

# Drama for Social Justice in ELT

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## Benefits of Drama for ELT

- Oral proficiency and pronunciation
- Grammar acquisition
- Writing skills and literacy development
- Motivation and confidence
- Critical thinking, imagination and creativity
- Cross cultural understanding
- Contextualized communication
- Higher results on achievement tests

## Drama and Social Justice

Drama for social and political change has a long history

Drama can engage current social issues, envision a new future or re-examine the past

Allows for representations that are missing from other media

## Embodiment: Drama is inherently physical and multimodal

*Embodied Cognition:* Our brains are shaped by our bodies

Shifts the cognitive load of language learning from the mind to the body

*Gesture and Nonverbal Communication:* Physical modes of communication

*Habitus:* Societal rules that influence behavior, govern our bodies, and reproduce the status quo

Drama creates opportunities to change our “embodied history”

*The ADDRESSING Model:* **A**ge, **D**isability, **D**ialect and Language,\* **R**eligion, **E**thnicity,

**S**ocial Status, **S**exual Orientation, **I**ndigenous Heritage, **N**ational Origin, and **G**ender

## Emotion: Drama uses two sets of emotions, the actor’s and the character’s

*Emotional Intelligence:* the ability to understand, name, and self-regulate your feelings

Enhances language learning, reduces anxiety, and strengthens critical thinking

*Cultural Expressions of Emotion:* Emotions are governed by a “cultural script”

Different culture conceptualize and express emotions differently

*Multilingualism and Emotion:* Emotional responses differ across languages

Learning languages in emotional context increase memory

## Identity: Drama allows students to create new identities in the L2

*Narrative Identity Development:* Creating a life story from one’s memories

Responsive listening helps speakers build a cohesive sense of self

*Identity Texts:* Creative works that reaffirm students’ identities

Agency in creating multimodal, multilingual, positive self representations

*Counter Storytelling:* Challenging majoritarian perspectives through storytelling

Confront injustice and represent experiences outside of mainstream deficit views

## Implementation Framework

### Physical Warm Ups

*Stretches:* Move your body to loosen up whatever feels tight.

*Physicalizing Words:* Listen to the word. Think of an action to represent or embody that word.

Perform the action when the teacher repeats the word.

*Tableaus:* In a group, use your bodies to create a physical representation of the word that you are given.

### Vocal Warm Ups

*Vowels and Consonants:* Listen and repeat the sounds. Try to pronounce them clearly, exaggerating the lip movements.

*Pitch, Volume and Speed Counts:* Count from one to five, increasing the pitch, increasing the volume or decreasing the speed as you say each number.

*Emotion Walk:* Walk around the room repeating the sentence “*But Toronto is no longer just an English speaking city.*” Change your voice and movement to match the emotion.

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## Theatre Games

*Status Game:* Choose a number from 1-5. One represents the lowest social status and five is the highest. Think about how that person would move through society, and walk around the room in that way. Notice how others are walking and try to group yourself with others you think share the same number.

*Feeling Echoes:* Listen to the text. Use your body to show the emotions that you think the text evokes. It's ok if your interpretation is different than the other students.

## Process Drama

*Sound Tracking:* Imagine the sounds of a high school hallway. Working together with the whole group, add sounds one at a time until everyone is making a sound to contribute to the soundscape.

*Conscience Alley:* Make two lines facing each other. One student shares a dilemma that a character in the play is facing. The other students give the character advice about the problem as they walk down the center of the alley.

## Identity Text Creation

- Choose a moment
- Create a storyboard
- Rehearse the scene
- Perform for the class

## Scripted Drama

*Forum Theatre:* In your group, assign the roles from the scene. Read/perform the scene for the rest of your group. The group members in the audience think about how the characters could behave differently to lead to a better outcome of the scene. Audience members volunteer to take the role of one of the characters and improvise a new ending to the scene. Repeat with different people trying different solutions to improve the outcome.

## Community Action Theatre

- Choose an issue facing the community
- Analyze the root causes
- Choose the setting and characters
- Develop the story
- Create the script
- Rehearse the play
- Perform for an audience
- Discuss the play with the audience

## Selected References

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