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Drama Activities as a Method for Creative Writing in Primary Education

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ABSTRACT
This paper is an example of a methodical scenario that shows how oral and written language expression can be developed through drama activities with the aim of creating a written story. In Croatian primary education, the main starting point is the interpretation of the literary text as a motivation for writing, where the text is also a sample for pupils` to create a certain form of written expression. Research has shown that for the development of pupils` literary abilities and skills, the reverse sequence of the situation is more productive, i.e. moving from the pupils` written expression to the literary text. The given example of methodical articulation is intended for pupils` of primary education (age 9-11) and will show how drama activities can be an excellent method for creative writing, as they allow pupils` to explore characters, settings and plot in a dynamic and engaging way. Through improvisation, role-playing and other interactive techniques, drama activities encourage pupils` to think creatively, develop their imagination and express themselves. By immersing themselves in the world of their characters, pupils` can gain a deeper understanding of their motivations and emotions, leading to richer and more complex speaking and writing.

Keywords: drama activities, creative writing, primary education, oral and written expression

INTRODUCTION

The main goal of teaching the mother tongue in primary education is the development of language, and especially language-communicative competence. The importance of developing language competences in the mother tongue is emphasized by the European Commission, which in 2005 highlighted communication in the mother tongue as the first and key competence among the eight competences for lifelong learning. Knowing one`s mother tongue enables faster and easier mastering of other languages, as well as other content. Research conducted in Croatia (AladrovićSlovaček, 2012; Aladrović, 2009; Pavličević-FranićiAladrovićSlovaček, 2011; Barbaroša-ŠikićiČeši, 2007, Visinko, 2007) show that pupils` at a very early age (first grade of primary school) master the language theory and spelling rules that are required of them very well, but do not master their application. Language mastery is influenced by many factors, the curriculum, which specifies the educational outcomes that teachers should achieve in certain period, textbooks for the mother tongue (use of vocabulary, way of text formatting, illustrations, task formatting), media and the teacher`s teaching methods (AladrovićSlovaček, 2018).

Communication is the basis and main goal of teaching the mother tongue. Language is learned through communication, i.e. encouraging and adopting specific language activities. Communication develops by communicating, in the function of real expression. According to Pavličević-Franić (2005), the communicative-functional approach to the teaching of the mother tongue emphasizes communication and a pragmatic approach to the contents of the language, thus training pupils` for successful communication in everyday life situations and for practical use of the language. The communication-functional approach encourages pupils` to be open to themselves and others, to be able to write and speak honestly about themselves, them fantasises and feelings, but also to learn to respect the opinions of other pupils` in the class (Delač&Mioković, 2008). The purpose of this approach to teaching is precisely the "development of expressive communication skill of all kinds", especially written and oral coping in everyday communication situations (Pavličević-Franić, 2005,p.73). The basic features of the communicative-functional approach are: play, functional linguistic communication, pluralism of teaching methods and the role of the teacher. Through teaching practice, it has been shown that learning is more successful when the pupil is more motivated, interested and active in learning.

Play always comes with a feeling of comfort and satisfaction, and when it is used in class, more information is acquired in a short period of time. The lesson should be designed so that the pupil is always active, and this will be achieved by the teacher motivating him and making him interested in the content. When a pupil is interested, he will be continuously active because of his desire to absorb as much new knowledge as possible. All this is the reason to create a new game in the communication-functional approach for each teaching unit that will activate and interest the pupil (Pavličević-Franić, 2005). Play is universal, familiar to all children, instinctive and an

essential part of growing up and forming a personality (Duran, 2011). Simulating reality, from which novelties in behaviour emerge, is cited as an important of the game. A child learns about himself and the world around him through play. In the play, the child develops cognitive, emotional, motor, social, communication and language skills. Studying reality, children imitate it in a childlike game. While playing, they communicate verbally and non-verbally, move, imagine, invent, create their imaginary world in which they mirror the real world as they see it (Plutand Mitrović, 1988, according to Duran, 2011).
Play is non-specialized, undifferentiated activity and is very suitable for research and development of various psychological process and human traits. It is and independent, expressive, autotelic, divergent activity in which the child has creative independence and shows his competences in it (Duran, 2011). In the play, the child "takes the role of and adult and creates a game situation, through the transfer of meaning from one object to another, conditionally portrays the activity of adults, modelling the motives, goals and norms of adults" (Elkonin 1975, p.18). Play influences the development of behavioural control and shapes basic social needs. All listed are also main goals of drama activities.

Writing and literacy

The purpose of writing is expression, that is, the creation of short texts in which the pupils` writing style will be visible, as well as their feelings and thoughts (Budinski, 2012). Writing is a system of communication in which conventional graphic signs represent the various elements of spoken language. It represents a complex and cognitively demanding activity, a dynamic set of lower and higher-level cognitive processes that often take place simultaneously and iteratively (Posokhova, 2007). It follows from this that writing is a complex activity that primarily requires knowledge of the letter system and the adoption of grammatical and orthographic rules and norms of a language (Pavličevć-Franić, 2005). There are three fundamental stages in the development of general literacy: the adoption of upper and lowercase printed and written letters, learning the spelling rules and legality of the written language, and the development of creative writing (Pavličevć-Franić, 2011).
Teaching writing cannot be the same for all pupils` because it depends of the age and cognitive abilities of the pupils`. Writing implies the management of a large number of skills (McLane and McNamee, 1990, in Visinko, 2010) – the pupils` understanding, learning and practice in a series of stages of the development of the writing process, namely: developing the basic thought, planning the structure of the text and revising the written text. Writing is a special system in which thoughts and emotions are objectified. According to Kovačević (2000), writing is just like any other activity and can be performed at different levels of qualification. At a lower level, writing can be seen as simply assembling graphic symbols into complete words. At a high level, creative writing will acquire a sophisticated, elegant note and, with its way of expression, will lead to viewing the writing process from an artistic aspect.
The writing process is based on literacy, and it arises from the natural human need to express one`s own attitudes, emotions and thoughts. The concept of literacy is ambiguous and changes in accordance with the informational forms imposed by the level of technological and civilizational development of society. Today, different types of functional literacy are needed: information, computer, graphic literacy, literacy in the sphere of writing scientific reports or that required for business presentations (AladrovićSlovaček, 2018).
At the end of certain period of schooling teachers expect a certain degree of craft and creative literacy. The craft level of literacy refers to spelling and grammatical accuracy in writing, to the appearance of the text and to the compositional structure. In contrast to the craft level, the creative level of the text refers to the ability and skill of processing and processing data (theme and motif) and the way of expression (stylistic peculiarities in the use of words and the formation of thoughts).
The creative level can be developed, although it depends to a greater extent on inclination and giftedness (Visinko, 2010). Since writing implies both craft and creative skills, pupils` should be encouraged to express themselves in writing as much as possible and in the most interesting way. If the teacher creates a stimulating environment and finds as many different ways as possible to encourage pupils` to write, his work bill be more successful, and his students will be more literate and creative in that regard (AladrovićSlovaček, 2018).

Creative Writing and Drama Activities

Pupils` creative writing is realized as a language activity. Through activities in this activity, pupils` form their messages in their own way. This further means that pupils` apply those writing techniques that belong to their level of ability to master natural language for the purpose of the final product-linguistic expression, i.e. written creativity. Pupils` creative writing can reveal a great deal about the authors of particular primary education texts. It extends from the pupils` childhood experience on many levels, all the way to their endless imagination. According to Visinko (2010), the presentational approach to teaching writing is the most prevalent in primary education in Croatia. The teacher is the main source of knowledge and understanding about the stylistic characteristics and structure of different types of texts. Pupils` are given instructions for writing, and after writing the text, the teacher examines it in detail and corrects it. Dyson and Genishi (1982) point out that the interactional approach is the most effective. According to this approach, pupils` in small groups are given tasks

and exercises in text writing, after which they discuss and exchange opinions about the created text. This approach opens up the opportunity for pupils` to talk and discuss with each other, as well as with the teacher, about the essential components of writing, about the very purpose of writing and various ways of writing text.

The interactional approach opens the door to drama art, which, despite its complexity, is institutionally the least represented in education in Croatia. Drama art is only a part of teaching the mother tongue and an extracurricular activity. Learning and teaching drama art, as well as learning and teaching using drama methods, today in the most advanced educational systems in the world is covered by the term drama education (Vukojević, 2016).

In Croatia, the term drama education is defined as "a set of teaching and learning methods that use dramatic expression as a human ability that is used during maturation and growing up. Drama education does not have as its exclusive goal the professional practice of dramatic art or only its easier understanding. Drama education first of all educates for life and is intended for all children" (Krušić, 2006, p.23). According to Gruić, Vignjević&RimacJurinović (2018), there are three major areas within drama education, for which the authors propose and define the following terms: drama expression, drama creativity and drama culture.Drama expression is the use of drama as a means of personal development and as a method of learning and teaching. The basic means of drama expression are speech and movement (Gruić et al., 2018). The main goal of drama expression is to reach developmental, expressive, self-aware, educational and other goals through various drama activities.

Drama activities are organized games in which performers are transported into certain situations, certain characters, phenomena or things using words, movements and sounds. In such a game, players are not bound by rules, but are free in their search for better expression, so at a certain creative moment they can themselves become creators of a new form of a game. Thus, drama games, along with the joy of playing, encourage players to be creative (Ladika, Čečuk&Dević, 1983). Drama activities within this area are primarily focused on personal and social development. The communication aspect of drama expression is focused on personal and group experience of the imagined situation (Gruić et al., 2018). The drama expression is used as a means for more dynamic and experiential learning, whether it is the concrete material of teaching subject or the learning of communication or socialization skills. Drama activities are applicable in all subjects, although in Croatian schools they are mostly used in Croatian language classes. The Curriculum Proposal for the Drama Education (2020) states that participation in drama activities enables pupils` to express and shape their feelings, opinions, get to know, understand and question interpersonal relationships and shape their own personal and social identity. Through drama expression, pupils` strongly develop their communication skills, strengthen security and self-confidence in public performance.

Many scientists in the world deal with theoretical considerations and research on the effectiveness of drama education. Research on the effectiveness of drama education in the language field gives interesting results.

In the language area, drama activities are used in researching pupils` language competences, whether it is about mastering the mother tongue or the language that pupils` learn as a foreign language (Butterfield, 1993; Lutzker, 2007; Piazzoli, 2010, Arslan iÇağdaş, 2011).Moore and Caldwell (1990) found that drama was a more effective precursor to writing than traditional planning and discussion.Neelands et al. (1993) indicate that drama positively enhances pupils' attitudes to writing and that such pupils` recognize the mutually reinforcing relationship and empathetic potential of drama and writing. Wagner (1994) has shown that role play can support persuasive writing. Researches have shown that when drama is integrated as a method into the teaching of reading, writing, speaking and listening, the quality of related writing is enhanced, particularly when it is written in-role (Grainger, 2003, 2004).According to Dunn et al. (2013, p. 253) drama increases motivation to write, encourages greater quality and quantity of writing and enhances empathy with characters. McNaughton`s research shows that pupils` who engage in drama prior to writing write more effectively and at greater length, using a richer vocabulary that contains more emotive and expressive insights (McNaughton, 1007, p.79). Wagner (1988) studied the effect of drama on persuasive writing. According to her results pupils` in the experimental group, who had first experienced role-play, produced 'significantly better' letters than pupils` in control groups who either received a lecture or had been given no instruction. Crumpler and Schneider (2002) found that writing composed in drama had more depth and detail. Dalby & Burton (2012)results showed that using the 'writing in role' provided a meaningful connection between pupils` experiences and their writing. Evans (1984) emphasizes the importance of drama for'stimulating the expression of feeling' and 'helping to uncover facets of characters. Craig and Edwards (1984) carried out a longitudinal study over 2 years on various aspects of drama-related learning. This study concluded that pupils` must have something real and urgent to talk or write about if they are going to engage in meaningful language work, and that drama gives them this. All these literacy studies have not linked drama specifically to the writing of playscripts, but to narratives, poetry and non-fiction genres, such as instructional texts and reports, recounts and persuasive writing.

Methodical Scenario for the Development of Creative Writing with Drama Activities

In the teaching process, the important question is how to get the pupil to learn the teaching content. The success of a teacher depends significantly on the organization, methods and means of working with pupils`. The mentioned methodical scenario shows how drama activities can provide pupils` oral and written language reception and production.

Topic: It upset me		
Learning outcomes: **Croatian language** The pupil talks and speaks in accordance with the communication situation. The pupil writes texts according to a simple structure. The pupil forms the text by applying knowledge about nouns, verbs and adjectives, respecting grammar spelling rules. The pupil express himself creatively stimulated by the text and experiences.		
Expectations of cross-curricular topics: **Personal and social development** Develops personal potentials. Develops work habits. Controls their emotions and behaviour. Develops communication skills. **Learning to learn** The pupil applies learning approaches and solves problems in all areas of learning with the teacher`s monitoring and support. The pupil distinguishes facts from opinions and can compare different ideas. The pupil uses creativity to shape his ideas and approach to problem solving. The pupil distinguishes facts from opinions and is able to compare different ideas. At the encouragement of the teacher, but also independently, the pupil self-evaluates the learning process and its results and evaluates the achieved progress. The pupil expresses positive and high expectations and believes in his success in learning.		
Teaching stage	**Drama Activity**	**Description of the activity**
Motivation	**Statues**	Pupils` are divided into pairs. Each pair is assigned a role: one pupil is the sculptor and the other pupil is the statue. A pupil who is a sculptor shapes a statue on the given adjectives. The sculptor shapes the statue to show the given adjective in such a way that he/she does not touch it, but verbally, he/she describes to the statue how the position of the body should look. When the statues are finished, the other pupils` guess which adjective is shown.
	Live pictures	Adjectives are: tired, worried, lazy, sick, sad, hungry, impatient. Pupils` are divided into groups. Each group receives a card with a life situation written on it: in a camped bus or tram; another negative mark; in a long line at the checkout; someone stole my bike; they are talking bad about me. Pupils` present a live picture of the given situation. The other pupils` guess what the situation is. Together with the teacher, the pupils` choose the live picture that was most interesting to them. Pupils` justify their choice.

The situation of oral or written language expression	**Improvisation on the theme** **Hot seat**	Pupils` are divided into groups. Each group prepares a short play on the selected live picture. Each group improvises on a theme. Groups choose the one whose improvisation on the theme was the most interesting. They explain why the selected improvisation on the theme was the most interesting. The selected group re-enacts their improvisation on the theme. Pupils` from the selected improvisation group sit on chairs in front of the other pupils`. The teacher asks questions to each member of the group. Teachers questions are: Who are you? Why are you here? What happened to you? How did you feel? Other pupils` listen carefully and think of additional questions for each member of the group.
Assignment for the development of a specific language expression	**Writing in role** **Simulation**	Pupils` are divided into groups. Each group got a piece of paper on which they write words or sentences that upset me. After they have written, on the PPT the teacher shows questions that they answer. They write the answers on paper. For each word of sentence that you said upset you please list: Imagine a character who would say that word or sentence. Describe that character. What is his/her voice like when he/she says it? What is the position of his/her body while speaking? Does he/she use those words or sentences with everyone when he/she communicates? Why do you think he/she uses such words or sentences? Pupils` in the group choose one character who would say a certain word or sentence that upset them. The assignment of the group is to come up with a scene, a play, in which that character appears and who will say a word or sentence that upset the group. Pupils` share roles, imagine situations in which they can find themselves with that character. Groups present their simulations. After each group, the teacher asks the pupils` questions: Where is this event taking place? Who is participating in this event? What happened? Where they able to solve this character problem? How would you solve this problem?
Assignments for practicing forms of language expression	**Writing in role**	Pupils` choose the simulation that was most interesting to them. Pupils` in groups write in a few sentences:the introduction, the main part and the end of the chosen simulation. Pupils` in the role of a character who uttered a word or sentence that upset them describe the character. The character is described as follows: 4 adjectives how he/she looks, 4 adjectives how he/she feels

		when he/she is happy, 4 adjectives how he/she feels when he/she is sad; 4 verbs what he/she does when he/she is happy, 4 verbs what he/she does when he/she is sad; 2 people who make him/her happy, 2 people who upset him/her, 2 objects he/she can't live without.
Assignments for applying the adopted language expression	**Speaking with one sentence**	**Oral language expression** Pupils` are divided into groups. Each group should tell the story in such a way that each pupil should use one sentence. The story needs to have an introduction, a main part and an ending. The story should end with the sentence: That really upset me.  **Written language expression** Pupils` in a group write a story on the topic It upset me. **Peer evaluation** Through peer evaluation, pupils` evaluate stories.

CONCLUSION

The entire process of learning written expression tends to develop writing and increase literacy. Since writing implies a craft and creative skill, it is necessary to encourage pupils` to use written expression as much as possible and in the most interesting way. Creative teaching of writing involves the use of different methods and techniques that will teach pupils` to creatively solve problems. One of the methods used in language teaching is the use of dramaactivities. Through drama activities, pupils` improve the acquisition of language content and make learning fun. Drama activities for pupils` represent a space in which they can free themselves in their own language, place the language in context, and allow pupils` to gain experience dealing with situations from life, thus helping them gain more confidence in using the language and increase their level of language competence. Research has shown that drama activities encourage commitment and concentration in writing. They have the potential to contribute to the development of composition and performance in writing, producing writing that captures and maintains the interest and attention of the reader. Through drama pupils` can see the creative possibilities that can help them imagine new dramatic spaces within which writing can be taught. Dramaactivities correspond to a communicative approach to language teaching, relying on people's natural ability to imitate and imagination. According to Bolton (1979) drama does not just help children in the acquisition of language, drama is language.

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