

THE THERAPEUTIC INFLUENCE OF DRAMA IN ENGLISH CLASSES

The main aim of the article is to show the seed of curiosity about drama and drama therapy as an unconventional and irreplaceable way of conducting English classes for children aged between 6 to 9. Teachers, who are aware of it and uses different techniques of drama, can help children to understand themselves, to cope with problems and to learn cooperating in groups, as well.

Introduction

The more techniques during a course, the better classes can be. It is known that each technique depends on both the numbers of pupils in a class, and the topic that teachers want to do. Teachers are as good as their knowledge about pupils, the branch of study they teach and their self-development throughout the life. Hence, the work consists of some drama techniques, some clues of what should be taken into consideration during the classes, and the importance of creating a specific aim for each class.

Drama therapy

Drama itself is very often used in teaching and therapy. It is believed that drama is one of the best educational and preventive methods. Drama plays a relevant role in schools, that is why it is used in Literature, History, Geography and Science lessons. It is of paramount importance to remember that not only a pupil, but a teacher as well, is in the role. Thus, *a self-conscious master teacher, who works daily to show others how to find materials... select symbols, achieve dramatic focus, heighten tension and slow pace to lead children to significant moments of insight.*¹ When the drama is not only a kind of amusement and resolves into some sort of self-knowledge, exposure of hidden emotion, then it obtains a therapeutic character. According to O'Neil there are six following functions of drama therapy:

- ❖ improvement of group's social condition,
- ❖ developing individual linguistic competence,

¹ Wagner B. J., *Drama as a Learning Medium*, London, 1979, p. 15

- ❖ understanding concepts and solving problems,
- ❖ diagnosing students' knowledge,
- ❖ stimulating such types of students' activities as writing, drawing, reading, observing, testing.

Techniques of drama

Techniques of drama, also known as drama strategies are the tools that teacher uses each day. These techniques help to develop enquiry skills, extend creativity and support the understanding. One of the simplest activities is story telling. It can be performed with gestures, pictures, words – pupils are freely to use anything they want to. Some other drama strategies are still images and freeze frames. These techniques are often used for improving students' vocabulary skills by asking them to illustrate a word or phrase. Common techniques which are sometimes forgotten in a drama strategy we represented by narration, when the speaker really composes a story. It sometimes has a shape of a letter, poem, story or a diary. The more personal the narration is the better effect it brings. There are also context techniques which focus on making a hero and a story. Everything must be discussed: a place, time, weather, mood. Creating a mask is an activity that is associated with context techniques. While making a mask it is essential to pay attention to the size of the eyes, nose hilliness, abundant lips, sculpted cheekbones, etc. Even the smallest thing is a carrier of information about the creator.

Summary

Therapy is not always a treatment for some disease, but it also can be a helping hand in self-development and building social relationships. For a few it is enough to talk with a friend, for others the best solution is an appointment with psychologist, and for some it can be just drama classes. While learning through drama, pupils learn faster and understand the subject better. Moreover, such classes have a therapeutic value. Pupils can objectify their emotions in the form of letters, poems, gestures, paintings, etc. They are more

self-conscious, or just more open to talk about what they feel. Good teachers can observe if something happened with their students, can help them through the drama, and if it is necessary talk with the parents for the sake of the child. Drama therapy helps to understand the rules in society, how to obey them. On the other hand, it helps to create the pictures of ourselves and understand each other, as well. As a recapitulation, I want to quote a short but a highly meaningful dialog written by an anonymous author: “What about your therapy? - You're it.”