



## Dramatization and Theater Performance: An Approach to the Teaching and Learning of English Literature

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**ABSTRACT:** This case study investigated the integration of drama in English literature teaching in a British literature course for English majors at Ho Chi Minh City Open University. It attempted to explore the underlying teaching strategies through dramatization. The primary data was collected through qualitative methods, the interview and observation to get a clear picture of how drama-based lessons were conducted and brought to theater performance. The study revealed several significant findings. First, dramatization bears some resemblance to Process Drama (Kao and O'Neill 1998) in its techniques. Therefore, the researcher was able to devise a set of teaching techniques in relevance to dramatization. The consolidation of the main phrases and steps was proposed to implement dramatization effectively in this English literature class. The researcher argued that the integration of creative drama into English literature teaching was deemed effective and had the potential in building the learners' understanding and appreciation of English literature. It is also noticeable that the performance of students' works on stage enhanced learners' appreciation and viewers' literary experience.

**KEY WORDS:** Dramatization, drama-based techniques, English literature, Theater performance.

### INTRODUCTION

Drama in education is not a novice teaching approach. In fact, this familiarization takes place especially in early stage of education in which children's initial development is provoked from the imitation of the world surround them. Drama brings the excitement and fascination to the children when learning literature or being involved in theatrical performances. In language teaching, drama-based activities such as role-play or improvisation are applied to maximize the amount of communication among learners. Taking into account this linguistic advantage, English literature has the merits of making improvement in linguistics knowledge, vocabulary enrichment, reading skills, cognition, and personal development for learners in English teaching and learning (Brumfit and Carter 1986; Hall 2015; Lazar 1993; Maley 1989). Having been included in Vietnamese English undergraduate programs as a rich linguistic material and main resource of comprehensible input. However, English literature teaching has become secondary importance when communicative competence is the top priority in language education, which leads to modifications of teaching approaches to suit the learning trend. Teaching English literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs to move forward and teachers are expected to explore new ways to facilitate learners with their learning.

The necessity for changes and adaptation of novice literature teaching practice is owing to the fact that English teaching in the modern world requires innovation and creativity. Particularly, literature teaching should not only equip learners the linguistics aspects but also foster them how to think critically, and gain confidence in group collaboration, presentation and problems-solving (Savvidou 2004; Timucin 2001). Accordingly, one of the recent adaptations of English literature teaching is the inclusion of drama component. The integration of drama in teaching English literature enables the interpretation of literary text differently yet effectively and thus promotes literacy development. In research, there has been a large volume of published studies describing the role of drama in language teaching especially in children education (Heathcote 1984; Heathcote and Wagner 1976; Lee et al. 2015; O'Neill 1995) and in language and literacy development (Barnes 1968; Britton 1970; Mages 2017; Mart 2018; Moffett and Wagner 1983). Provided that drama enhances learners' experience and motivation in learning English literature, this stands a chance to be a positive change to the scenario of English literature teaching and learning.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

Showalter (2003) suggested the three main theories of literature teaching: subject-centered theory (1), teacher-centered theory (2) and student-centered theory (3). These theories are not mutually exclusive, and convergence of the theories is apparent to maximize the learning experience of learners. The subject-centered theory refers to course content. Most courses are content- and subject-centered, and teachers with sufficient skills and knowledge deliver the lessons to meet the learning outcome. Kheladi (2013) expressed that the “crux of this theory is what to be taught” (22). Teachers adapting this model, according to Showalter (2003), “are expected to be knowledgeable about their fields and teacher-center theory is inescapable in teacher” (28). The teacher as the center of this teaching philosophy needs to perform outstandingly and confidently, which results from careful lesson preparation, but teachers also need to manage the lessons wisely to avoid overshadowing students’ activities.

Parkinson and Thomas (2019) were concerned about the imbalance between the teacher’s and student’s power. This leads to the emergence of a modified teaching approach whose centeredness is not on the instructors but learners. Thorpe Miller (1999) is one of those who advocated the shift to student-centered teaching by expressing that in the literature classrooms, the emphasis is shifting gradually but inexorably away from the traditional exposure to great works, with the teacher presenting background information and modeling a literary analysis that students will learn to emulate, towards an active, collaborative learning that takes place as the student confronts the text directly. (Thorpe Miller 1999, 57)

Nevertheless, each teaching philosophy has its own merits in supporting literature teaching. No approaches should be dominant in the teaching and learning process, but instead should complement each other. In fact, Showalter (2003) put forward that the most widespread theory of teaching literature is “having no theory at all, and trying to make use of whatever will do the job” (37), suggesting the notion of the elective approach. The learning and teaching process is affected several factors, so the application of one single teaching approach is not equally effective compared with the combination of two or more approaches or theories.

### *Definition of Drama and Dramatization*

Put simply, according to Holden (1981), drama is synonymous with the idea of “let’s pretend” which asks the learners to project themselves imaginatively into another situation, outside the classroom, or into the skin and persona of another person, where the focus is on “doing rather than on the presentation” (8). Drama in perspective of Courtney and Jossart (2007) is viewed as “an interactive dramatic student response to the stories, poems, and content area texts they hear and heard” (6). Manon van de Water, Mary McAvoy, and Kristin Hunt (2015) differentiated between formal theatre and informal drama in the classroom. Drama is open to all learners, but theatre distinctly differs in its participants, who are regarded as selected, talented individuals. Additionally, drama is for everyone, which, in fact, is a universal human skill that we use every day such as communication, empathy, observation, and improvisation. The aim of using drama in the classroom is not the creation of a refined performance, but the development of emotional, embodied and cognitive knowledge built on experience (Van de Water et al. 2015). In another perspective, O’Neill (1995) conceptualized drama in the modern world to be the “development of a dramatic world created by both the teachers and the students working together” (36).

Furthermore, drama in educational context is also regarded as Process Drama or synonymously to ‘educational drama’ or ‘drama in education’ and once again, several scholars have hold different views towards connotations of drama. Specifically, drama is “a compilation of drama activities that do not lead up to performances to an audience who are outside the drama” (Carkin 2007, quoted in Reed and Seong 2013, 94). For Mouly (2012), educational drama involves role-taking activities whose main concern is the reflection of students’ previous experience, imagination and improvisation into the performance. In addition, according to Bowell and Heap (2013), Process Drama is the term used to describe “the type of drama in which performance to an external audience is absent but presentation to the internal audience is essential” (6).

### *Drama Teaching Approaches in English Literature*

In the field of drama, O’Shea and Egan (1978) introduced techniques of teaching literature from the simplest to the most extricate technique for different levels of learners. They mutually agreed that the role of the teacher is to help learners develop personal insights, creative bents, and shape their hopes. They listed some of these following dramatic approaches. The first approach is pantomime, which consists of a sequence of facial expressions, gestures, hand and body movements that have been observed from life, and are imaginatively used by actors to tell something pertinent such as character, situation, locale, and atmosphere.



Improvisation is the second category that refers to the creation of a plot or a story and the implementation of it with the unplanned or unrehearsed dialogue. Extrapolation or expanding a character is another teaching approach. The meaning is transparent by its name, which is an extensive activity for learners to analyze the characters by making supposition; for example, teachers assign the “what if” or “if I were” activity to encourage learners to extend their feeling and insights into the characters.

The fourth approach, reader’s theater, was more integrated and complex in the implementation process. Reader’s theater is defined as “a performance of a dramatic reading of a poem, novel, play, or short story” (O’Shea and Egan 1978, 54). No sets are used. Actors must attempt verbally to communicate as honestly as possible the author’s ideas, feelings, and intentions to the audience. Lastly, as stated by O’Shea and Egan (1978), a modified version of this activity is a live stage or “globe theater revisited” (55). This performance provides a workshop in which learners can use a variety of artistic talents at their disposal. This approach shares some similarities with the previous one with the exclusive creation of works. This offers learners the opportunities to freely create an original script, produce and perform in front of an audience.

In language education, drama teaching approaches and techniques have been refined to make it appropriate for drama-oriented language classrooms. One of the most acclaimed drama teaching approaches is Process Drama proposed by Kao and O’Neill (1998). It is a teaching technique in which the teacher and the students work together to create an imaginary dramatic world to explore a particular problem, situation, theme, or series of related themes, not for a separate audience, but for the benefits of the participants. The aim of Process Drama is to involve learners in dramatic activities, and thus they gain an understanding of the socio-cultural context, develop their literacy and linguistics competence with more emphasis placed on its complexity, immediacy, involvement, student autonomy and teacher function (Kao and O’Neill 1998).

There are some strategies or techniques in sequential order to implement Process Drama in the language classroom. First, the teacher determines the context with themes, or topics suitable for participants, background knowledge, linguistic abilities and objectives of the lessons to exploit and create ‘pre-text’. The next step is assigning roles for the participants, and both learners and teachers and building levels of tension for the dramatic activities. During the process of dramatization, verbal and non-verbal communications are utilized to maximize learner linguistics input in the scenario or context. The final strategy is reflections on the experience during the process of dramatization (Kao and O’Neill 1998, 20-32).

First, pre-text, a term coined by O’Neill (1995), refers to the source or impulse for the drama process, which carries the meaning of a text that exists before the event. A pre-text can be initiated by “a word, a gesture, a location, a story, an idea, an object, or an image, as well as by a character or a play script” (O’Neill 1995, 19). The pre-text gives learners a general picture with initial characters, plots, actions, locations, and atmosphere. It sets objectives, and limitations of the context with specifications of roles and situations.

The next technique is determining the roles of learners and roles of teachers. Learners and teachers act out different roles depending on the context. Moreover, role taking can be spontaneous or controlled. Creating tension and dramatic actions is another key element of Process Drama. It refers to the “essential aesthetic elements, and essential structural principle in generating dramatic worlds” (Kao and O’Neill 1998, 28). Next, for effective communication, learners use non-verbal communication in exchanging ideas with partners. Besides, in daily conversation or even in an imaginary world in drama activities, it is important to keep communication meaningful and authentic. Therefore, verbal and non-verbal communication such as body language, gestures or facial expression are employed to enhance the effects of the play.

Reflection is the next technique. Reflection can be classified into experience reflection and linguistic reflection, which both interrelated to each other. Liu (2002) remarked that reflection facilitates meaning negotiation, and form-function alignment. Through reflection, learners review progress, understand processes of thoughts, prepare for the next stages of drama, and resolve problems.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used the case study design, an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (Creswell 2015). The study follows an exploratory case study approach since the objective of the study is to explore the practice of teaching and learning English literature at Ho Chi Minh City Open University where dramatization has been applied as an alternative literature teaching approach. This educational establishment has been acclaimed for its inclusion of drama in literature courses of English language programs. Recently, there have been a number of plays performed by students from this university at the local theater as a part of their English



literature courses. In addition, this teaching approach also received positive feedback and attention from the participants, the audience, and the media of its domain. What is also worth considering is that if teachers at this institution have taken initiatives in applying dramatization into their teaching, and whether approaching English literature in this perspective looks promising with positive feedback, this study with in-depth exploration of dramatization offers the researcher the ‘once-in-a-lifetime opportunity’ to perceive the act of teaching English literature through dramatization. For the above reasons, this drives the researcher to conduct a case study into the process of teaching and learning English literature in Ho Chi Minh City Open University.

The exploratory case study was employed as it was helpful to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has not clear single set of outcome (Yin 2003, quoted in Baxter and Jack 2008). The case study allows the analysis of extensive data collection and thus provides a fuller picture of the situation. By employing the case study, the researcher attempts to explore this case to gain understanding of the practice of teaching and learning English literature through dramatization, the intervention that has not been fully understood. The study looks into one single case study, which is the British literature course at this university. The following section provides general information of the setting of the case study.

### **Research Instrument**

The focus of observation is to explore the process of teaching and learning English literature, including the teaching strategies, the phrases and the components of drama in a drama-based lesson. Classroom observation is a direct tool to gather first-hand information directly at the research site, enabling the researcher to record information in its setting, and study actual behavior of learners and instructors. Dornyei and Ushioda (2021) highly recommended this instrument when they considered it as “one of the three basic data resource for empirical research” (178).

Officially, the observational sessions were conducted on a weekly basis. The teacher and the learners met for 8 sessions, each of which lasted for 4 periods every Friday morning from 7 am to 11 am starting at the campus in Go Vap District. There were other meetings and rehearsals among the participants afterwards if their works were scheduled to be performed on the stage. The researcher had attended 8 sessions with approximately 25 hours of observation.

After collecting the data from the observations, the researcher proceeded to the interview section. At this stage, the researcher employed purposive sampling since the researcher would like to select cases that are uniquely informative (1), to reach members from a difficult site or from specialized groups (2), and particular cases for intensive investigation (3), which helps the researcher avoid the generalization of the findings (Lawrence 2014). In this case study, the researcher purposely selected this non-random sampling procedure for the sake of gaining attitudinal data from T.1, who was in charge of this British course. The sample comprises one English language teacher, T.1, a senior lecturer, who took initiative in implementing dramatization in literature classrooms. He holds a Master’s degree in TESOL, and his specialization is theatre in education. With his experience of teaching English literature for over 10 years, he has applied new teaching approaches in his courses, notably drama in delivering a new learning experience for learners. He was also the teacher-in-charge of the British literature course.

The purposive sampling was also employed in this case study. The students involved in this study were third-year English majors. There were thirty-five students, 30 females and 5 males aged between 20 and 22 years old. The students attended full-time programs, and they were selected for these following criteria. First, their language proficiency was satisfactory compared to other students whose learning tracks are distance learning or part time. In full-time program, learners have a relatively equal level of English competence, and they were more committed to their learning. If there is a great disparity among their linguistics competence, the study may lack its consistence in collecting meaningful data.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

First, descriptive and reflective field-notes from multiple observations in the classrooms were recorded and processed attentively to obtain the best understanding of the subjects. The observations protocols were presented and the classification of data into sub-themes was the following step of this procedure. Then, based on the data collected in the observation session, the questionnaire was designed, and then it was administered to the learners. After that, data collected was entered into SPSS and Google Forms for statistical analysis. The average response per statement gave insights into each aspect via mean and standard deviation.

The interview was recorded, coded, and generalized in themes. Next, the results and findings were exploited to unfold the picture of this teaching practice. The final step was the discussion and interpretation of the research tools to fully seek answers for the research questions of the study.



## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher has classified the activities in themes, which was the most prominent activities that she generalized in chronological order.

### *Read, Discuss and Understand Literary Works*

In the introductory session, the teacher introduced the main objectives of the British literature course and initiated dramatization into practice. Learners listened to their teacher attentively. The division of the class into groups was the next step, followed by the workload division. It was the process in which members of the group assigned roles for the members including who would do the cast, write the plot, the lines of the characters, who would be in charge of the make-up, hair, poster, music, sound effects, properties, photography and media, every of which was essential component to highlight the effects of a drama.

Then, learners had a discussion of the literary work to dramatize. The literary work should originate from the United Kingdom or Great Britain because the requirement of the course is to increase learners' understanding of British literature, culture, history and values, whose account is depicted considerably in British literary works. In total, there were three groups with at least 10 members each. Group 1 dramatized "The Happy Prince" by Oscar Wilde. Group 2 worked on "Agnes Grey"—a novel of English author, Anne Brontë. Finally, "Wuthering Heights" written by Emily Brontë was the choice of group 3. All the 3 works were written by British authors and set in Britain.

In this the first session, learners had limited time to read a whole text of the novel or story, the teacher and the learners discussed some general information related to the work, specifically about plot and the author. The teacher asked some questions to check the students' comprehension of the story. Normally, he asked each group to tell him what they knew about the author, the work, some aspects of the text including story, characters, the reason they chose the work, and what made the story interesting or compelling. He emphasized on how they approach the text by remarking that What do you like about the story? Which values of the story do you like? Since a literary work offers a number of values, meanings and themes, I suggest that you should choose some values you want to highlight for your play. Climax of the story is a good choice because the most intense point of the story leaves emotional impact on the audience.

For that reason, each group took turn discussing with their teacher and presented their initial thoughts and feelings about the work. They were obliged to take into account how they approached the text and decided on the plot, and the summary of the story. They discussed some aspects of the work such as the background of the author, the plot and the characters. At home, they were asked to read the stories (a majority of the reading was done at home), and take notes of the highlights of the works, or parts of the stories that provokes the highest level of emotions. In the initial plans, they also needed to propose the outline of the play including the number of acts, and scenes.

In this course, they got familiar with some basic elements of drama or pretense theater namely plot, setting, conflict, characterization, language and style, and theme from the teacher's lectures and discussions. The teacher gave an explanation of some technical theatre terms, and some examples based upon his knowledge and experience to demonstrate his points and to help learners visualize the tasks they needed to fulfill. He stressed that being aware of these aspects was of great significance seeing that the audience expresses criticism for unsatisfactory replication of the story. Thus, good preparation and consideration grant the participants and the audience enjoyment and satisfaction.

Regarding the teacher, he was the instructor and the facilitator who supported learners while encouraging their autonomy and responsibility. Depending on the tasks, the teacher played the role of an instructor, a facilitator, a conductor and a director. He showed his enthusiasm, excitement and dedication in his teaching to inspire learners and ensure that his students would have good experience in this course. He was quite experienced in demonstrating his points to avoid confusion for his learners. Regarding learners, they played different roles for the sake of the production of the play. They took responsibility of their own assigned role in the play, and work as a member in their group, the class and in the university community.

On the second day, group discussion and the teacher's consultation were the key activities of the lesson. The teacher and his learners read and analyzed the text. He asked them the highlights of the work which they would like to emphasize and deliver to the audience. As mentioned before, the highlights should have emotional effects on audience as well. The teacher gave examples of some themes or values they could choose from including altruism, friendship, and love, which was a good value, or the greediness or sins, which were negative sides of life that need to be criticized. Examples were regularly given to demonstrate his points, supporting learners



in capturing the key essence of dramatization. Learners conversed with each other mainly in Vietnamese. The lack of first-hand exposure or experience with dramatization necessitates the teacher's clarification.

Intensive reading was taught indirectly and implicitly compared with the traditional approaches, which often involve the analysis of literary texts in a more direct way. The study of English literature through dramatization stimulates "the understanding of literature as a body of the texts, and a view of literary texts as belonging to a background of specific historical, social and ideological contexts" (Carter and Long 1991). Concerning the act of reading, traditional literature classroom involves intensive reading of different genres of literature including short story, poem, novel, and other kinds of prose. Learning literature through dramatization on the other hand has narrowed down its focus to a specific kind of text, which is prose, or plays. Although it seems that learners experience fewer reading texts, dramatization aids text interpretation. This also posed a new way to approach and interpret the text. Through discussion, the teacher at the same time taught elements of literature, the characteristics, values of British literature and drama to increase learners' literature and language awareness.

Responding well to dramatic activities deepened the students' understanding of the text and the dramatic events. Intensive reading fostered the interpretation of plot, setting, theme, characters, language, culture and history of that target literature, creating a dramatic world but still conveying the feeling of actuality to the audience. The play represents a window through which we look at some aspects of life although the presentation is not so naturalistic and realistic (O'Neill 1985). Thus, dramatization still maintains the experience of the real values through the imaginary world or pretense theater.

### ***Writing The Screenplay***

Having finished reading the works, their next consideration was the plot. Learners considered whether they would keep the original story or make changes. They were asked to provide him convincing reasons for the changes of any the scenes, characters and the events. First, they told him the original events of the story as a way to compare the original and the revised one. "Why should there be some changes of the stories? If so, are there any possibilities that the values or meanings were less prominent compared with the original ones?" These were the questions that they had to bear in mind when making changes to the plot. They need not restrict themselves to the original plot. If only the changes made the play more captivating and moving did learners make these kinds of changes. The teacher listened to his learners and gave comment on each learner's preparation and performance.

The act of allowing the modification of the plot, character and events promoted learner creativity. In Lawrence's taxonomy (1956), evaluating and creating are higher order thinking skills. Reviewing a story or a book required understanding, analyzing, evaluating and creating. Dramatization is seen as the creation and presentation of book into a play or drama; thus, enhanced creativity in students' work. Meanwhile, there was a long discussion with a lot of suggestions, changes, approvals and disapprovals within the groups and the teacher. Noticeably, collaboration among groups and teacher consultation were the key learning and teaching media. In addition, this alternative teaching approach switches the centeredness from the teacher to learners. The teacher is the person who sets criteria and gives instructions whereas learners are the main performers of most of the tasks. It is ideal when learners are provided with more learning opportunities and take control over their learning process. After reaching the consensus of the plot, the groups started to work on modifying the dialogue or the screenplay. This is when learners use language in a communicative way both verbally and non-verbally such as taking turns, using body languages, postures, gestures, facial expressions, etc.

### ***Characterization and Drama Speech***

The next issue was improvising dialogues and monologues, which is considered an important aspect contributing to effective characterization. Learners spent considerable amount of time practicing speaking the lines on their own before reading them aloud with the teacher. Then, each learner with their printed screenplay dictated their lines to the teacher. The process of speaking lines was as follows. One learner spoke the lines of the character he or she would dramatize. This could be monologues, soliloquies, and dialogues. The teacher listened carefully and gave instant feedback and correction at any mistakes the learner made. He mostly corrected some common pronunciation mistakes in ending sounds, intonation, and tones. The teacher also read some lines aloud as a demonstration, and learners repeated several times until he felt satisfied with it. To do so, learners were expected to identify the style of drama language.

Although drama speech remodels real-life conversations among people, it bears complete differences from real talk. Long (1986) noticed the difficulties in monitoring play-reading, and the problem that most learners encountered in play-reading. He remarked that speakers will typically look at their script, concentrating on perfecting their pronunciation rather than 'feeling' of the line or

fact that they are speaking to somebody. Drama language tends to be rhetorical and poetic to really bring emotional impact, and draw listeners' attentions to the artistic elements of the play.

This procedure lasted for several sessions later for the sake of assuring learners could speak the line satisfactorily. At this stage, the centeredness shifted to the teacher more when learners practicing the lines. Also, he showed his seriousness and strictness to this aspect. He was quite demanding, and he expected great attention from his learners because speaking character lines was a crucial element of the drama.

From the teacher, the key of improvising dialogues was speaking with clarity, emotion and fluency. Speaking the lines was not solely the conversation among characters; as a matter of fact, it could tell a lot about the characters. The dialogues among the characters disclosed their personalities and concurrently, developed the plot of the story. What the learners know was limited to dialogue and action (Barnet et al. 2000, 96); therefore, diction or speaking characters' lines was of huge importance in story-telling and characterization. To be more specific, learners with particular roles had to consider the diction of the character lines in term of its accents, intonation, emphasis and tone (Shiach 2000). Its role is so important to the play because the language or the dialogue characterizes the actors. From the teacher's examples, students learned that the setting, the theme, the characters bonds a strong relation with voice and narration. Furthermore, the literary language characterized the aesthetics and emotional properties the work brings to readers.

Concerning learners, some of them found drama speech troublesome, which was understandable since this was the first time they had experienced this teaching approach. Some felt unwilling to speak in a stylized way, in the place of characters, not theirs. In general, most learners participated in the activities attentively and felt a sense of responsibility for the roles that they were in charge of. Through this activity, they also realized their pronunciation mistakes, making them aware of speech and language use. Speaking and listening skills were prioritized at speaking the characters' lines. When paying more attention to speech, learners improved their pronunciation and communication skill in play performance.

As a result, practicing lines for the drama helps build confidence and improve their speaking skill by broadening their linguistic awareness and language proficiency. The integration of literature and drama in this part made a difference in learners' language competence. Learners saw improvement in vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation and pragmatic competence in making sense of language use in a discourse level.



**Figure 1. A student practicing speaking character lines with her teacher**

### ***Reflective Learning and Teaching***

After observing 4 sessions, the researcher took notice of reflective learning, a continuous process that took place in both the teacher and the participants. Kao and O'Neill (1998) believed that it was vital for teachers in understanding learner progress and their needs for learning. Reflective learning took place continually in every step or phrase of dramatization, distinctly after the first session and



sustained throughout the course. The nature of reflection from learners was to review, look for solutions, solve problems, fulfill the tasks they were assigned to, perform their duties and responsibilities required by their roles.

Two main kinds of reflection could be observed: experience reflection and linguistics reflection. Both of them could not be described separately. In fact, they are interrelated and influenced each other. The linguistics reflections are elevated at the speaking characters' lines stage when learners were expected to make adjustments of their language to successfully demonstrate the characters they portrayed. Apart from this, one of the major sources of reflection was from teachers' feedback. Constructive feedback was in great help for learners to make improvement upon their mistakes and in shaping their mind with the knowledge and experience of literature and theater performance from him.

In the position of learners, they examined their own learning through the teacher's comments, peer comments, self-reflection and self-discovery. Learners gained and accumulated information, knowledge and experiences. Only when experiences were thoughtfully examined and reflected did deep learning occur (Kao and O'Neill 1998). Thus, self-reflection was also valuable and helpful for teachers and learners. Reflection promoted deep understanding of the teaching practice. The teacher self-reflected on his teaching method and made appropriate adjustment for the tensions. Changes were made through evaluation and decision-making, which helps the teacher understand the procedures of giving a drama lesson, the good sides that need to enhance, the limitations, the solutions or alternatives for the issues. The teacher gained confidence in involving learners in different activities and thus encouraged them to assess their learning concerning their linguistic abilities and self-development stages. The assessment of linguistic competence was straightforward whereas experience assessment was subjected to each learner and was more difficult and complex to evaluate fully. Even though the teacher engaged learners in a fictional context, the effectiveness or reflection came within and went beyond drama.

### *Play-Acting*

At the acting stage, the teacher encouraged learners to visualize how they staged the play and try acting out the story on that stage. The teacher established some criteria learners could consider when they acted out. The first thing was the stage area, where the actors act out and where the audience views the stage. Imagining on the stage, there are two scenes in different locations or spaces, the characters should not all stand on the podium. Secondly, when acting, learners had to make sure that they maintained eye contacts with the members and the audience. They should also consider their postures; for example, it is not a good idea to stand with their back to the audience. The audiences wish to see the actors' appearance and their facial expressions.

Finally, there should be some appropriate pauses or silent intervals for non-verbal communication and interior monologue, which really had emotional impact on the audience. After providing some suggestions for performing and acting, the teacher had some learners in each group act out a scene in the play. In this session, learners had to familiarize themselves with a new concept of acting. The teacher could not demand good capability of professional acting rather than a satisfactory performance as an indication of a deep comprehension of the story and full attention to the role they played.

First, to act well, it was crucial for learners to have deep appreciation to the text. The teacher emphasized the act of slow reading because reading the screenplay enables apprehension of the characters' psychological development. It stresses the great importance of close reading and maintaining the process of text analysis. Considering work analysis, the art of teaching was implied in the activities or the tensions the teacher created. In a traditional perspective, learners read and then analyze the components of the text such as points of view, themes, characterization, figurative language through questions. In the drama-oriented classroom, the interpretation of the text was carried out through the act of questioning from the teacher. He involved learners in the dramatic activities by using elicitation to promote discussion and support his learners in case they failed to understand the instructions or had some difficulties conducting the play. The challenges boosted the process of thinking and problem solving skill from the input the teacher provided.

Besides, in this typical creative drama lesson, the observer noticed that asking questions accounted for an extensive amount of time. The teacher made inquiries to check learners' comprehension of the text and facilitated the tasks they were performing. Furthermore, skillful questioning ignites the reflection process, so the teacher raised more open questions than questions with fixed answers. For instance, questions Why and How were generated the most to maximize the reflection and critical thinking process of learners. Such questions inquired were "Why did you change the storyline?"; "How do you make arrangement of the stage and assign roles for the characters?"; etc. He did not always directly give instructions or lectures, but rather in an implicit and subtle way, facilitating the



acquisition of language and knowledge constructed and accumulated from the experience learners had in the dramatic world of the play.

Concerning acting again, speaking characters' lines was a task in which verbal communication was the target while acting incorporated non-verbal communication in greater extent. In fact, in a drama-oriented classroom, non-verbal communication was enhanced and incorporated more. At the acting stage, learners conversed with each other using gestures, physical movements, facial expressions, and body languages for the representation and characterization of the characters. Lines diction and acting helps learners gain more confidence in their speaking skill. They also increase their communication competence by utilizing verbal expression and non-verbal communications. Potentially, learners become better communicators for such exposure to acting, not only in their second or foreign language but also in their first language.



**Image 2. “The Happy Prince” group practicing acting with a director**

### ***Create The Final Project (Theatrical Performance)***

At the rehearsal stage, basic components of drama were prepared carefully and the participants performed their roles satisfactorily, especially in drama speech and acting. Even though they performed on stage at last, the teacher could make assessment and evaluation of their performance in class through their rehearsal. The evaluation criteria are learners' participation in group and class discussion, their attendance, and how complete their role was at the final presentation of their group's product. It was a formative assessment, not summative because he observed his learners' performance throughout the course. Furthermore, dramatization was a process with drama as a product, which should be evaluated in different criteria to have a more objective evaluation of learners' performance. The participants met for more sessions for the rehearsal and stage performance at the theater located at District 1 Ho Chi Minh City. This was the final assessment of learners' performance and an opportunity for the participants to promote the dramatic activities for the public audience.

After observing, the researcher notices the similarities that dramatization share with reader's theater and live stage (O'Shea and Egan 1978), and story-based improvisation (Mages 2008). Learners normally work with a given text in these techniques. Story-based improvisation refers to creative intervention with stories, predetermined characters or plots. Reader's theater is the performance of a dramatic reading of a poem, novel, play, or short story. Live-stage, which is the upgraded model of reader's

theater, is a performance in which learners can use a variety of artistic talent at their disposal. After comparing them, the researcher noticed that in the continuum of different drama techniques namely role-play, dramatized story, process drama, etc., dramatization falls to these mentioned categories for the drama-oriented classrooms. In dramatization, learners are involved in a given text or pre-text, which is the literary work and are trying to make sense of the imaginary world they are dramatizing. Teaching British literature through dramatization is not very different from Process Drama. The main difference is that Process Drama does not typically proceed with a script, so learners usually write their own script and thus the outcome of the improvised activities may vary. In this context, the learners dealt with a literary text, and even though they can change the plot to some extent, and the amount of control on content of the text is limited. However, the steps on implementing Process Drama share a certain resemblance to what is happening in the British literature course. Therefore, the researcher can adapt the techniques in implementing Process Drama for the techniques used in this British literature class.

The next concern is which literature teaching model and literature teaching approach that the teacher incorporated in his teaching. Although it is too early to conclude, from the results of the findings, dramatization has the features of personal growth model. The play offers the opportunities for learners to relive in other lives, explore other situations, try new behaviors and new way of talking (Wagner 1976).

Moreover, dramatization places the centeredness on learners who made their own decisions on the tasks they performed. The teacher is the one who initiates, supports and provides resources. Group work, pair work or whole class discussion are the central of the class activities, so it is likely that dramatization is a more student-centered teaching approach.

However, dramatization is not a full open communication strategy because learners work on a given script or literary text, which they did not invent from a theme or context. In addition, drama speech involves repeating the lines many times until they achieve proper pronunciation and projection, so the pronunciation is the key component. The researcher can conclude that the clearest impact of dramatization on speaking is refining learner's pronunciation. Moreover, like story-based improvisation (Mages 2008), this activity is most likely considered the most beneficial strategy for literature teaching for its pre-determined plots and characters. Despite bringing less creative intervention, this strategy provides clearer objectives and allows teachers to scaffold the content in a more effective way.



Image 3. A scene from the play “The Wuthering Heights”



Image 4. A scene from the play “The Happy Prince”

## CONCLUSION

In general, dramatic components, techniques, steps are perceived in the observation process on how dramatization takes place appropriately. Dramatization has become a lively form of teaching English literature, favored by the teachers and the students of British literature course at Ho Chi Minh City Open University. This approach changes the way learners perceive English literature as a static, traditional form of art into performance art to a source of stimulating imagination and creativity. This activity is so entertaining and motivating because it gives learners some freshness in their study. The theater performance also received positive responses from the learners, teachers and public audience who feel delighted for being involved in dramatization. The researcher has suggested a 5-step teaching approach in orientation of English literature teaching through drama at Ho Chi Minh City Open University and can be fully exploited in these following steps (Figure 1).

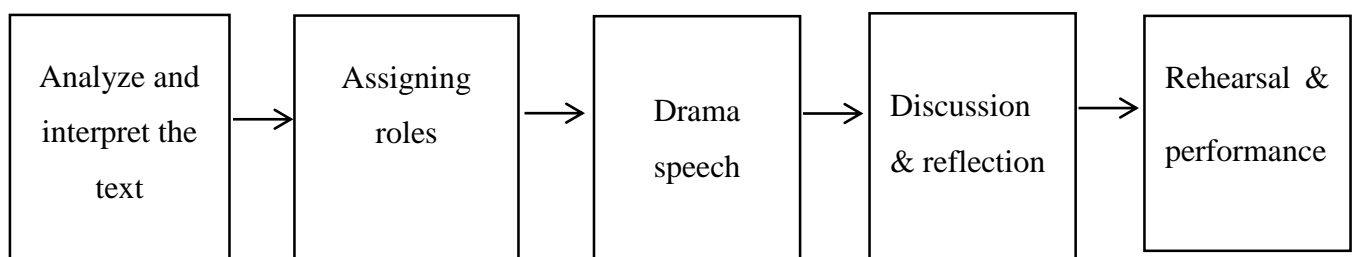


Figure 1. Structure of a drama-based lesson

Dramatization is the central theme of this teaching approach at Ho Chi Minh City Open University; however, one teaching technique may fail to cater for all students’ needs and expectation because this teaching strategy is likely to work well with some students, but may not be proven as effective with other individuals with different learning styles. Therefore, complementary teaching strategies are essential to maximize learning experience and accommodate the drawbacks of dramatization on learning and teaching.



Depending on the teachers' teaching styles, their preferences and their target learners, the teachers can allocate teaching strategies that suits their learners best. To be more specific, the number of drama-based activities were placed upon teaching objectives. If learners are expected to achieve language proficiency, and dramatization is strictly limited with several lessons; thus, this activity is widely perceived as Process Drama or educational drama in Kao and O'Neill's (1998) study. Teachers can also adapt or adopt some drama-based activities proposed by Mages (2008) or O'Shea and Egan (1978) in language teaching. If the teachers wish to employ theater performances, they can follow the steps described in the observational sessions. When full-scale staging is not feasible, performing in class with some props and fewer meticulous tasks on stage design can also be motivating and rewarding. An elaboration of the findings together with the further recommendation for effective implementation of dramatization into classroom was presented. From the mentioned above recommendations, it is hopeful that dramatization will be appreciated and widely adapted in English literature teaching as an independent teaching technique or in conjunction with other teaching activities. Teacher can adjust their teaching strategies in accordance with the length of the course, the level of English proficiency to assign roles and tasks suitable for learners' competence. Practical implications drawn from the results and findings of the study is of great importance in contributing to the practice of teaching English literature through dramatization. Further suggestions and recommendation could be a good source for reference and as a springboard for the implementation of further studies. Finally, it is full of hope that the findings of this study have a number of important implications for future practice and contribute to the practical teaching approach in EFL education generally, and English literature teaching in particular.

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