

SPEAKING AND

LISTENING

THROUGH

Drama 7-11

FRANCIS PRENDIVILLE

AND NIGEL TOYE

FOREWORD BY GAVIN BOLTON

Speaking and Listening through Drama 7–11

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by Francis Prendiville and Nigel Toye



Paul Chapman
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Foreword

by Gavin Bolton, Reader Emeritus, University of Durham

At last! – a book on ‘speaking and listening’ that guides teachers into ways of enriching communication in the classroom. There is now a general recognition among teachers that in spite of the good intentions behind the inclusion of speaking and listening within curriculum skills, the normal culture of the classroom is such that any practice in these skills is limited by the narrowness and rigidity of that very culture: teachers use the language of the teacher in the classroom and listen to their pupils from their position of authority; and, in turn, the pupils respond in their role as ‘pupils’ and, if they listen to each other, they are attending as one ‘pupil’ to another ‘pupil’, their roles defined and confined. An analysis of the language used in the classroom would inevitably reveal a mixture of teacher ‘instructing or questioning’ and pupil ‘answering’. This is not the best context for expanding ‘speaking and listening’ skills.

Francis Prendiville and Nigel Toye offer a way of moving outside this culture, a way that frees children into temporarily breaking with their narrow ‘pupil’ role, into more challenging levels of thinking, talking and attending. Prendiville and Toye are lecturers at St Martins College in Lancaster. For many years they have trained teachers, basing that training on classroom practice. This publication is derived from first-hand experience of teaching primary school children. What they offer is well tested; you can tell they know what they are talking about as they share with you the variety of ways in which drama can promote skills and learning.

Drama! The very word, with its theatrical associations, may put you off. But this is ‘classroom drama’, rooted in education, remote from stages and actor skills. This is not about ‘casting parts’, ‘dressing up’ ‘play-acting’ or ‘learning lines’. This is about signalling an alternative context within which children may learn. In the authors’ methodology the teacher, having set the ‘frame’ within which the drama is to take place, invites the children to take over the responsibility for creating their own drama within the parameters of that frame. But the children are not to ‘play parts’, for they are required, collectively, to take on a social role, as peasants, scientists, servants, historians, advisers, etc., and to discover the spoken language that fits the fictitious context and their role within it. The authors outline for the reader an amazingly wide range of themes drawn from lessons that have already been tried out in classrooms.

There is a central ingredient, the explanation of which takes up the major part of the book, distinguishing this kind of educational drama. Teachers do not merely *explain* what the context is to be. They themselves take on a role. Thus the class are no longer listening to ‘teacher instructions’, for they find themselves attending to a dialogue that steps over into fiction, endows them with their role and invites them to step with the teacher into this parallel world.

The authors successfully undertake two major teaching tasks:

- 1 How a teacher should set about playing a role and, just as important, how to use ‘coming out of role’ effectively.
- 2 How to plan a drama session in a way that allows sufficient space for pupil ownership.

Their considerable experience of helping others to teach guarantees the effectiveness of these chapters. I believe any teacher or trainee teacher could learn from these pages and feel comfortable trying out the authors' carefully laid out instructions.

We are given instances of remarkable uses of language expressed by children once they have stepped confidently into the fiction. The teacher–pupil relationship is temporarily replaced by a different culture, from Hans Christian Andersen to *Macbeth*, from a Victorian workhouse to *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. But of course the achievements by the pupils stretch beyond Speaking and Listening to engaging with a range of subjects from the curriculum – there is a most informative chapter on the teaching of History and the link with Citizenship, for instance – and to matters of cooperation, motivation, empathy, responsibility, stimulation for reading and writing. It is the latter, writing, that can give support to the evidence needed by a teacher in assessing Speaking and Listening skills, for it is now accepted that the experience of creating new dialogue seems automatically, even with less literate children, to motivate towards writing, as if children, excited by their discovery of an alternative world, feel the need to continue to express it in another form.

This book will inspire those of you who have never thought of using drama in your classrooms. The guidelines offered here, opening a new door that could raise the level of achievement of your pupils in many directions, are mapped out very clearly in a way that is protective of both pupil and teacher. For those of you with more experience of using this art form, you will find that Francis Prendiville and Nigel Toye have reshaped, sharpened and refreshed our thinking about the classroom practice of drama.

Introduction

For us drama is the most exciting way of teaching. We see the making of fictions, the joint work of a teacher and class, as the most creative and powerful way of teaching and learning, with all participants involved as both teacher and taught. Pupils learn from the teacher and each other and the teacher learns from the pupils as the piece develops. A new drama will become revealed in its potential and in its current limitations by the class at its first usage.

Those of you who already know our book *Drama and Traditional Story for the Early Years* will know that we portray drama as powerful in its language development for young children. With this book we seek to place the methods we use at the centre of the curriculum for 7–11-year-olds. The basis for learning in all subjects should be speaking and listening and when, as for this age group, the pupil has social skills and language and they can see the possibilities of themselves contributing to the lesson, then we have potential for greater growth in all the communication skills. We can add development in the more reflective and artistic skills because of the greater capacity for self-awareness and creative insight that drama offers.

We have a number of key ideas and themes that underpin good practice in speaking and listening. As teachers we must seek to:

For speaking

Use Teacher in Role to stimulate and promote response that is natural

Build confidence

Allow ownership of the work to the pupils through their contribution

Help them look at another's contribution to interpret it

Promote the asking of questions by all participants

Require thinking before speaking

For listening

Use Teacher in Role to model and support

Allow space for those who are not yet confident

Help pupils understand the focus of the work

Develop empathy and the ability to see the value of others' contributions

Value non-verbal communication

Promote understanding through listening

One of the most important components of personal and social learning mentioned in these lists is empathy. It is a quality that is misunderstood and not as easy to achieve as is sometimes thought. Empathy is vital to produce individuals who are truly part of a community and we consider what that means.

To achieve these attributes, qualities and skills, the work must evolve through dialogue, where the teacher provides structures to stimulate and provide the challenge for the pupils. The pupils must have room to shape and build within the structure so that they own as well as experience. Thus dialogue between leader and led is the stuff of drama. The language you see in this introduction is the clue to our approach – participative, active, interactive, cooperative, creative. The most important tool in this learning style is the involvement of the teacher inside the context, teacher in role. This is not just one of many tools or techniques; for us it is the most valuable and provides the ground-base for all the others.

Our intention with the book is to support teachers in their use of drama by sharing our experience and understanding. Our experience of running courses for teachers supports our approach to drama. For example, at a recent course the teachers' expectations of the day were all in the areas we attend to in this book. They wanted:

Good ideas – literacy learning objectives
 Speaking and listening through drama
 Promoting self-confidence
 How practically to set drama up
 Links to PSHE – socially and emotionally aware
 Developing intuition

When the sessions were over, the feed-back reflects the effect of drama:

Silence is powerful.

I still like the role of drama to 'hook' children into literacy. It's very engaging.

Showing sensitivity and respect towards my young persons will make it easier for the shy ones to engage in drama activities.

I learned how the technique of drama can take participants to deeper places of meaning and universal understandings.

A different approach to drama especially using characters that are not central to story.

I've strengthened my belief in the power of children being totally involved.

That drama is not just 'acting', costumes and props. It is another way to examine plot, characters and settings.

This approach is similar to other literacy activities where you dig and discuss, but it is so uniquely different when children can interview the characters in the development.

Drama is a form of expression that children can relate to when modelled, with guidance and in a secure environment.

I have learned to take a challenge as a teacher. The drama lesson may not go down path 'A' but it gives the students a chance to form the lesson.

The first section of the book seeks to explore and explain the thinking behind this approach. We have devoted chapters to each of the key elements and given clear reference to and examples from the dramas to support our ideas.

The second section contains the collection of dramas for this age group we offer as material for readers to use. They are usable for readers of all levels; those wanting to gain experience of the power of drama for engaging and motivating pupils will be able to take the dramas as given, whereas those with more experience will be able to adapt and develop the work to suit themselves. There are also ideas for further development and outline beginnings for those wanting ideas for new plans.

It is useful to look through some of the dramas before reading the 'how to' chapters. The chapters refer heavily to the practical work in the dramas and can be better understood if you have looked at them. Look particularly at 'The Governor's Child', 'The Wild Thing' and 'The Victorian Street Children' or 'The Workhouse', which are used in the chapters on planning, inclusion, etc.

Each drama is planned to work for itself and to develop other work based on it, writing and reading.

We hope you enjoy them as much as we have.

Conventions Used in the Text

We use the following abbreviations for convenience:

TiR is Teacher in Role

ToR is Teacher out of Role

OoR is Out of Role

In addition, we use italics for words spoken in dramas. In Part One of the book italics indicate words spoken by participants in the course of the drama. In the outline dramas in Part Two the italicised text indicates where we are giving examples of what a role might say.

Strategies/Techniques for Use in the Dramas

Teacher in Role does not appear in this list, but has a chapter to itself, because it is not just one of a set of techniques. It is the central teaching strategy, which, even if used very sparingly, must be a key element of any drama.

Technique	What?	Why?	When?	Variations
Tableau	Small groups make a still picture of roles in a drama, showing attitudes and relationships, people in an event, an idea of what the material they are working on means	To begin to set up a context To summarise what people think so far To show possible endings	At any time in the drama The timing will affect the nature and depth of the picture	Copy a given picture Add one word/one action Activate and show previous or following 30 seconds Tell story of that event in 4 pictures Triptych – show 3 key moments from, e.g., a life Add captions or speech bubbles Whole class tableau as in 'The Victorian Street Children'
Hot-seating	Pupils question a role, usually TiR but sometimes followed by a pupil role The plain version is that the role just sits in front of the gathered group	Helps build understanding of the role's situation	Needs to be at a point where enough of the context is already clear	Just wheeling in a person to be questioned is limited in its drama. It is better to create more dynamic in how a role is met. For example, when the advisers choose to talk to Hermia in 'The Dream', have them 'on their way' to her room in the palace and 'find' her reading a note. This provides input and a tension, especially when she hides the note
Occupational mime	Creating a semblance of activity and action of the situation	To develop context and belief in the pupils' role	Usually earlier in a drama rather than later	Recreating an event Mime loop – a set of 6 actions is repeated and can be revisited to be updated later in the drama

Sculpting	Whole class put volunteers into shape of roles interacting	Shows how group see attitudes of roles Can help reflect on meaning so far	At any time	Pairs sculpt each other Groups sculpt one member
Defining the space	The outline and contents of an imagined place are given physical representation, using available furniture and labels	Adds context and builds ideas of the role whose space it is	After sufficient knowledge of the role and the situation is established to make it possible to imagine the role's space without it being random	Put one person as a surrogate of the role in that space and use one action/one thought, alternately provided by the rest of the group, to animate the role and use the space
Overheard conversation	TiR is heard having one side a of conversation with an imagined role, who is present or on the end of a telephone	To provide information that the role might not want the class to know	At a time when the information might challenge previously established ideas or preconceptions	
Thought-tracking	Pupils gather round a role and speak the thoughts of the role	To help the pupils empathise with that role	Has to be at a significant moment when the thoughts are focused as a response to the moment	<i>Alter ego</i> – where the role has two sets of thoughts, like good and bad spirits, voicing contrary reactions to an event or a decision he/she has to make. Pupils stand to the right and left of the role to voice them
Conscience alley	Two facing lines of participants. TiR walks slowly down between them. One side voices one choice for the role and the other side a different possibility	It explores choices. For example when Maria walked to the soldier to give herself up to save the baby in 'The Governor's Child', some villagers voiced how she was right to do it and others were against it	At moments of decision or difficult conflicting ideas of what another role has done	The two sides can voice opposite opinions of the role The two sides can represent two other roles trying to persuade the person walking through to take their viewpoint. A walks between the 2 rows towards B, a person they have to meet after significant events, and we hear A's voice, showing the attitude to B. Then B walks away from A and we hear what B thinks about the situation. For example Geb's wife in 'The Egyptians' drama walks towards him knowing he is going to jail. Then Geb walks away from her on his way to prison

Technique	What?	Why?	When?	Variations
Sociogram	Pupils stand round a key role, placing themselves close to or away from the person according to how they feel about him/her	To give a snap-shot of the whole class's attitude	When a role is influential on the community role and we need to see how people feel	
Narration	Teacher tells story of part of the drama	Link parts of drama	At a time where we need to move the drama on and where it is not appropriate, necessary or useful to have a class create the moment	The class can participate in creating the narrative and offer stages of the story of that event – as with the taking of the children by the Pied Piper
Writing input	Note, letter, diary, poster, chants	Can provide a necessary boost to pupil involvement Can be mysterious and demanding or simply give information	Where new stimulus is necessary, e.g. a letter from Lysander to Hermia arranging the elopement	Can be handed to the pupils Can be found by them Can be sought by them as important and which a role seeks to keep from them
Writing output	As above	If written 'in role' it helps develop role, reflect on role	At a time where pupils need to create something from a role, which reflects on what is happening to the role	Can be written by individuals, groups, or the whole class Can be done at the moment in the drama, after the drama or between sessions of the drama
Maps	Picture maps or symbol maps of the place of the drama	Provided by the teacher they help locate place and roles	At any time. At the beginning of the drama they can look to a journey	Can be jointly drawn by class at a point where the physical spaces need to be defined
Role on the wall	An outline of a figure is provided and pupils (or teacher as scribe) write inside words that describe what the role is like and outside the figure they write what they know about the role	This provides a summary of a role and a way of reflecting on the role's importance in the situation	At a point where we have come to see the role and have a relationship with him/her	This can be added to or altered at a later stage when we know more or different things about the role

Forum theatre	<p>An adaptation of the Augusto Boal form, where a class take on a role who has to sort out a TiR, teach the person something, challenge their attitude</p> <p>One representative of the class takes the role sitting opposite the TiR and others stop the role-play to take over in the hot-seat if they see a new approach or the person on the seat gets stuck</p>	Where there needs to be the resolution of an issue or problem	Usually later on in a drama where the problem TiR is most exposed	They take the role on collectively at times where they are inexperienced and lack the confidence to sit on the seat in front of the rest of the class
Collective drawing	A picture of a place or of objects	To give a physical representation of what we are imagining	<p>Depending on the use: At the beginning it would set the scene, for example a map of a village</p> <p>If it has to show what we know of the village then it needs to be far enough into a drama so that constraints are clear and the picture can be focused</p>	
Symbols	<p>The role signifier of each role</p> <p>Key objects in the drama</p>	<p>To represent the role and show when the teacher is in or out of role</p> <p>An object that symbolises an important idea, for example the candle in <i>Macbeth</i> showing his death</p>	As stated	A good object can focus a drama and strengthen the authentic feel of the drama, for example the whip in 'The Highwayman' that represents how he treats the horses he rides

Part One:

How to Approach Speaking and Listening through Drama

1 How to Begin with Teacher in Role

Why use teacher in role?

The most important resource you have as a teacher when using drama is yourself. Learning demands intervention from the teacher to structure, direct and influence the learning of the pupils. One of the best ways to do that in drama work is to be inside the drama. Therefore, at the centre of the dramas that we include in this book, is the key teaching technique that is used, namely teacher in role (TiR). This chapter will set out approaches to TiR and give examples of how it works.

Many teachers see TiR as a difficult activity, particularly with older children in the primary school. However, it is our experience that when a teacher takes a role he or she becomes 'interesting' to the children, so that there are less control problems because they become engaged. Many times we have watched trainee teachers with a class of children struggling to get attention when giving instructions in traditional teacher mode. Yet, as soon as they move into role, they obtain that attention more effectively.

For example, a trainee was talking out of role to a class to explain that they were about to meet a girl who was having trouble with her father and needed their help (see 'The Dream' drama based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). The class were calling out and not listening properly. She was talking over them and trying to teach without getting their full attention. Then she explained that they could ask questions of one of the roles from the story and that she was going to become that role when she sat down. She picked up a ribbon with a ring threaded on it and put it round her neck as the role signifier. When she sat down as Hermia, they were focused entirely on her and were listening very closely, putting hands up to ask questions and taking turns in a very orderly way. They were interested in her problem, which was her father's insistence on deciding whom she should marry. The trainee was not doing anything different apart from using role and committing to it very strongly. She looked far more comfortable.

The trainee was using the simplest form of TiR, hot-seating the role, where the class meets the role sitting in front of them and can ask questions. TiR creates a particular context and can raise the level of commitment and the meaning-making. It can 'feel real' even though it is not.

You are not effective as a teacher if you do not at some point engage fully with the drama yourself by using TiR. Remaining as teacher, intervening as teacher, side-coaching, structuring the drama from the outside, and/or sending the class off in groups to create their own drama must at best restrict and at worst negate any opportunity for the teacher to teach effectively. It is far more effective for the teacher to engage with the drama form as artist and be part of the creative act.

It is very useful in a Literacy lesson for the teacher to use roles from the text. The very fact that you take on a key role can provide important ways of defining and exploring the text. How does hot-seating open up the ideas and issues of a story to the children? Let us look more closely at the Hermia role. It can be used with 10- or 11-year-olds as a way of introducing Shakespeare or for other objectives.

Negotiate with the class that you are going to be someone with a problem. This can be done by narrating an opening:

The teenage girl with a paper in her hand burst angrily into the room.

Then sit down on the chair and stare at the piece of paper:

What am I going to do about this? How dare he. He can't do what he wants. He's not me. How does he know what I want to do?

Go out of role:

What did you learn about her and why she's angry?

Having discussed the first entry you then give the class a chance to find out whether their speculations about her are correct or not by asking questions.

Here is another way that the role could be introduced. Set it up like this:

I am going to become someone else to begin the next piece of work and all you have to do is look at her and see what you think is going on.

Sit on the seat with a piece of paper in your hand reading it silently to yourself.

How stupid he is. He writes me a letter and thinks I like him and I will like him even more just because he likes me. He knows I like somebody else. I'll never like him, let alone love him. I will have to tell him – again. But he won't listen. Especially as my dad thinks he's really nice and is encouraging him. He doesn't know him.

Notice that the piece of paper means something different in each of the above situations. In the first it is the note from her father, Egeus, outlining her situation (she is under threat of death if she does not follow his wishes). In that case it will have a seal and look official. In the second instance it is a letter from Demetrius declaring his love for her and her blindness in seeking Lysander's love. It will look different and might be accompanied by a little gift, a token like a ribbon or a necklace.

In this case, again, you go out of role to talk about what the class have seen and heard:

How does she seem? What is the situation? Who are all these people she's talking about?

In both cases, when the class have speculated enough, they will have questions to ask Hermia and you have an interesting way to begin to tell them the basic situation at the beginning of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

You can then answer the questions by playing the role of Hermia based on the way that the character is in the play. She's obstinate, believes in herself and her love for Lysander, is adamant she won't do what her father wants and will want the pupils' help to influence her father and the Duke.

You can introduce the fact that her father is threatening to invoke the law, to have her put to death if she doesn't obey him. You can set up the idea that in this society a daughter is expected to obey her father. This extreme social expectation and law makes the fiction like their reality but also different from it, something that helps drama create a useful distance, which helps the class reflect on their own beliefs and look at the drama world in a more balanced and thoughtful way.

All of this introduces an interesting set of issues which children at this age are beginning to experience and understand about their relationship with parents and about their relationship with the opposite sex. Even if the main aim of the work is not a study of the Shakespeare play, the role can be used to open up very