Primary School Spanish Theatre Production as a strategy for building confidence in student teachers

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2008

- Spanish compulsory for Primary Specialisation in B.Ed. Degree at UTT
- Programme adapted to reality of schools and prospective teachers (our target group)
- Classes delivered to model best practices
Background

Evaluation considers the various learning styles:

- poems
- stories
- theatre
- dialogues
- journals
- research projects
- educational games
- written exams
History of Theatre in Programme

Theatre started as assignment in 2009. The rationale was to:

- Explore cross-curricular integration
- Build oral competence - pronunciation
- Explore various forms of evaluation
- Explore and expose students to different ways of using language (Multiple Intelligences)
By 2010, original pieces were emerging full of creative content.
With well integrated, child appropriate Spanish structures
Sound cross-curricular content
Science

La Oruga: The life cycle of a butterfly
Social Studies
Cruzar la calle - Road safety
Process insight

• Plays selected in March

• Language and Stage direction reviewed

• Rehearsal, costuming and set design organised during the months of April and May

• Performance done in June and July at schools
UTT Spanish Theatre 2010-beyond

2010

- invited to UWI Inter-campus Foreign Language Theatre Festival
- Invitation for on site performances primary school performances
- Genesis of idea to become an on-going, fixed part of the department’s activities.
In 2010 presented 2 plays at 2 primary schools in the St. Augustine area.

By 2012 presented 6 plays at schools both in Trinidad and Tobago with a focus on rural areas.

Since the inception performed for more than 16 schools and

a total of 33 student teachers participated - all showing positive tendencies of growth in their language skills and confidence.
Questions arising

This led us to several questions:

• Does this theatre impact on student teacher confidence in Spanish?

• If so, in which skills?

• Does this theatre impact on their teaching confidence?
Methodology

• In 2012 we decided to research this issue using that year’s performing group of 14 students.

• Their plays covered a range of themes

• A questionnaire was structured to reflect the research questions. Majority of question were rated on a scale of 1-5, with one open ended question.

• This was given to them after all the performances of the plays
Salient findings

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Discussions- Speaking/Listening

• Dramatic increase in confidence in oral and listening skills

• Attributed to the oral/aural nature of theatre with high level of speaking practice done (pronunciation, intonation, stress)

• Listening for cues in play

• Listening to other plays which are new material
Before

- Very High: 2
- High: 8
- Average: 4

After

- Very High: 3
- High: 7
- Average: 4
Discussion in reading

- Minimal increase in reading skills
- Due to lack of clear understanding of what reading is: Reading comprehension vs. Reading aloud
- Once they read and learnt lines, no need to exercise this skill, no new challenge.
- Great time lapse - Reading done earlier in semester during preparation
- Reading not an explicit part of theatre performance
Before

- Very High: 6
- High: 5
- Average: 2
- Low: 1

After

- Very High: 3
- High: 6
- Average: 5
- Low: 3
Discussion writing

• Increased confidence in writing

• Linked theatre process starting in January and going through many iterations before end result

• Plays were chosen - may have given them confidence in the quality of their work
How would you rate your confidence in Spanish before/after the theatre experience?

Before
- Very High: 4
- High: 8
- Average:

After
- Very High: 4
- High: 10
- Average:
Overall confidence discussion

- Overall increase which validates use of theatre

- Literature says that increased oral competence influences confidence in other skills e.g. listening, reading and writing
Confidence to deliver a Spanish lesson

- Very High: 9
- High: 4
Discussion

• Confidence was rated and participants had to explain their rating. Their increased confidence to deliver a lesson in Spanish was described in different terms:

• No longer introverted.
• Theatre techniques can be applied to teaching in general
• Application to other subject areas since the theatre itself integrates other subject areas
Recommendations

- Theatre should be an integral part of teacher education programmes.
- Integrate different aspects of their learning.
- Increase confidence and collaboration.
- Integrate cross curricular content.
- Think about their work critically, test their work in front of children.
- Prepare them for the new curriculum.
Recommendations cont’d

• A greater increase in confidence in reading and writing can be gained by polishing and reformulating the plays

• Further study in linguistic gains - reading, writing etc

• Further study comparing linguistic gains with confidence levels

• Further study to explore the linguistic impact on children as well as their attitude on learning a foreign language
Quotes

• “...[B]efore my confidence was lacking especially in the area of pronunciation. With the assistance of the lecturers my confidence improved and as a result, I feel strong in my conviction to deliver a Spanish lesson.”

• “The theatre experience has helped me gain my confidence and enthusiasm for teaching Spanish. I enjoyed teaching my lessons...”

• “I feel confident...I have learnt techniques which I can use effectively to help my students communicate in the language in meaningful ways.”
MUCHAS GRACIAS