (Searle, 1969: 69), binds the character to the act itself, as when that customer's request counts as an attempt to get the salesperson to do something.

However, returning to the notion of drama, which I referred to earlier as derived from the Greek word *ἄνῃα*, meaning action, involving conflict and concluding with a resolution, the action in dramatic role-playing must be seen as subverting Searle's conditions in some way. That is to say, the preparatory condition is infelicitious because the subordinate gives the manager an order; or the sincerity condition breaks down because the salesperson starts asking customers for his or her own products; or the essential condition is undermined because a customer requests a product that the salesperson quite obviously cannot supply.

Austin (1962: 117) affirms that failure in "securing uptake" can make discourse defective. But however so this may be, when illocutionary uptake is not secured the potential for dramatic conflict is introduced into the discourse. For example, "There's a bull market coming" might refer to stock prices on the rise, or livestock to be sold, or a market that really is not a market at all. If a stockbroker says it, you would expect the meaning to be taken in the first sense, and that the customer is probably being advised to buy shares. However, if the customer replies, "I really don't need a bull", the situation might be touchingly comical if the advisee is a retired music teacher who knows nothing about investment, or startling if the same advisee just happens to be the recently elected mayor of the town.

Of course, the speaker's meaning or intention might not be explicit at all; in which case the listener would need to make some inferences. In this sense inferring is not unlike hypothesis testing, which Courtney (1990: 13) considers essential to human thought and discourse: "We do this in many spheres of life, not all of which are as obviously dramatic as role-taking or theatre".

In the co-operative principle, Grice (1989: 26) establishes that there exists an unwritten conversational protocol, which can be summarised in the following manner: "Make your conversation/contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged". Grice (1967, 1975) suggests that there are four conversational maxims: quantity (give enough information as is needed); quality (make it truthful); relevance (make it relevant); and manner (make it as clear and brief as possible).

However, he also indicates that these rules of conversation may be purposefully ignored by a speaker in order to make a point. In fact, conversational implicature is common in speech. It is also habitual in dramatic role-playing. When, for example, a sales representative reports to the head of the sales department, ignoring the maxim of quantity by providing minute details of a recent business, without getting to the main point, the implied message might be that the trip was unsuccessful because nothing was sold. Or, to take another example, if a doctor enquires whether a patient has stopped smoking, and the patient replies, "The Red Sox lost again last night," thus flouting the maxim of relevance, the doctor might take this to mean that patient has not yet kicked the habit.

Generally, the force of impact created by the pragmatics of discourse tend to be less concentrated and intense in everyday speech than in dramatic role-plays. "It's raining" in response to "What are you doing today?" may simply mean that because of the inclement weather, an outing is unlikely. If the speakers cannot, say, go to the beach because of the rainy weather, they can always take in a movie or go bowling instead. In dramatic role-plays, however, the impact is usually more forceful. Elam (1980: 178) notes, "The drama presents what is very much a 'pure' model of social intercourse, and the dialogue bears a very limited resemblance to what actually takes place in 'everyday' linguistic encounters". Thus, because of the bad weather, an architect may be unable to inspect the construction of a potentially dangerous building project going on at a work site.

Strategic Interaction

Di Pietro (1987) also distinguishes between common speech discourse and the dramatic discourse of role-plays. What I have thus far been referring to as dramatic role-plays, Di Pietro (1987) calls scenarios. In his words, a scenario “captures the dramatic element of human interaction” (p. 3). A scenario gives “a label to real-life happenings that entail the unexpected and require the use of language to resolve them” (p. vii).

Contrary to role-play simulations, the dramatic factor is an inseparable part of a scenario. Puhl (1987: 143) states, “scenarios must evoke a felt communicative need based on the nature of the situation (scenario content)”. As I have already suggested, inferring, hypothesis testing, having a personal stake in the action, and relying on group interaction for a final resolution are essential to dramatic role-plays. This is what Di Pietro in his book refers to as “strategic interaction”. Di Pietro (1987: 3) sustains that “Without the element of dramatic tension, a scenario is unlikely to be successful, no matter how relevant its theme might be to learners' functional needs”.

What takes place linguistically during strategic interaction is not unlike that which occurs in simulations or undramatic role-plays. Information is exchanged, negotiation takes place, and appropriate behaviour in accordance with the characters' social status in a given context is considered.

The difference becomes apparent, however, in the approach taken to the performance of the role-play itself. In strategic interaction, language is used not so much to simulate reality as it is to disambiguate it. Information given may be grammatically ambiguous, as, especially in this day and age, when someone says “Flying planes can be dangerous”; or pragmatically vague, as when someone else says “It’s warm in here” and the speaker's intention in saying so is unclear (e.g., “Does she want the air conditioner switched on?” “Is he trying to cover up the fact that he is nervous?”, etc.); or socially inappropriate (e.g., a sales clerk might certainly say to a customer “May I help you?” but not the other way around, unless, for example, the customer turns out to be an undercover detective who has surprised a clerk in the act of shoplifting).

Disambiguating the meaning of language, then, is at the core of strategic interaction. According to Di Pietro (1987: 21), a typical scenario has four parts. First, scenarios are selected. These are “mini-dramas that happen because of an unexpected event or the need

to resolve some dilemma of social interaction"; this in turn is followed by a rehearsal period leading up to a performance and a subsequent debriefing. The procedure is similar to what Holden (1981) proposes. As to that, Dickson (1989: 305) reports,

Holden describes a process for improvising scenes which can be used at the intermediate level. Her process includes five steps: 1) presentation of the theme or problem by the teacher, 2) discussion in groups of how to act out the scene, 3) experimenting in groups with different interpretations of the scene, 4) presentation of the scene by one or two groups, and 5) discussion of the scene with the whole class.

Following is an example of a scenario.

Role A: (male or female) You run a flower shop. You have fresh roses but your other flowers are not fresh (they are wilted)... Try to sell the old flowers to the next customer.

Role B: (male) You have just met a young German woman. She has invited you to dinner. You have been told that you should bring flowers to your hostess. Roses are especially fitting in these situations. Prepare yourself to purchase some flowers in the flower shop. (Di Pietro, 1987: 28)

During the first phase of the role-play, students read the text corresponding to only one of the roles, and in small groups discuss their respective characters. Each group then chooses one of its members to perform in the scenario.

This is followed by a rehearsal period, in which each group analyses the aims of its respective character as well as the means by which his or her goal may best be attained. Keeping the social status (shopkeeper and customer) of both characters in mind, each group discusses its own character's strategies as well as those it feels may be the strategies put into play by the other character. The member chosen to perform the designated role for each group is subsequently briefed, and possible dialogic exchanges are rehearsed.

The scenario involving both roles is then performed. Most likely the encounter will force each character to make spontaneous strategic adjustments as the situation shifts from what was rehearsed to what actually takes place during the scenario. This is then followed by a debriefing session, in which the entire class evaluates the overall performance.

Social factors and language associated with them are of particular importance when analysing, rehearsing and performing the designated roles of a given scenario. Ethnic origin, age, sex, social class, type of education, among other socially significant

aspects, all factor into the interpretation of the characters and the strategies they are likely to use in order to achieve their goals.

Strategic interaction requires role reciprocation, for example shopkeeper/customer; employer/employee; doctor/patient; parent/child; young male/young female; cautious/spontaneous; unemotional/emotional, etc. In an article on real-life role types, Di Pietro (1981: 28) observes, "Roles do not exist in communicational vacuum. Rather they are oppositional". This reciprocation lends itself to drama, i.e., conflict and the ensuing pursuit of a negotiated solution. As Di Pietro explains, "The strategic function of language exchanged between persons playing reciprocal roles is for the interactants to move toward a shared goal" (p. 28).

One of the objectives of a dramatic role-play is to get students to do research on the characters involved. A student, for example, who is to role play a textile manufacturer from Alcoi will not only need to consider the character as a professional and take into account key aspects concerning the textile industry itself, but will also have to consider the character as a social being with a personal history. The character research preparation will affect the overall language used and the functional strategies employed during the performance of the role-play. This in turn will make the activity more consistent with the other objective of the role play activity, which is to get students to communicate on a broad range of topics in a way which is as near as possible to authenticity in the classroom context.

A dramatic role-play can never be simply a dialogic exchange among characters. A phone conversation between two business people is not in itself dramatic. Unless role reciprocation in tandem with social and personal history factors are imbedded in the exchange, it is unlikely that the role-play will exceed the mechanical expectations of simulation, with little or no authentic communicative interaction involved.

Naturally, students need to acquire the necessary language to perform the task. But unlike simulation practice, dramatic role-playing actually gives them the opportunity to practice discourse as communication. With regard to that, Puhl (1987: 142) sustains that strategic interaction "allows for the development of metalinguistic awareness and the acquisition of communicative skills by the learner".

Puhl (pp. 144-145) presents twenty-two scenarios, which are broken down into content and linguistic aims, such as in Figure 2:

Title	Scenario Content	Target Structure
1. Department Store	1. Return a faulty TV, lost sales slip	1. v. + inf. v. + gerund
2. A Job Interview	2. For receptionist who has skills but imperfect English	2. v. + s. + inf.
3. A Raise	3. Secretary's job expands, he or she asks for more money	3. 1 st conditional <i>may/ might</i>

Figure 2. Three scenarios suggested by Puhl (1987).

However, breaking scenarios down into content and linguistic objectives should not take precedence over the communicative aim of scenarios. Di Pietro (1981: 29), while claiming that "A good basis for formulating verbal strategies which fulfil ... types of roles is the functional-notional syllabus", nevertheless insists that "functions and notions must be made situationally and personally relevant".

Additionally, it is interesting to note that Short (1981: 200), in discussing discourse analysis and the analysis of drama, holds a similar view.

I would not want to discourage the practice of getting students to act out parts of dramatic texts in class. Besides building confidence and giving oral practice, such a procedure is likely to bring ... a greater understanding of the rules governing language use But it is the process, not the product, which is important.

Moreover, this is in line with what Brice (1993: 177) reports.

Both language learning theorists and practitioners of teaching English as a second language or dialect have argued that role playing moves language learners beyond their usual performance in ordinary classroom presentations.

Finally, although Strategic Interaction scenarios as proposed by Di Pietro (1981, 1987) and Puhl (1987) was originally construed for F/SLT, and though nonexhibitional drama has mostly been used as a remedial tool in general education for decades, the use of these methodologies can also be extended to other areas. For example, dramatic role-plays are currently being loosely applied to the ESP curriculum at the tertiary level. (See DiNapoli, 1997, 2001a, 2001b; DiNapoli & Algarra, 2001a, 2001b)

Concluding Remarks

In spite of it seeming to be more often than not the case, dialogic interaction in role-plays need not be simulative. Unlike role playing for simulation, dramatic role-play is a dialogical process in which meaning is generated by inference and interactive hypothesis testing. Furthermore, it requires of the participants a commitment that is both cognitive and affective. The connections between drama and F/SLT have long existed. Though at present the relationship seems rather tenuous, there is reason to believe, as this article suggests, that further research on the subject is imminent.

Note

¹ Later on in this article I will explain Di Pietro's scenario methodology in relation to dramatic role-plays, and provide bibliographical details that include information on the subject of dramatic role playing in the Business English curriculum at the Facultat d'Economia of the Universitat de València.

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