

FINAL REMARKS

This type of activity does not have to be excessively long and drawn out. Rather than work through the same scenario over and over, class period after class period, it is better to work on as many other scenes as possible throughout the school year. As students become more and more familiar with the process, the less time will be needed to work through each scene.

An alternative to this procedure could involve the use of role cards (especially effective when working with out-of-sequence or anticipated scenes). Instead of using scripts, role cards which are "character specific" can be distributed to each group. A scene taken from the novel is presented from the point of view of the group's character; specific details and instructions are provided. The three phases of "strategic interaction," as outlined above, can be followed here as well. Of course, anticipation of what other characters (interlocutors) in the scene are going to say and do becomes a more important strategy in this activity, since this information is not given in explicit terms.

Example role card:

You are Gwendolyn, Davey's mother. Davey is in the living room alone; she is leafing through a magazine. You and Jason are napping in your rooms. You hear the doorbell ring. You know Davey will answer. You realize it is Hugh who has come to look in on Davey because you had asked him to do so. You told him that Davey hasn't been out of the house since the funeral. Davey goes to the door and lets Hugh in. After he makes an offer to Davey and she refuses, you enter the living room and agree with Hugh saying why you think it would be a good idea for her to go out. Finally, after your insisting, Davey accepts and the two of them leave the house.

"Tiger Eyes"
by Judy Blume

Another alternative would be to have each group choose a scene and prepare role cards for other groups to perform. Such an activity could take the form of a game resulting in competition among groups and lots of fun while, let's not forget, "grappling" with with a literary text!

References:

- Di Pietro, R. J. (1987). *Strategic Interaction: Learning Languages through Scenarios*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Duff, A. & Maley, A. (1991). *Resource Books for Teachers: LITERATURE*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Selected Bibliography (Judy Blume / Dell Publishing):

- Are you there God? It's Me, Margaret*. (for ages 11-13)
Then Again, Maybe I Won't. (for ages 11-13)
Forever. (for ages 14-18)
Tiger Eyes. (for ages 14-18)
Smart Women. (for teenagers and adults)

Teaching idea

Babylonia

No. 00, 1992

Narrative-Based Scenarios: The "Young Adult" Novel

No. 7

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At a glance

- 1. Language:** Any language
- 2. Level:** Any level/secondary school age
- 3. Activity:** Write, rehearse and perform scenarios which are based on passages chosen from dialogue-dense "young adult" novels.
- 4. Objectives:**

Develop reading, writing and oral communication strategies; accelerate language learning and raise language learning awareness; sustain on-task concentration and increase interest, motivation and student output;

Experiment with the "young adult" novel genre by using it as a source from which to select real-life, dramatic human interactions for the scripting of scenarios;

Provoke a genuine interaction between the reader and the text and between readers;

Proceed from the performance of scenarios to the study and analysis of spoken discourse.
- 5. Duration:** One or more lessons, periodically, throughout the school year.
- 6. Materials:**

Novel: Open choice (see selected bibliography);

Notebook: for reflection and planning;

Scripts: prepared by students and/or teacher;

Stage: integrated into classroom space;

Video camera: if desired for use in debriefing phases and/or for the purposes of self and peer-evaluation and exchange of constructive criticism.

RATIONALE

A common dilemma for L2 teachers working with intermediate, low-intermediate and beginning learners involves whether or not, or when, to begin using "literary texts" in the L2 classroom. Since criteria for choosing texts that are considered "accessible" to low-level learners are not well defined and foolproof guidelines non-existent, the L2 teacher is generally left to her/his own wits when confronted with questions regarding which texts to use and what to do with them in the classroom.

But, because of an innate reluctance to overwhelm low-level learners with texts that are considered "too difficult" and because, for many, literature still remains the sacred domain of only those who take it "seriously," the temptation to use literature is often repressed and other, "non-literary," sources commonly used for stimulating language activities are favored. Recently, though, attempts have been made "to explore further the use of literary texts as a language teaching resource rather than an object of literary study as such" (Duffy and Maley, 1991). The "teaching idea" presented here represents such an effort.

Concerning which texts to use with secondary students, the "young adult" novel genre was chosen for its "realism" and presumed interest to teenagers. Texts like "Tiger Eyes" and "Forever" by Judy Blume (just to name two), that automatically activate background knowledge about the complexities of adolescence and about the confusions that go along with growing up, seemed opportune. Because these narratives speak directly to and from the point of view of teenagers, it was felt that they would be accessible - even to low low-intermediate and beginning learners of, in this case, English.

Working from the assumption that students appreciate a well-articulated challenge and that they are capable of learning English faster than is usually thought possible, it was hypothesized that immediate access to spoken discourse, provided by the above-mentioned novels' 1st-person and dialogue-dense narration, would serve as our "pedagogical" trump card. Passages which contained "mini-scenes" were chosen. It was found that scripts, being inherent in the dialogues, could very easily be transcribed and thus provide both the format and the input required for creating "scenarios" which could be prepared and performed in the classroom. Systematic analysis of spoken discourse and genuine interaction between students are logical consequences of the process.

Following is a procedural description of a language learning activity (plus a few suggested alternatives) intended to encourage learners to: 1) develop an interest in direct involvement in the processes and dynamics of interaction between both the text and other learners; 2) become more attentive to both spoken and unspoken communicative conventions and strategies as exemplified in the proposed texts; 3) develop an awareness of the connections between text, program objectives and content already covered in the course and; 4) generate spontaneous speech in the classroom. Di Pietro's (1987) three-phase "strategic interaction" approach (consisting of rehearsal, performance and debriefing phases) has been adapted in order to work with scenarios that are derived from a literary text rather than created through roleplay alone.

PROCEDURE

Pre-class or in-class preparation

Choose a specific scene in the novel that easily lends itself to dramatization (decision can be negotiated with students);

Write script (determine number of characters involved, place where action occurs, important background information, placement of essential props, characters' lines, gestures and movements);
Give each student a neat copy of script (preferably typed);

NB: This can either be done in class in groups, at home or the teacher may begin the lesson having already prepared the script. In any case, neat, identical copies are a must!

The three phases of strategic interaction

Phase 1 (Rehearsal):

Students form groups. The number of groups is dependent upon the number of characters in the scene and/or the number of students in the class. The idea here is that each group represents one of the characters and has the task of deciding how to interpret that character's role.

Students are asked to study the script in their groups and come up with a "game plan" or "agenda" to fulfill the roles of the characters assigned to them. The rehearsal phase allows students to interact among themselves and make decisions together. The teacher's role at this time is to act as facilitator by circulating among student groups, advising and guiding them as needed.

Phase 2 (Performance):

Students perform their roles with support of their respective groups while teacher and remainder of class look on.

One student from each group is nominated to perform in front of the class.

Onlookers pay close attention to group member's performance and take note of positive and negative points. Timing, pronunciation, intonation, gesture, attitude, or any other aspect of the performance to be maintained or improved upon are noted.

Performing students return to their respective groups. "Game plan" is revised on the basis of onlooker observations and suggestions and of negotiated agreements made by the entire group. Another student from each group is nominated and performance phase is repeated.

Phase 3 (Debriefing):

Teacher leads the entire class in a discussion of the students' performance. The following and other questions can be asked to lead the discussion:

- What was the outcome of the interaction?
- Were intentions met?
- Could there have been other possibilities?
- What problems surfaced and how were they handled?

These and similar concerns are then discussed by the whole class. Alternative solutions can be provided and, once students are in command of the method and feel like experimenting with it, an attempt can be made to have them take control.

Discrete points, such as intonation or grammar may also serve as the subject of discussion.

Cross-cultural comparisons between the target culture(s) and that (those) of students can also be made and, in this way, sociolinguistic differences can be emphasized.

Learners should note relevant information of whatever nature in a personalized "log" or "learning journal."