Embracing Drama in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Making use of drama can transcend traditional grammar-based instruction in that it is better suited to foster authentic, dynamic, and student-generated communication. Incorporating the spontaneity of Meisner techniques, along with the character exploration of Stanislavski, students will gain a more nuanced, emotional, and holistic understanding of their target language.

I. Introduction

Language teachers have a plethora of tools at their disposal for energizing students and bringing authentic language into the classroom. One that I believe to be underutilized is drama. The doubtful may ask why an instructor would take the risk of introducing methodology that may further reinforce the affective filter. It could be embarrassing for the teacher and the student. Embarrassment though, is a huge part of language learning and drama. As Anne Bogart says in, *A Director Prepares*:

Embarrassment is a teacher. A good actor risks embarrassment in every moment. There is nothing more thrilling than being in rehearsal with an actor that is willing to set foot in embarrassing territory. The uneasiness keeps the lines tight. If you try to avoid being embarrassed by what you do, nothing will happen because the territory remains safe and unexposed. Embarrassment engenders a glow and a presence and a dissolving of habit.

Parallels can be directly drawn to the second language learner. In the traditional EFL classroom, great care is taken to avoid embarrassment. Output is kept to a minimum because it causes the most discomfort. When output is produced, it is largely in the staid reading of words that are not of their own making. This type of class is "language learning theater", more Kabuki than anything approaching authenticity. Students learn to play the game and little progress is made. So, in order for learning to take place, teachers must help students to become aware that learning and producing a second language has an inherent risk of embarrassment and that embarrassment is good. Once this is understood and becomes the foundation for the EFL classroom, learners will find balance, and perhaps, even excitement in what was once only discomfort.

The "dissolving of habit" that Bogart speaks of can be seen as L1 in the EFL sense. It is admittedly odd for a class of twenty-five plus learners who share an L1 to be conversing in L2 and yet that is the task. Teachers must find a way to make this authentic. One way to do this is by helping students come to terms with the reality that the classroom is inauthentic and so, in the drama process, they will be in another place, the circumstances of their lives will be different, in fact, they are to become someone else.

Something I discovered when auditioning an actor for a play in New York may be of some use here. He

was a fabulous talent once the scene started rolling but quite awkward and shy in social situations. He was also trilingual. When asked why someone so shy became an actor he said that his shyness was exactly the reason why. His opportunity to be someone else set him free from embarrassment. He was no longer worried about social or verbal gaffes he might make because he was no longer himself. Adding that, his natural state when acting was to be slightly off-balance, like a skater who finds stability through the alternating rhythm of his strides. Each push of the skate would send him crashing to the ground if not for the forthcoming push of the next skate. Acting for him was to embrace the instability. Interestingly, even though he had over a decade of experience, he hated watching his performances on the screen when finished. This, however, makes sense as although he is watching a character, he is not watching as a character.

Bogart Continues with "The feeling of embarrassment is a good omen because it signifies that you are meeting the moment fully, with an openness to the new feelings it will engender."

Combining drama with language teaching makes perfect sense if teachers can get students to the point of feeling comfort in the discomfort. Learners are then ready to experience L2. It can take language from the page and into the experience of each student. It, like language is emotional, unpredictable, and based on communication.

II. Background

The only thing remembered from my first-year Spanish class at Boston University was the performance my friend and I gave. It was in the form of a press conference. I was the guitarist; Pete Townshend and he was Keith Moon. We were given simple directions: give a 2–3-minute speech as a famous person. We could show two photos as we spoke. Why would I remember only these minutes from a class the lasted a full year? First, there was pressure in the preparation. I was engaged in the material because I chose it. If I did not choose carefully, I had only myself to blame. Next, I had to become someone else. Some say that simply speaking another language we are, in a sense, someone else. So instead of adding pressure, the tension decreased because each student was twice not himself. Once removed as a character and again by speaking a foreign language Finally, it was spontaneous and emotional. The audience laughed and asked questions. Each student was able to create a real space to communicate where the outcome could not be entirely predicted. This took place nearly 30 years ago and this simple project created the rigorous test I now have for my own lessons. Will the students remember this class 10 years from now?

Drama is project based. There is a collaborative process at work. Students depend on one another and digest the learning material in an active way. Add film and other media to this and it is much more geared toward how students get their information in daily life. Phones are here to stay. To teach a class without media or active learning and teachers are asking students to enter a foreign atmosphere. It has also been shown (Gunawan et.al., 2017) that students participating in project-based learning with media assistance achieved higher scores in the post-test compared to those in the control class.

III. Setting the Stage

This paper will show that the actor/director and student/teacher analogy is relatively easy to put into action. This is only true however, if as language teachers we believe in certain fundamentals such as student autonomy, the teacher as facilitator, student generated materials, and an active learning environment. Let's

look at these individually.

1. Student autonomy encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. In relation to drama, students can choose the project goals, what success looks like, and the timeline of the process.

2. Teacher as Facilitator/Director

The best language teachers and directors are collaborators not dictators. In the case of directors, why would anyone want to silence any asset that could make for a better production? Directors listen to set designers, lighting people, costume designers, actors, and scores more. The job of the director is to organize these professionals so that they are all working toward a common goal. The analogy with language teachers may be a bit harder to see but they too are not the only expert in the room. First, very few students learn in the same way. If a teacher mistakenly believes that all students should accommodate their learning to a single methodology that a teacher may have, then that instructor will quickly lose the room. The teacher must be aware of developments in the field and use materials that connect with students and the instructor on various levels. The teacher must teach in different ways and be aware of what helps each student to be engaged. The language teacher cannot teach the language. The successful student will experience the language with the teacher as a facilitator.

The traditional role of both the teacher and the director is one of being the sole authority in the classroom. More enlightened thinkers now understand that learning and creation is a collaborative process. None other than Martin Scorsese said that of course he listens to his actors. It would be insane to have them on set and not utilize their creativity.

3. Student-Generated Materials

For language learners to remain engaged, students, especially at the college level, need to have a say in what they are learning and create their own materials. Students do not have the same interests, therefore there should not be one theme or goal for any project. I have seen embarrassing lessons where teachers try guessing the type of music students like or movies they watch. While it is important to stay updated, this type of pandering ends in failure more often than not. It is better to choose music or a movie that is clearly out of date but has educational value. Better yet, allow the students to choose and study what they think to be valuable. Communication originates from the desire to say something. When students are invested in their own material, they will try harder than if only the teacher spends time explaining why something is important.

4. An Active Learning Environment

Do not confuse this with pair work. Pair work can be a start, but it is certainly not the end. A truly active learning environment is one where students participate and collaborate to find answers to problems that are not known only to the teacher. While typical textbooks can work to help students to find answers together, projects with well-understood parameters will help the classroom to be more interactive. This could be as simple as sending groups of four outside the room to take photos and create a short story to present. Working toward a common goal that leaves room for spontaneity is the essence of the active learning classroom.

IV. Non-Verbal Communication

Although it may seem counterintuitive to actively teach non-verbal communication in an EFL class, it is absolutely the place to begin when blending drama and communication. Although the 1981 book Silent Messages by Albert Mehrabian is often misquoted to say that communication is 93% non-verbal, it surely is not, it is however a large percentage of overall communication. University students can use their vast L1 experience to communicate effectively despite not having any English experience at all. Once students become aware of communication strategies they already possess, bridging the gap into L2 communication seems much less daunting. We are also in line here with the fourth rule of Dr. Fanselow's *XIII Rules for Student-Centered Language Teaching* (2012):

Never depend on language alone to communicate, instead ensure that other mediums, such as gestures, sketches, sounds and music, accompany the language you and your students use.

With Drama we will use all five senses, and more.

1. Pantomime

Students usually have a vague understanding of pantomime already. They know enough not to speak, to communicate through somewhat exaggerated gestures, to be consistent when dealing with objects and more. What they usually need to be told is that this is not a game of charades. The point is to tell a story, no matter how brief, that has a beginning, middle and end. Let's explore a few ways this can contribute to language learning.

A. The most basic reason for this activity is that it is active. It engages students in the learning process. This type of lesson should be loud, memorable, and stimulate their kinesthetic learning abilities. It is possible that first-year university students in Japan have never explored this type of hands-on lesson. This is unfortunate as a significant percentage of the class may retain information better this way.

B. Vocabulary can be taught both visually and contextually using pantomime. After watching a pantomime, students are asked to visually describe what they just saw. In this way, students are recalling a visual representation of an action or object rather than just seeing a word on a page. This also works contextually as students will need to infer meaning. Learners see a story taking place and then need to guess vocabulary they do not understand. It is truly active learning as the teacher is not telling them what should be learned. A study done by Manolis et.al. (Manolis et al., 2013) investigated more than 5,000 students in the USA, Hong Kong and Japan, grades 5 to 12, showed that learners vocabulary style preferences were Visual (29%), Auditory (34%) and Kinesthetic (37%). Most everyone uses all three styles, but preferences have shown to be important. Furthermore, Minda and Perdana (2023) in *Learning Styles and Vocabulary Acheivement* found that when students were taught in their preferred learning style that they were better able to absorb and recall vocabulary.

C. Confidence is a third byproduct of pantomime. Some teachers may think that confidence could decrease, and that the affective filter raises when required to do something physical in class but if students are in

small groups and are directed to help one another, confidence will increase with each successful story communicated. It will become apparent quickly that most messages can be conveyed without words and so that relieves some of the pressure to concentrate solely on vocabulary lists.

D. Cultural awareness can also be explored through pantomime in a fun, non-threatening way. Sociocultural competence in language learning was emphasized in the 1990s and the research has not slowed. Savignon & Sysoyev (2005) provide empirical evidence that sociocultural strategies can be seen as one of the efficient ways of achieving learners' sociocultural competence within L2 communicative competence. Let's explore some examples.

In almost all countries a smile is just a smile with the same feelings associated with it, but a nod of the head or a wave of the hand can have opposite meanings. In the West, the chin is raised when greeting whereas most Asian countries lower the head and perhaps even bow. Japanese often have automatically pained expressions when declining and invitation. This can be quite foreign to an American who sees no reason to feel bad about declining a request that is beyond his control. The Japanese, however, empathize with the person inviting and share their disappointment when declining. Again, students should be able to retain vocabulary, cultural traits and gain confidence through pantomime because they are engaged in their own learning and can actively experience new concepts in the L2.

2. Voice

Now that learners have become aware that most communication is often non-verbal, it is time to start using their voices. The obvious place to start is adding voices to their pantomime stories. This should be done only after exploring the basics of the voice.

1. Clarity. Students of English do not have to speak the same way. The English as Lingua Franca movement is making great strides but students themselves want to be understood and so are quite willing participants in pronunciation practice. Here, there is no reason not to use actual actor's warm-ups that are designed to stimulate particular muscles used for speech. "Red leather, yellow leather" for the tongue and "Rubber Baby Buggy Bumper" for the lips and more can easily be found. Note that it is important during the repetition that doing it well is better than doing it quickly. This is also an exercise that can be checked via their phones. Voice recognition is not 100% correct but students can easily become aware of issues with their pronunciation if the same types of sounds cannot be recognized by their phones.

2. Projection. Actors and students need to be heard if they want to communicate their ideas. This is an active and fun lesson that entails throwing their voices across the room to one another. Distance and the sounds of other students create the necessity to project their voices. The teacher could simply use greetings or create a short dialogue that necessitates each student is heard.

3. Modulation.

Juan David Leongómez et. al. (2021) state in *Voice modulation: From origin and mechanism to social impact* that:

existing research suggests that humans possess a remarkably advanced capacity for voluntary vocal control—one which surpasses the abilities observed in other terrestrial mammals, including extant nonhuman primates. While vocal control is a necessary prerequisite for speech, it is also observed in human nonverbal vocalizations, such as conversational laughter, exaggerated roars of aggression or embellished cries of pain. This suggests that voice modulation plays an important role in both verbal and nonverbal communication and may often confer social and reproductive advantages.

Most people do not realize the importance of voice, much less the power that research attributes to it. As teachers, we need to break it down carefully so it can be used as an effective element in L1 as well as L2 communication.

This comes in 4 parts with volume being the first. The most important thing to teach is something counterintuitive. Being loud does not always get the most attention. Often, it's the whisper that will turn heads. Figuring out how to speak dynamically in a role will only come with experience. Next is tone, which conveys attitude and intention. Students can start with a simple "Good Morning" while changing the tone. A warm friendly tone asks for more conversation while a monotone kills, or is meant to kill, any chance of that. Rate is the third component to explore. Talking too slow can quickly bore the listener, whereas speed talking can be hard to follow and cause the audience to believe that the speaker would rather being doing something else. The challenge here is to find the right balance and to be dynamic as speaking slowly and rapidly both have their place in communication. The final element is Pitch. Explore how a low pitch can convey authority and a high pitch urgency. Have students read a line from a script in 3 different types of pitch. Have their partners reflect on how each makes them feel. Again, the key for all the above is to increase awareness and, by doing so, add nuance to speaking.

4. Emotion. Happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and surprise are the universally accepted basic emotions. Student actors can easily explore these emoticons by saying a set phrase in each emotion. My favorites are "OK" and "I love you." The former works because it is one of the most recognizable in the world. The latter is interesting because it gets very difficult to say sadly or with anger. The teaching point during this exercise comes when students realize that they are using all types of modulation and having to imagine a backstory for each emotion. Shouting an angry "I love you" takes some thought. Why would the character be angry? Is it the first time the phrase has been said? What might the anticipated reaction be? By logging these ideas, students begin to understand the process of becoming a character.

V. The Meisner Technique

English language teachers who use content in lessons will be rewarded with more active and motivated students. It is, however, important to remember that whatever content is introduced, the class remains an English language class. Teachers should not pretend to be experts just because they are teaching a content EFL seminar. They should also not expect that students are planning to major in that particular content. Sacrifices must be made in order to ensure that only relevant content, in relation to the study of English, is introduced. What will now be explored are the basic concepts of the Meisner technique, how they are

beneficial to the teaching of language and then how they can be applied.

Acting is behaving truthfully under imaginary circumstances -Sanford Meisner

This is the first Meisner concept to understand. This does not mean that students need to find the truth in an imaginary world. The imaginary circumstances are taking on a character, a role, and usually a script. This is not so removed from the traditional pair work that happens in the classroom. The difference, arguably, is in the preparation, process and content of the script. Pair work still requires students to "act." How then can we train them to act better? There are four ideas to consider.

1. Truthful Emotions: University students do not start from zero language and experience. The majority will have at least 18 years of life to draw from as well as 1 or more languages. To teach them grammar as if they are babies would be to waste this experience. Meisner wants his actors to find genuine emotion and reactions from their personal experiences. He wants them "to do" rather than "to act." In the language setting the goal is the same as students should use language rather than study it. Depending on the level of L2, some L1 may be necessary to find these personal experiences. Usually, 5-10 minutes in groups of four will be enough.

2. Repetition: As Sanford Meiner famously said:

   Acting is not talking; it's living off the other fellow!!!

   Rote learning has always been a part of language learning and its merits can be debated but it undoubtedly plays a role. When adapted in an EFL class, rote learning can be brought alive. Meisner stives for actors to respond truthfully to what is happening in the script. A scene gets stale rather quickly if it is always performed the same way. Perhaps the most well-known of Meisner's techniques is his repetition exercise. In its most basic form, a pair of actors repeat a simple phrase to each other over and over for up the 30 minutes. The purpose is to observe and be aware of all that is going on while focusing on the exercise. The hope is that instead of becoming stale, actors will develop better listening skills and ability to respond spontaneously. They are not just repeating but constantly observing and reacting truthfully. In the language context, the process and goals remain the same, but 5-10 minutes should be more than enough.

3. Objective: In relation to Meisner, the goals of the actors drive the actions. In the language context, it is much the same. We speak because we feel the need to speak. Humans desire something or some response. This will be explored later as to how this can be conveyed to the language learner so that self-generated speech can be motivated by necessity.

4. Adaptability: Actors need to be flexible in a scene so that reactions can be authentic. Language learners need to be given these same tools to communicate effectively. Where traditional models of language

learning fails are in being inflexible. Students are more apt to be given set dialogues or vocabulary to be used for a singular purpose whereas, in reality, all languages are much less linear and predictable.

VI. Meisner in the EFL Classroom

1. As previously mentioned, the repetition exercise is the most well-known technique. The set-up is simple. Students are paired across from one another. One starts by creating a phrase that is simple and observable, such as "you're wearing earrings." The other student responds with "I'm wearing earrings." Language learners observe and repeat the phrase. As it is self-generated, they should be more engaged. The teacher is not telling them what to say. As a facilitator, however, what is said should be monitored for grammar so as not to reinforce mistakes. It should also be noted that initial observations should not be too personal or anything that makes someone uncomfortable. I once had a male student begin with "You have beautiful lips." While not necessarily an offensive phrase, the male respondent was unable to fully concentrate on the task as they could not stop laughing.

Students continue repeating the phrases back and forth, all the while, focusing on meaning but more so on how the phrase is being spoken. If the students are truly listening and responding, then each will notice that no two phrases are exactly the same. Since they are different, be it in intonation or emotion, a different response is warranted. What is described here is observation to the actor and a kind of language awareness to the learner. If the students are listening carefully, emotional spontaneity will take place. Although each knows what they will say, a genuine reaction cannot be planned, it must stem from the output of the partner. This kind of activity mirrors authentic language learning. Students can be taught appropriate responses to others but there is no guarantee that the initial prompt will occur or that it will be said with the anticipated emotion.

Finally, variation should be introduced by changing the phrase, adding emotion, or using gestures.

2. Sense memory is another key technique that can be put into practice. In the classroom, students can choose a set of vocabulary that is associated with the theme of their script. Once a word is chosen, they can imagine sensory experiences related to each word. Bringing in all five senses and having them make meaning that way will aid in their retention because, again, students are finding ways to take responsibility for their own learning. When students try to recall the words later, they can use various senses rather than simply sight used for vocabulary lists.

3. Improvisation is related to both objective and adaptability. Once the students have thoroughly studied their characters, goals, and motivations, it is time to see if they can be creative enough to use the vocabulary and language strategies that were introduced. The improved situations should be given as tasks not scripts. The goal for the teacher is to encourage flexibility and spontaneity. A simple lesson might include one character that needs to enter a room and another whose goal is to keep that character out. The conflict, of course, must be language driven and not physical. A character with better logic and communication skills should succeed. It takes genuine listening skills to be able to negotiate and respond in this type of situation. As a teacher, be sure to keep each student in character. When the game is repeated a few times, students can study the opposing character and try that side a few times. This

will help immensely when analyzing the motivations of the other character when students finally move to scripted dialogues. Experiential memory is triggered in improvisational exercises. These immersive language exercises make use of various senses and should enhance memory retention. Picture a student studying a vocabulary list on the train. The words are just words, and the experience is studying for a test. This is as far away from contextual and experiential learning as we can get. All the words are the same on the page without experiencing the emotions.

4. Role play and scripted dialogues bring everything mentioned previously into play. Students need to know that even though the scene is scripted, they still need to listen carefully and respond with not only the appropriate vocabulary but also the proper emotional state. Dialogue for the actor, as well as the student actor, should not be memorized but internalized. The only way to do this is to follow a process that emphasizes truthful reactions through intense listening. Kodotchigova (2001) proposed seven steps to follow in language classes. First, the teacher has to create a situation which meets the students' needs, interests, and experience. Next, the teacher develops the role play in line with the students' level of competence. Third, the teacher analyzes the linguistic factors for students to prepare. Fifth, the students are given precise role descriptions and information. Sixth, roles are assigned performed. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, is the debriefing, in which students discuss and express opinions about their performances.

VII. The Stanislavski Method
"If you are looking for something, don't go sit on the seashore and expect it to come and find you; you must search, search, search with all the stubbornness in you!"
–Konstantin Stanislavski, Building A Character

Acting is work. It can be both physically and mentally exhausting. Ask anyone who has done it professionally, even for a brief period of time. It is up to the director, or teacher in the English classroom, to guide the student actors through a process that makes it all worthwhile.

Stanislavski was revolutionary. Up until his approach, acting in the theater was almost all melodrama and exaggeration. Acting was acting and acting was anything but real. He laid the foundation for realism and authenticity. His systematic approach to character development and psychological realism are still important today. This paper will explore three key aspects of the Stanislavski method. There are more but not overlapping with Meisner and looking at what is most suitable for language class we arrive at emotional memory, given circumstances, and subtext.

1. Emotional Memory:
   "In the language of an actor, to know is synonymous with to feel"
   — Constantin Stanislavski, Creating A Role

What most people with any knowledge of Stanislavski think of is the idea that every individual has a vast emotional storehouse that, with training, can be accessed. Regarding acting, it means that instead of

"acting" with the emotions of the character, actors use their own, accessed, authentic emotions, in their role. This should result in more honest portrayals as the emotions drawn from their own life experiences are genuine. This can be seen as activating associative memory for learners. Associative memory helps to link language with emotions and actions which should help students remember grammar and vocabulary better because what is learned can be recalled or associated with a particular scene or experience in which they were used.

2. Given circumstances is the second tenet. This simply means understanding the context of a scene to make it more believable. Actors must understand the time and place of the scene, location, weather, and historical period. The lack of awareness of such things is what makes Back to the Future so entertaining. The actor must also understand the character relationships and background. Humans tend to act in the present as they have in the past. It makes all the difference if two characters have had a good relationship or one that was antagonistic. Finally, the social and cultural norms need to be understood. It would not work to have characters react to situations as they would in present day life. Cultural customs and societal norms come into play and awareness of such things is essential.

3. Exploring the subtext of the lines means searching for hidden meanings and motivations beyond what is being said. Often, things left unspoken can reveal more about motivation than can be heard. Actors need to explore this to find hidden meanings, tension, and conflict. In the Stanislavski method, collaboration is encouraged between all involved in the creative process to search for layers beneath the surface. Rehearsals and discussions serve as not just a way to perfect their performances, but potentially to find new interpretations of meaning.

VIII. Stanislavski in the EFL Classroom

1. Emotional memory easily lends itself to a wide variety of role-playing exercises. A teacher could use the staidest dialogue and infuse it with a backstory to make it more exciting. Look at this 6-line dialogue:

A: Excuse me, could you tell me where the store is?
B: What kind of store are you looking for?
A: A convenience store. I need to buy some tape.
B: I see. Well, if you go one block up and turn right, you'll find a 24 Always on your left.
A: One block up, turn right, look to my left. Thank you very much.
B: You are most welcome.

This is certainly a useful exchange but far from riveting. Instead of allowing language learners to go through the motions, we can ask a few questions. How old is each character? What is B doing outside? Is B busy or just walking aimlessly? Why does A need tape? Where is A from? Why doesn't A know the area? Have they ever met before? The list could go on. Students may find that A is 95 years-old and is out for a leisurely stroll only to encounter a frantic, visiting, B, 18, whose friend was in a bicycle accident. It was the fault of Bs friend, so he is trying to take care of his bleeding comrade without

alerting the authorities. He needs more than tape but does not want to say.

We can now imagine how intense this exchange has become. Neither party has all the information and A would never share with B. A is somewhat panicked but not so much to call the police. B surely would be responding more slowly, if not for his age, then at least for the calm circumstances he is reluctant to leave behind.

Discussions and rehearsals would lead to a collaboration between the student-actors and the teacher as to what each might access from their own emotional memory. Surely everyone has been slightly panicked and, in a hurry, and encountered someone who is not. Someone who, though well-intentioned, slows things down.

No doubt the contextual learning that takes place here will stay in the mind of the students longer than if they were to simply read without any emotional attachment. The hope is that vocabulary and grammar structures become more entrenched as well because they are actually communicating rather than preparing or pretending to communicate. Ideally, this experience itself will become part of the emotional recall of the students. The feelings generated by the process of discussion, rehearsal, and performance should remain.

2. Given circumstances was explored in the last example because it is impossible to completely separate the tenets when giving examples. To emphasize the importance of given circumstances, let's look at a cultural difference between Japan and the West. It is generally agreed upon that English is more direct than Japanese but there is one important circumstance where the opposite is true. It is in the way that someone "confesses love." In the West, the progression from friendship to love tends to be organic. It happens over a period of time and remains in the subtext of conversations. Someone may meet at class and go for a coffee after. They may do this several times before graduating to lunch or dinner. This may continue for some time until someone in the relationship asks, "What am I to you?" This kind of ambiguity is generally not tolerated in Japan when it comes to love. Quite early on, perhaps the first time two people are alone together, someone will make their intentions clear. This Kokuhaku is extremely direct. It may be the first café visit when someone says, "I like you, let's start dating." Of course, it makes perfect sense in Japanese society to know where each person stands. It is still common today for people to ask the age of someone they meet to find out if honorific language should be used. Japanese want to know clearly where they stand whether it be love or seniority. Setting up a cross-cultural improv here should prove educational to both the American and the Japanese. If the American stays in character, although he should be used to direct language, he will most likely be shocked by the use of it in this situation. The key here is to set up the situation with both parties knowing that they are friendly towards one another and going for their first coffee. The Japanese would be instructed to confess around the third minute of the conversation. The surprise of the American and the forthrightness of the Japanese are the teachable moments. This is just one example of how students can experience culture in given circumstances.

3. Subtext.
"If you're aware as you are writing that both characters have their own desires and conflicting

emotions, if you allow them to reveal some of their feelings and hide others, they will become authentic and believable." --Janet Burroway, Writing Fiction: A guide to Narrative Craft.

Traditional textbook dialogues are too on the nose. That is to say that they say what they mean and mean what they say. While this is beneficial to lower-level learners, it robs those more advanced of the nuance and naturally occurring ambiguity that occurs daily in authentic communication. Euphemisms are one case where language becomes obscured to avoid hurt feelings. When someone has to fire someone from a job, "You're fired" is fairly rare as it is too direct and painful. The euphemism, "We're going to have to let you go" is much more common. For the second language learner, these lines can be particularly tricky if they are read out of context. Go where? Experiencing these lines in drama, finding the subtext is something that the class must give a good deal of time. Perhaps the best examples of subtext are the ones with fewest words. The Godfather contains one of the most simple and infamous when Marlon Brando as Don Corleone says, "I'm going to make him an offer he can't refuse" when his godson asks him for a favor. In the scene Corleone is calm and confident, completely in control. The audience has a some understanding of what he means but they are sure soon after what they find out the "offer" was a death threat in the form of a bloody horse head under the white silk sheets of a movie producer.

Another genius of simplicity is at the start of *The Princess Bride*:

BUTTERCUP
Farm boy. Polish my horse's
saddle. I want to see my face
shining in it by morning.

WESTLEY
(quietly, watching her)
As you wish.

Westley is perhaps half a dozen years older than Buttercup.
And maybe as handsome as she is beautiful. He gazes at her as she walks away.

GRANDFATHER
(off-screen)
"As you wish" was all he ever
said to her.

DISSOLVE TO:
WESTLEY, outside, chopping wood. Buttercup drops two large
buckets near him.

BUTTERCUP

Farm Boy. Fill these with water --
(a beat)
--please.

WESTLEY
As you wish.

She leaves; his eyes stay on her. She stops, turns -- he
manages to look away as now her eyes stay on him.

GRANDFATHER
(off-screen)
That day, she was amazed to
discover that when he was saying,
"As you wish," what he meant was,
"I love you."

In this case, the subtext is given away at the end because the grandfather is reading to a child. But when watching the scene, the subtext is apparent in the body language, facial expressions, intonation, rate of speaking, and of course the score of the film. In the classroom, lessons on subtext can start with critical thinking exercises where students read scripts or even newspaper articles and discuss the words behind the words. Subtext study also lends itself to writing assignments where students have to fill-in the subtext after each line in a script along with the emotion that can best convey the meaning. Finally, cultural context cannot be ignored. The Japanese pride themselves on "reading the air" so have students find examples of this in Japanese cinema. The businessmen ordering food in Juzo Itami's Tampopo is one of my favorites. A group of Japanese salarymen enter a private room for lunch. Each man is ranked in this ridged hierarchy. There is a commotion immediately as the lowest ranking worker begins to sit down before his superiors. He is physically restrained from doing so by his immediate boss. As they order, they do so by rank. Each man is slow and deliberate as if he is choosing according to his own will but in fact all are following and ordering what the highest-ranking worker has ordered. They simply order fairly quickly until we get to the lowest ranking member. Much to the surprise of everyone he is thinking deeply and asking the waiter specific questions about various food on the menu. He correctly guesses the area in France that the chef was trained. He clearly reads the menu which is only in French, and the others cannot. He has experience with this type of food and wine and the others do not. One solution would be for the most knowledgeable person to speak up so that everyone present could have a tastier lunch. But in this hierarchy, that would never be allowed. He is the youngest and lowest ranking so he must follow so as to not show up his superiors. After much deliberation and kicks under the table, he orders an elaborate feast and asks for the sommelier. The scene ends with the others red-faced and seemingly on the verge of a heart attack.

The cultural subtext here is that he was unable to read the room. Every time he inquired about the menu, he was destroying social norms. His vast knowledge was not the point. It was not only wasted but caused

significant damage. The subtext of the scene can be debated but at least one conclusion is that if Steve Jobs were in a Japanese company, Apple would never have started. No matter the knowledge he had or the creativity, he would be too young to lead and put his ideas into practice.

IX. Further Notes on being a Teacher/Director

Little distinction must be made between the teacher and the director. Teachers should be careful to keep in mind that the goal is language acquisition, and a good performance is secondary. The process, however, is the same and so a few more notes are in order.

In *Notes on Directing* by Hauser and Reich (2003) there is a chapter on talking to the actors. Parts 61, 62, and 66 are particularly relevant to the classroom:

61. Sincerely praise actors sincerely and often.
A very important note. Rather than correcting your actors all the time, get into the habit of telling them what they are doing right. Also, be sure to tell your actors whenever they look good on stage. They'll trust you more knowing that you are concerned with their appearance and dignity, and it will free them to go about their duties with less self-consciousness.

Students may not have the ego of most actors, but they are in a vulnerable position when acting. They need to be encouraged. Also, the vast majority have very little experience acting. Students will want to know if they are doing something right. As for the latter part, teachers need to be more careful concerning appearance and focus more on the dignity. Student-actors will be asked to make certain style decisions and they deserve feedback.

Although someone I admire very much disagrees:

Never say words such as very good, excellent, wonderful after students respond, instead observe how your students show that learning is its own reward and provide information about what they do that ensures they are accurate and have high expectations for themselves. (Fanselow, 2012)

While I understand the reasoning of Dr. Fanselow, I believe that the acting process is different than a student offering and answering a question. Actors need directors and a director must make certain judgements. Part 62 from Notes on Directing may serve as a guide:

62: Talk to the character, not the actor.
When actors don't seem to have the right idea-close but no cigar-it's okay to say what they did was good for the quality you were looking for but didn't get.
Example: A couple is saying goodbye to each other for the last time because the husband is on his way to the chopping block. They embrace, they cry, but something's missing. Say: "Wonderful! Touching! They're so proud of each other!

Perhaps they weren't so proud, but they will get your point about what's really going on with the characters and their feelings as actors will go unwounded.

This is in line with the fundamentals of language teaching. Teachers should certainly never reinforce errors but there is never a need to brutally correct when students are vulnerable. By talking to the characters and not the students, more can be said and the final point I'll mention by Hauser and Reich advises how to say it:

66. Keep actors on their task.
Just as a person who tries to be funny won't be, an actor who tries too hard to hold the audience's attention is sure to bore them to tears. The actor's job is not to hold the audience's attention. It is to do what needs to get done in the moment. Your job then is to keep actors focused on their objectives:

A: "What do you want?"
B: "What are you doing to get it?"
C: "Is it working?"
D: "Where's the resistance?"

Call this the Socratic Method for the teacher/Director. Students will be more a part of the process and think more critically if the teacher asks questions. Just as in ancient Greece, the teacher needs to find ways to encourage self-discovery, or in this case self-discovery through the character.

X. Discussion.

Most of the ideas explored here are simply part of teaching in a student-centered classroom. But that classroom needs content as a vehicle. Drama provides that vehicle in creative and meaningful ways. Not only does it provide a form for output using communication skills but with the study of story and character, students have the opportunity to evaluate vocabulary, grammatical structures and even cultural norms. Inherent in the process of drama, learners access procedural memory through physical actions, implicit memory that help them to internalize language patterns through dialogue, and associative memory though emotions and circumstances that help in the recall of grammar and vocabulary. Though the implementation of a full course of English through drama can be daunting for some teachers, it should be accessible to all instructors if they follow the six steps listed by Kodotchigova. Don't forget the final debriefing step as this is where up to half the learning takes place. The discussion of how students felt acting, pronouncing, gesturing, and how well the grammar was recalled should all be enlightening for students and teachers. If introduced, with process in mind, drama will allow students to be emotionally engaged in their own learning which will lead to a more holistic and nuanced study of the English language.

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