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Usability of Conscience Alley, Classroom Dramatization and Stage Acting as Pedagogical Techniques of Interactive Method of Teaching Drama at University Level

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Abstract

This study demonstrates the accessibility extent of three prominent pedagogical techniques of interactive method of teaching drama at university level: conscience alley, classroom dramatization, and stage acting. It covers their characteristics in terms of their fulfillments, pros, cons, the teacher's role, non-human resources, viewership and example of dramas for implementation of each technique accordingly. Moreover, it encompasses the effectiveness of the three techniques in learning process when utilized properly. Besides, it supplies useful recommendations for more successful teaching process under the light of the mentioned techniques for instance, improving solitary effort of drama teachers via actual insertion of the techniques (at least the first two, if not all) in their classes, and establishing an academic connection and fruitful cooperation between Art Education Department and Department of English Language in College of Basic Education in Sulaimani University, or their equivalences, as an innovative approach for drama teachers at university level.

Keywords: Interactive teaching method, conscience alley, classroom dramatization, stage acting, teaching drama

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قابلية استخدام زقاق الضمير، التمثيل الدرامي في الصف ، التمثيل المسرحي كتقنيات تربوية للطريقة التفاعلية لتعليم الدراما على المستوى الجامعي

ا.م. رهوف جمال أمين

جامعة السليمانية / كلية التربية الأساسية / قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

المستخلص

توضح هذه الدراسة مدى إمكانية الوصول لثلاث تقنيات تربوية بارزة للطريقة التفاعلية لتدريس الدراما على المستوى الجامعي: زقاق الضمير، والتمثيل الدرامي في الصف، والتمثيل المسرحي. ويغطي خصائصها من حيث الإنجازات والإيجابيات والسلبيات ودور المعلم والموارد غير البشرية والمشاهدة ومثال على الأعمال الدرامية لتنفيذ كل أسلوب وفقاً لذلك. علاوة على ذلك، فإنه يشمل فعالية التقنيات الثلاثة في عملية التعلم عند استخدامها بشكل صحيح. إلى جانب ذلك، يقدم توصيات مفيدة لعملية تدريس أكثر نجاحاً في ضوء التقنيات المذكورة على سبيل المثال ، تحسين الجهد الفردي لمعلمي الدراما من خلال الإدراج الفعلي للتقنيات (على الأقل الأولين ، إن لم يكن كلهم) في صفهم ، وإنشاء ارتباط أكاديمي وتعاون مثمر بين قسم التربية الفنية وقسم اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية التربية الأساسية بجامعة السليمانية ، أو ما يعادلها ، كنهج مبتكر لمعلمي الدراما على المستوى الجامعي.

الكلمات الدالة: طريقة التدريس التفاعلي ، زقاق الضمير ، التمثيل الدرامي في الصف ، التمثيل المسرحي ، تعليم الدراما.

1. Introduction:

Not only in teaching drama, but in all EFL courses, regardless to the subject, interactive method of teaching is unquestionably the quickest aim-reaching method; it is universally proven to be the most effective method which is applicable and beneficial for all learners equally, ranging from kindergarten and preschool to graduate and postgraduate learners. This is because of the quick changes in pedagogical perspectives in the recent decades towards the switch of teacher-centered method to student-centered method. Collie and Slater (1987) regarding student-centeredness state that:

In establishing a number of ways in which a text could be explored, we have tried to bear in mind that any approach used exclusively can turn to tedium in the classroom. We have found that role play, improvisation, creative writing, discussions, questionnaires, visuals and many other activities which we use successfully to vary our language classes can serve a similar purpose when we teach literature. An array of enjoyable student-centered activities is particularly important when working with students who are not literature specialists and who may not as yet have developed a wish to read literature in the target language on their own initiative. (9)

That is to say, student-centered activities increase the learners' appetite for literature and reading literature. In teaching drama, in particular, interactive method of teaching, which belongs to experiential learning approach, covers miscellaneous techniques; this study scrutinizes three of them that are conscience alley, classroom dramatization and stage acting. These three deal with interactive and physical engagement of the students. It is worth reiterating that active and physical engagement in drama enables students to develop new understandings and forms of knowing which may not be so accessible in other, more traditional, ways of learning (Nicholson, 2000, p.9). Besides, usability of these techniques in class is in line with CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in education in which both, the content of drama subject and the target language -English language- are learnt. That is why it is of great importance to shed light on the selected techniques and display their implementation, positives, negatives and other features listed below.

2. Interactive Method of Teaching:

In teaching drama, while experiential learning approach is taken, using interactive activities and techniques inside the classroom has changed the role of the teacher blatantly. If interactive techniques applied, the class becomes more of a learner-centered rather than a teacher-centered one. The teacher, accordingly, becomes facilitator most of the times or even participant.

Using drama in education, not only in drama but in all subjects, dates back to the beginning of 20th century. Harriet Finlay-Johnson, a British educationalist, was among the pioneers to have "an interdisciplinary approach to drama in the classroom, and applied it to a variety of subjects. She considered the greatest value of drama to be not in the performance or the 'end product', but rather in the very process of practicing drama. Her students did free improvisations or acted out texts, but an audience was irrelevant" (Ronke, 2005, p. 23).

If we go back to history, we find many direct and indirect references to the method which we now name it interactive method of teaching. For instance, in 18th century Benjamin Franklin stated "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn". This quote, perchance, is rooted from a Chinese proverb which is believed to be stated by the giant Chinese philosopher, Confucius, that says "I hear I forget, I see I remember, I do I understand". Similarly, Tolstoy (1967), one of the world's greatest novelists, claimed that "the school of the future will, perhaps, not be a school as we understand it—with benches, blackboards, and a teacher's platform—it may be a theatre, a library, a museum, or a conversation—(p. 150). If we take these three quotes into consideration, they are plainly alluding to the fact that, even in ancient times and also before 20th century, educators, scholars, philosophers and teachers knew the utmost importance of learner's activeness in any learning process. The first two quotes by Benjamin Franklin and Confucius denote the fact that if teachers simply lecture in class, the learners will accordingly forget within a short period of time. However, if visual aids used, the learners may remember, which is a quite better step compared to giving dull lectures merely. But if instructors make the learners participate physically and interact in the classes, then they will learn and most probably never forget. Tolstoy's intelligent prognostication once again re-affirms that he was well aware of the deficits in education in 19th century, and he masterly anticipated what may come in the forthcoming centuries. This is something we witness nowadays.

In the previous century, gradually, teachers were immensely encouraged to utilize more learner-centered techniques so that the students can practically take part in the classes. Edgar Dale, one of the most influential educationalists in 20th century, developed a pyramid called 'Cone of Experience' (see below figure) in which he

eloquently theorized that learners retain more information by what they do compared to what is heard, read or observed. In the last edition of *Audiovisual Methods in Teaching* (1969), Dale composed three modes of learning in the Cone by categorizing learning experiences: enactive (i.e., learning by doing), iconic (i.e., learning through observation), and symbolic experience (i.e., learning through abstraction) (Lee and Revees, 2018, p. 2).

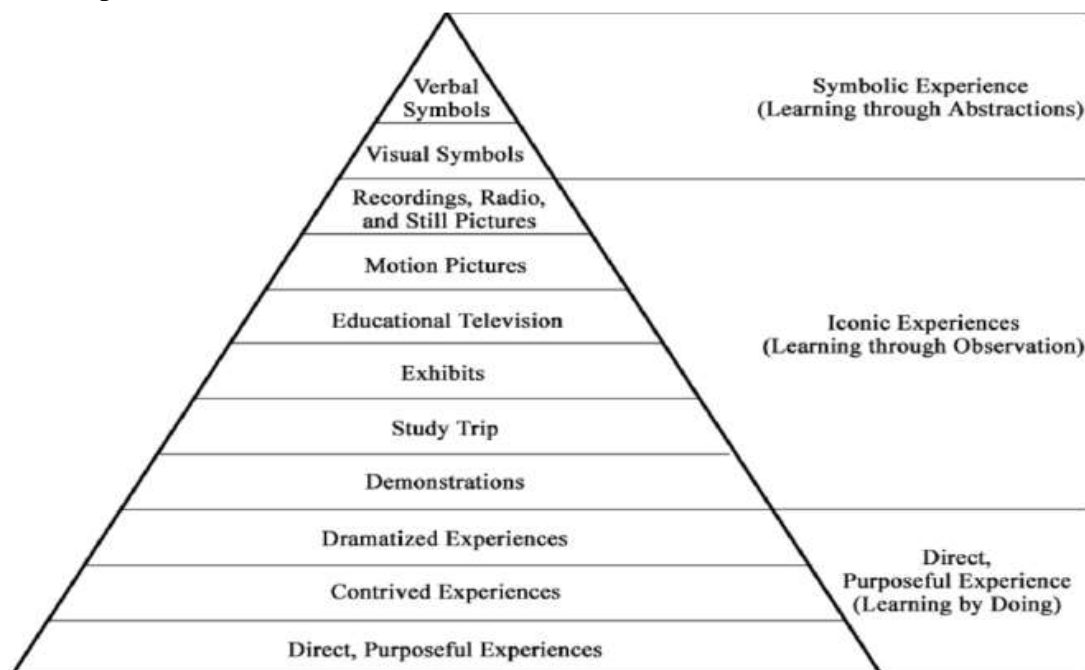


Figure 1. Dale's Cone of Experience.

As shown in the figure, the least effective learning method starts at the top, while the most effective one lies in the bottom of the cone. It is irrefutable to say that the above figure is an obvious medium to find the position of prolific techniques of interactive method of teaching. It, furthermore, can be applicable to be used as a platform for teaching drama techniques as well. In the top of the pyramid, there is symbolic experience (learning through abstractions) which simply includes verbal and visual symbols. In teaching drama, it parallels with the traditional lecture-method in which the learners will forget what they hear after a short period of time. The second one is iconic experience (learning through observation) that covers recording, movies, motion pictures, demonstration... etc. Teaching drama taken into consideration, iconic experience corresponds watching the performances of the plays in class, movies based on the plays, trip to theatres and so on. In the iconic experience, as it stands, the learner will remember more information than symbolic experience. The third experience, which is the most efficient one, is purposeful experience, that is, learning through doing. The purposeful experience includes dramatized experiences, contrived experiences, direct purposeful experiences and go-through-real experiences. Put it into teaching drama, purposeful experience covers conscience alley, classroom dramatization and stage acting. Overall, "whether the ...(students) are playing in the role-play area, spontaneously improvising in a drama lesson or presenting a staged theatre performance, by its dynamic, interactive and live nature, dramatic activity always generates shared, original and creative outcomes which are different every time and which offer a sense of individual and shared ownership (Baldwin and Fleming, 2003, p. 13-14). The three techniques that are selected in this study are explicated below:

3- Conscience Alley:

Conscience alley, or sometimes called 'decision alley' or 'tunnel thought', is an eminently useful technique for exploring any kind of dilemma faced by a character in a drama; it provides an opportunity to analyze a decisive moment in greater detail. The class forms two lines facing each other. One student (or even sometimes the teacher), who plays the role of the character in the play with dilemma, walks between the lines as the members of each group speak their advice. It can be organized so that those on one side give opposing advice to those on the other. When the character reaches the end of the alley, he/she makes his/her decision' (Farmer). Meanwhile, Baldwin (2018) defines it as:

A drama strategy, sometimes referred to as a Decision Alley or Thought Tunnel. The words conscience, decision and thought clearly indicate this strategy's link with thinking skills. It enables students to collaboratively generate a character's inner (and possibly conflicting) thoughts, usually at a key moment of indecision within a drama.

For drama teachers, conscience alley is a useful technique which widens the students' understanding and makes them identify with the character facing the problem. In terms of fulfillment of the technique, pros, cons, teacher's role, non-human resources, viewership and example of the technique, the characteristics of conscience alley in teaching drama are as follow:

3.1 The Fulfillment of the Technique: The drama teacher has to split the class into two parts opposing each other in opinions; the two lines facing each other create an alley. Next, a student (or sometimes the teacher) playing the role of the character in the play with a sort of dilemma or inability to decide walks through the alley slowly in such a way that he/she listens to opposing ideas or advices from both parts of the class until he/she reaches the end of the alley (Kempe, 2007, p. 177). Then the student after a deep contemplation makes up his/her mind and takes side with one part of the class; he/she, then, displays why that decision is made.

3.2 Pros: Firstly, conscience alley makes all students participate in the class blissfully and it draws all learners into the collaborative development and presentation of an argument. Secondly, the students, befittingly, come up with different ideas and antithetical advices to the participant who plays the role of the character in the play. Thirdly, it creates a joyous atmosphere to the students; even shy students find it enjoyable since everyone in class is engaged with the technique determinedly due to its interactiveness and lack of audience. Finally, it creates a sense of independent decision-making and self-confidence.

3.3 Cons: Firstly, drama teachers cannot always apply conscience alley for all plays selected in their course books because of the nature of the technique. In the selected play, there has to be a character suffering from dilemma or indecisiveness then conscience alley can be used; otherwise, the teacher is obliged to exclude conscience alley in his/her classes. Secondly, this technique is inevitably time-consuming and may take longer than pre-planned. Last but not least, conscience alley is seemingly difficult to be applied in Sulaimani University because of the class size. For instance, I taught modern drama to third year students last semester; fifty-two students in one group make it tremendously difficult for such type of technique.

3.4 Teacher's Role: The teacher can play the role of the centering character that goes through the alley, i.e. the two rows of the students facing each other, or he/she can be facilitator who supervises and guides the process of conscience alley through observing

the class. If the teacher plays the role of the character then he/she acts and supervises the students simultaneously. The learners can also get benefit from the tone, intonation, gestures, body language and knowledge of their teacher on one hand, they can write off shyness and anxiety when they see their teacher is parallel with them in role-playing on the other hand.

3.5 Non-human Resources: Non-human resources include props like costumes, swords, decorations, goods and other necessary tools for performing a play. Usually conscience alley does not require necessary non-human resources because it becomes a part of the lecture.

3.6 Viewership: There is no audience in conscience alley since all students take part and interact with each other.

3.7 Example: When a character in a play encounters dilemma, a problem offering two possibilities neither of which is unambiguously acceptable or preferable, then conscience alley would be the fittest technique to use in class. There are many characters suffering from dilemma and stuck in vacillating situation, for example Hamlet in *Hamlet* when he is uncertain about the speeches of his father's ghost, or when in his famous soliloquy 'to be or not to be' he is reluctant about what comes after death. Another example is Macbeth in *Macbeth* when he heads to King Duncan's bedchamber suffering from choosing between his wife's greedy words or his rational thought toward keeping the king safe instead of killing him in the scene of the floating dagger. Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* is another character who is suitable for conscience alley; she is bilaterally forced when Romeo is banished from Verona and her parents arrange a wedding for Paris with her contemporaneously and unknowingly. Likewise, Othello in Shakespeare's *Othello* gets stuck between Desdemona's purity and innocence and Iago's manipulative words to picture Desdemona as adulterous. Similarly, Dr. Ridgeon in *The Doctor's Dilemma* by George Bernard Shaw, and Daisy in *The Sun* by John Galsworthy suffer from dilemma; the first one is unable to decide whom to cure, the second is lost between either waiting for her lover who has gone to war or jilting him for a new lover. I utilized conscience alley in teaching *Romeo and Juliet*; for Friar Laurence when he is reluctant either to marry Romeo and Juliet or not, and for Juliet when she finds out that Romeo is banished and her parents force her to marry Paris. It worked quite well.

4- Classroom Dramatization:

Classroom dramatization, as the name implies, is a technique applied in class; it is dramatization of any selected drama in the course. In general, according to Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, dramatization means the process of presenting a book, an event, etc. as a play or film; a play or film of this kind. Classroom, on its own, can function as a small theatre for the students. As Kenneth Eble points out, "it is commonly forgotten that the classroom offers the rudiments of a stage. In auditoriums, used as classrooms, everything is there, including curtains and lights. There is little to be lost and much to be gained in using the classroom, when appropriate, as theater" (as cited in Showalter, 2003, p. 79). Therefore, drama teachers are able to get benefit from classroom to masterly teach interactively. One of the classroom-engaging techniques of teaching drama is classroom dramatization which its characteristics are:

4.1 The Fulfillment of the Technique: The students have to choose a scene or more than one scene, even sometimes an entire act, from the play they have studied. Accordingly, they distribute the roles per the characters in the chosen scene. Usually classroom dramatization requires preparation and training before the performance which may take days or even weeks. Once the preparation is well-made by the students, they appoint a date for the classroom dramatization; or sometimes the teacher sets the

deadline for the classroom dramatization one month ahead so as to give the students adequate time to prepare themselves. Then, the students perform the selected scene in the class in front of other students and the teacher. Consequently, there has to be some discussions about the performance and what is relevant to the actual production of the play by skilled actors. Necessary theatrical techniques would be explicated afterwards.

4.2 Pros: I, personally, find classroom dramatization as one of the best techniques to be utilized in any drama course, because, based on my personal seven-year experience in teaching drama, I have always fixed classroom dramatization in my drama course books due to some fruitful reasons. Firstly, classroom dramatization diminishes, or even sometimes totally terminates, the student's shyness immeasurably; he or she feels relaxed when he/she performs with other colleagues in class in front of the remaining students and the teacher. Certainly, this objective of shyness overcoming needs the teacher's ongoing encouragements. Many times, I have endeavored to ease the stress of enactment and encouraged my students to perform in class by even giving them better marks compared to presentation or other spoken assignments. For instance, for the current semester of Renaissance drama, I have informed my students that presentation about an essay which is to be written individually will be out of ten marks per the student's spoken performance, but whoever participates in classroom dramatization will get ten out of ten regardless to the character's type in the drama, major or minor. Secondly, classroom dramatization is the best opportunity for the students to feel the characters in the drama; it empowers imaginative abilities which aid the learners to explore new horizons of knowledge consciously and subconsciously. Furthermore, 'dramatization helps students better understand the plot and the feelings of the characters, even if they do not initially comprehend all of the words' (Greenfader & Brouillette, 2013, p. 173). This is precisely true because I have had students who have found Shakespeare's language difficult, but once participated in classroom dramatization, they have ascertained that the classroom dramatization helped, cheerily and considerably, to comprehend the characters better and made the plot knowable.

Another significant advantage of the technique is enrichment of the communicative skills. As an interactive technique, the students playing the roles communicate directly with each other coequally, and sometimes they improvise since they may forget the text. In my classes, I always instruct my students not to memorize the script of the drama; they rather understand the script and the sequence of the dialogues and events, then they can dramatize by their English spontaneously as improvisation. This, perhaps, is applicable for Renaissance plays, especially Shakespearean plays, as some students find the language difficult to memorize. The students, therefore, are encouraged to use their own language and communicate as how they feel relaxed and comfortable. The main reason behind classroom dramatization is not memorizing the scripted plays; it is actually a medium to improve their communicative skills like speaking, listening, gestures, mimes and body movements. This goal is obtained because classroom dramatization has less stressful moments compared to stage acting as Wessels asserts that "drama in education uses the same tools employed by actors in the theatre. But while in the theatre everything is contrived for the benefit of the audience, in classroom drama everything is contrived for the benefit of the learners" (as cited in Alvarado, 2017, p. 308).

4.3 Cons: Despite of the enormous benefit, classroom dramatization has cons as well. Firstly, it is time-consuming for it takes time to make preparation and to perform in class. Another con of the technique is its application in large class size. English department taken as an example, if a class performance of a scene involving 4 students takes 10 minutes, then the whole students may need about 250 minutes which is too

much for a four-month time semester, because the number of the students in each stage is approximately 100 students. Finally, due to its interactiveness, there may be some students to feel reluctant to become involved in classroom dramatization.

4.4 Teacher's Role: The drama teacher facilitates classroom dramatization via helping the students during training and preparation, giving advices as stage directions, and instigates group discussion after the performance.

4.5 Non-human Resources: To beautify the enactment, classroom dramatization requires some preliminary non-human resources like cloak, sword, shield, chair, table, cup and other props that are easy to get.

4.6 Viewership: Usually, some students perform in classroom dramatization of a scene and the rest of the class function as audience with the teacher. However, sometimes in my classes, I have invited some of my colleagues to attend in class as audience to watch the performance. The students who are not acting out dramatic roles can in some cases observe the general interaction of actors, or they can be charged to watch for specific things (Chesler & Fox, 1966, p. 36), that is, they can seek some specific points for discussion after the reenactment.

4.7 Example: Classroom drama can be used for any scene or any short act in any play ranging from renaissance to modern plays. This technique encompasses one scene due to number of the students and time span, in other words, an entire long play cannot be performed through classroom dramatization; a scene or a couple of subsequent scenes are selected to be enacted in classroom by students.

5. Stage Acting:

For drama teachers, this technique is the most difficult one to apply because it requires substantial effort and resources. Stage acting, sometimes called stage performance, again as its name suggests, as an interactive technique in teaching drama, means the actual re-enactment of the entire scripted play by students. Theatrical performance is a vital factor for the students to live in the characters' shoes and feel the characters' situation on stage in front of an audience. "Stage acting generally involves performing for an external audience, which requires a certain degree of training, technical precision, structured movement, and scripted lines" (Bowman, 2015). Hence, what makes stage acting different from other techniques is its need for a real stage, well-trained students to act, a good stage director, well-organized non-human resources and, of course, an outsider audience. Here are the characteristics of stage acting compared to the previous two above-mentioned techniques:

5.1 The Fulfillment of the Technique: A play, which is already studied in the drama course, is selected to be performed. Then, the list of the characters involved in the entire play is given to the students so that they will play the roles of the characters, major and minor. An intensive training and careful preparation are made by the students and the teacher as the director. During the training, the teacher should look after the preparation cautiously, giving the students precise stage directions so that the eventual performance will seem professional. Later, a date for actual performance will be announced so that audiences (the deanery, the teachers, the staff, and other students of the department or even from other departments of the college) will attend. And finally, the theatrical performance will be presented on a real stage in front of audiences. Taking English department as an example, the whole process will require a thorough collaboration with Art Education Department, or its equivalence for other English department at other colleges, since English department lacks stage with seats for audiences for stage acting.

5.2 Pros: Irrefutably, stage acting is the most interactive technique of teaching drama. If well-prepared, the students will never forget the real experience. In addition, through involving the students, they bodily and psychologically feel the character on stage in

front of an outsider audience. Their communicative and theatrical skills will be developed in such a way that it may drive them to think about acting even after graduation. Enhancing the capability to interpret is another benefit of stage acting. When Bryony Williamson combined the roles of teacher of drama and director of a play; she implicitly rejects the idea that performance is solely concerned with technical skills or entertainment, and offers many valuable insights into how performing plays offers creative and intellectual challenges to students as they learn how to interpret and realize a dramatic script (as cited in Nicholson, 2000, p. 14).

Another advantage of the technique is bridging English department with Art Education department; this may result in continuous cooperation for further theatrical performances. Moreover, stage acting develops the tradition of adoring theatre which has, unfortunately, faded away in Kurdish society and culture. Finally, the stage acting can be placed in the program of annual university festivals as an interactive activity not only at college level, but at university of Sulaimani level accordingly.

5.3 Cons: For drama teachers, one of the obvious drawbacks of stage acting is lack of stage with audience seats. Usually, actual production of any play needs a real stage with seats for an outstanding audience. Secondly, training and preparations would be tiresome. The teacher has to be with the students during the training after the official studying time in order not to miss the lectures. This takes much time from the students and the teacher as well. Another disadvantage of stage acting is the fear from failure. Because there will be audiences during the performance, some students refuse to participate in the stage acting out of shyness, fear and reluctance of acting.

5.4 Teacher's Role: The drama teacher plays the role of stage director; he or she should, energetically and enthusiastically, give adequate stage directions to the students playing the characters' roles in the selected play which is to be performed live on stage in front of an audience. The teacher, furthermore, has to find enough time to supervise the pre-performance training in order to avoid defects in re-enactment, replace insufficient students by others, and pay ample attention to the spoken form of the students since the language would be English. Overall, the role of the teacher is much more burdensome compared to the other two previously mentioned techniques, conscience alley and classroom dramatization.

5.5 Non-human Resources: Stage acting needs full list of non-human resources of the chosen play because the performance reflects the entire drama, from A to Z. Any non-human resource required for the play must be obtained ahead and well-prepared for the training and the live performance.

5.6 Viewership: Outsider audience ranging from colleagues from the same stage, department teachers and staff, students of the other stages in English department, students and teachers of the other departments in the college, deanery staff including the dean of the college, or even at University level, people from outside of the college may attend the live performance of the stage acting. This, undoubtedly, puts extra pressure on the students playing the roles of the characters on the stage.

5.7 Example: Any drama which is already studied by the students can be picked for the stage acting. But since the students are usually not skilled actors, modern dramas are better to be selected for this technique since they are shorter than the classical plays of renaissance. Some examples of modern plays for stage acting are: *Mountain Language* by Harold Pinter as it delves into minority issues in which problems of Kurds are indirectly depicted in Turkey, *The Glass Menageries* by Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* by Tom Stoppard, and many more renowned plays written by famous playwright.

6. Conclusions:

To conclude, it is an undeniable fact that every teacher in general, drama teacher in particular, attempts to teach effectively via using interactive method of teaching. Among many, the three selected techniques are the most influential ones if conducted cautiously and neatly. Despite of having some drawbacks, they provide a joyous atmosphere for learning process and they further enrich the students' spoken performance. They, besides, aid the shy students to break the ice and take part in the classes frequently. Additionally, conscience alley, classroom dramatization and stage acting work on the personal, intellectual and cognitive levels of the students; they supply an optimistic platform for each and convince the learners equally that interaction in education is the key to improve spoken skills, and they, all together, ease the obstacles they may face during any drama course at university level. As for drama teachers, their roles fluctuate, ranging from either the centering character or supervisor in conscience alley, facilitator as in classroom dramatization, and stage director in stage acting. Finally, via the above mentioned techniques, the teacher is able to craftily get the best out of the students and encourage them to delve into the subjects concurrently.

7. Suggestions:

This study can open the door for further researches about interactive techniques for drama teachers; many other interactive techniques in teaching drama, like hot seating, thought tracking, hot spotting, role play, improvisation etc., need to be scrutinized laboriously, applied in practice during the courses, proven to be effective and, finally displayed for drama teachers at university level.

Finally, as a matter of innovation in education, it is suggested that Art Education Department and Department of English Language in College of Basic Education in Sulaimani University, or their equivalences at university level, establish an educational connection to strengthen the pedagogical techniques related to theatre. Consequently, an educational bridge is recommended to be set up so that students of English department will get benefit from the experiences and facilities available in Art Education Department and vice versa. I personally and wholeheartedly look forward to it so that our students will be able to try stage acting technique in front of a real audience in the future as part of the drama courses.

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