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Alternative Identities and Foreign Language Learning

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Table of contents

Table of contents.....	page 2
1 Introduction.....	4
2 Outline, with aims and questions.....	5
3 Background.....	6
3.1 Part one: Core ideas of drama, and acting and playing related to language learning.....	7
3.1.1 Language play.....	7
3.1.2 The purpose of drama, and its goal.....	9
3.1.3 Definitions of motivation.....	10
3.1.4 Language classroom climate.....	12
3.2 Part two: The usage of drama in language teaching, or lack of it.....	13
3.2.1 Form and meaning.....	13
3.2.2 The ludic gap.....	14
3.2.3 Decontextualising.....	14
3.2.4 The sense of agency.....	15
3.3 Part three: Suggested drama activities, and examples of factual usage of drama in school.....	16
3.3.1 <i>New Ways of Using Drama and Literature in Language Teaching</i>	16
3.3.2 <i>Redcoats and Patriots</i>	17
3.3.3 <i>The play between life and language – non-linguistic factors in foreign language learning</i>	19

4	Aim repetition, and hypothesis.....	22
5	Method.....	23
6	Results and discussion.....	25
6.1	General discussion.....	25
6.2	Study results and discussion.....	28
6.2.1	First session results.....	29
6.2.2	Second session results.....	32
6.2.3	Recapitulating discussion.....	35
7	Conclusion.....	41
8	Appendices.....	42
Appendix 1:	Schoolbook discussion topics.....	42
Appendix 2:	Improvisation topics.....	42
Appendix 3:	Transcripts from recorded tapes.....	43
9	Bibliography.....	46

1 Introduction

I have noticed that Swedish teenage students of English tend to be reluctant to speaking a foreign language in a school setting. This could be contrasted with what might occur when the students are provided with the opportunity to act as somebody else in class. I have, myself, experienced a difference between language usage in a regular classroom situation compared to the one in school theatre, when it comes to students' readiness to speak.

In the field of language acquisition research, the overall focus has turned away from teaching methods, and presently it is on learner types, what successful learners do, types of motivation, and material authenticity. There seems to be, however, very little focus on the reluctance many students display to actually express themselves in a foreign language. If scholars do focus on that, there is a tendency to believe in the efficiency – and possibility – of transmitting the methods of successful learners to unsuccessful ones, and of presenting lists of learner types and motivation types for the students, as if they thereby hope that the unsuccessful learners somehow will show a more courageous student profile.

I personally think that there is a close relationship between the readiness, or lack of it, to use a foreign language a person may have, and how secure the person feels, which in turn is probably closely linked to that person's belief in what role s/he is expected to play in the actual setting. I also think that many people are reluctant to expose themselves and their standpoints, and even more so, if they are supposed to express themselves in a language they know they do not master. To sum up the introduction, I return to my opening words, and repeat that I think it is generally easier to express oneself in a foreign language, if one is allowed to do so as somebody else, i.e. through acting.

2 Outline, with aims and questions

The general aim of the essay is to discuss the phenomenon of readiness in relation to publications on language play, language acquisition, and on language and identity. Different kinds of drama exercises will be presented in the background, together with two factual examples of usage of drama in school.

In addition, there is a more specific aim of the essay, which is to take a closer look at the phenomenon of how student reluctance or readiness to speak a foreign language in school might depend on how threatened or secure the students feel, which in turn might depend on the kind of role they are supposed to act. In the results and discussion section, the essay presents the findings of a minor study on the topic.

The study aims to look at Swedish teenage students' willingness to use the foreign language English in a school setting, where a difference in their readiness might be expected. There will be a comparison of their readiness to speak English in the two school-tasks 'group discussion' and 'drama improvisations', performed respectively by the students acting as themselves and acting as a chosen character.

The essay asks two sets of questions, and tries to answer them both by presenting an overall view of the field as well as describing the precise results of the study, and both sets of questions are dealt with thoroughly in the discussion section. Firstly, there are four general questions about aspects of drama:

1. What is drama?
2. How can drama be used in school?
3. What effects does it have on students?
4. What does drama give that "traditional" teaching does not?

Secondly, the essay also deals with three questions, specifically related to the study:

1. Based on the background standpoints about drama, could it be expected to find that the Swedish students in the study display a difference in readiness to speak the foreign language English in the tape recordings of the two different tasks?
2. If so, could this be related to what role the students act, i.e, themselves or a character that has been taken on?
3. If provided with the possibility to act as somebody else, do Swedish students display a greater readiness to speak the foreign language English?

3 Background

The background consists of three parts, where some aspects of foreign language usage in school are investigated. This is done by presenting opinions of reports written by different scholars of the areas language learning / acquisition, plus language teaching. Part one concerns the relation between acting and playing and language learning, and describes core ideas of drama. Part two is about the general lack of acting and playing in language classes in school, and part three presents some kinds of drama activities, together with a presentation of some successful drama projects in school, in a language class and in a social studies class.

3.1 Part one: Core ideas of drama, and acting and playing related to language learning.

3.1.1 Language play

We all construct our identity through the use of language. It is even possible to say that language is a crucial tool in the process, whether it is sign language or spoken language. Building an identity could also be characterized as part of the process of dealing with the world. The goal is to eventually be able to know and master as much as possible of both oneself and the world that surrounds us. This process could not be characterised as a matter of regular language learning. Infants and toddlers are not expected to perform school tasks, nor does anyone think of correcting them in the way school children are corrected. Still, young children are usually very proficient in their language at the time they start school.

Crystal states that: “everyone plays with language or responds to language play” (Crystal 1998 p.1), which is something most people would agree upon. Then Crystal wants to get to the bottom of the matter, and asks: “why do we find it so enjoyable being part of a playful linguistic interchange? [...] Where does our fascination with language play come from?” (1998 p.159). These are relevant questions in a language learning context, and Crystal answers the first question by saying that there is a social value in language play, since sharing language play makes people bond with each other (1998 p 219). Another simple reason might be that we are attracted to what is amusing and funny. A sense of humour is one thing that distinguishes us from animals. The fascination for language play originates early in life, Crystal (1998 p.159) claims, because the early parent – child interaction is based on and develops by language play. We should not disregard the importance of

language play, Crystal says, since it has been an important part of our human growth, and he quotes Deacon: “laughter is not just an expression of emotion. It is a public symptom of engaging in a kind of mental conflict resolution” (Crystal 1998 p.224). So Crystal concludes that laughter has a “presymbolic function, antedating language” (1998 p.224).

As examples of language play could be mentioned babies’ initial cooing and babbling, in which parents and older siblings usually enjoy taking part. Later on, children enjoy repeating a newly acquired word, just for the pleasure of it, but endlessly, other people think. Then comes all the experimenting with the rules of language, which both functions as an aid to get hold of the rules, and as a sheer pleasure in itself. Language play for older children and adults includes jokes and conversations that play with pronunciation, abnormal voice, onomatopoeia (sound-resembling words), meanings of words, alliteration, grammar, spelling, assumptions, made-up words, and a lot more. Once we master the rules of the language, we enjoy bending the same rules.

Doubtlessly, Crystal believes in the healthy power and usefulness of language play as he says: “I cannot prove it, but I do believe that the more children are given opportunities to play with language and respond to language play, as they move up through the school, the more sophisticated will be their eventual prowess in the verbal arts” (Crystal 1998 p.220). Other scholars agree with Crystal on the issue, as Maley and Duff (1996) do, but they extend it to cover the learning of any language. They claim that without practice in language play, people get stuck at a simple level of the language, which allows for nothing but a simple expression, and they prescribe a playful method towards success: “the more we can experiment with

different combinations of words, the better we can come to know the potential of the language we are learning” (1996 p. 3).

3.1.2 The purpose of drama, and its goal

Drama could be seen as a working method, a game, or an art. However established and well reputed the art of drama is, the essay focuses on the playful aspect of it, along with its usefulness as a tool for personal as well as subject-related development. As a basis for drama sessions, written material may be used, like poems, literary texts, songs, or musicals, as well as shorter exercises, acted out by improvisation. Both kinds need planning, but the outcome is still unpredictable, since it is formed by the participants' imagination and courage.

Many schoolteachers nurture well defined borders between their subject and other subjects, which implies that many language teachers would never even consider using anything else than the textbook with its cassettes. Another attitude is expressed by Maley and Duff, who say that drama gives the teacher a chance to redefine the subject of language: “Drama is like the naughty child who climbs the high walls and ignores the ‘No trespassing’ sign” (Maley and Duff 1996 p.15). They further say that drama “forces us to take as our starting point life not language. And life means all subjects, whether they are on the timetable or not” (1996 p.15). Such a starting point probably gives other opportunities to classes than traditional one-to-thirty classroom communication.

It is important, though, not to confuse drama with mechanical memorizing of other people's words. Putting on plays in that way can make the words “turn to ashes in the speaker's mouth”, according to Maley and Duff (1996 p.6). Their definition states that the purpose of drama is “to grapple with a problem, not to

produce polished prose or verse; to develop an idea, not to reproduce a text” (1996 p.4). The focus of the activity is, in other words, the learning and sharing process of the participants, or, as Maley and Duff put it; the only relevant audience is “the people who are *taking part*” (1996 p.6).

Related to this view on the purpose of drama is the discussion, by Williams and Burden, on the topic of setting goals in general. They summarize an extensive debate among cognitive psychologists, who agree upon the fact that there are two different types of goal orientation, although they all label them differently. Williams and Burden thus conclude that there are two types of goal orientation: “*performance*, where the prime concern is to look good, or, at least, not to look stupid, and *learning*, where the goal is to increase knowledge, skill or understanding” (Williams and Burden 1997 p.131). The drama purpose view and the goal orientation view do go nicely together. “Put simply, with performance goals, an individual aims to look smart, whereas with learning goals the individual aims at becoming smarter” (Dweck 1985 p. 291 in Williams and Burden 1997 p.131). Although put in a bantering style, Dweck’s words give possible associations to different teacher goals, reflected and unreflected goals as they might be, which thus set different conditions for students’ learning.

3.1.3 Definitions of motivation

Motivation is a factor closely connected to the issue of language learning. Most teachers would agree on the statement that students learn more when motivated, and less when not motivated. Williams and Burden describe the notion of ‘motivation’ from different angles, beginning with a basic dividing up of the motivation into three core stages: reasons for doing something, deciding to do it, and sustaining the effort. These stages are to be seen as forming a circular model, where the third, sustaining

stage continues into a new, first, initiating stage. Williams and Burden further states that this takes place “within a social context and culture which will influence choices made at each stage” (1997 p.121). Further views on motivation are the ones that split it into extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, either perceived as opposites, excluding each other at the same time, or as parts of a continuum, gradually overlapping each other at any given point (1997 pp.123-25).

Every person looks differently upon any kind of task. What someone perceives as a challenge is regarded as dull and useless by somebody else. Thus, the perceived value of the activity must be taken into consideration, when discussing people’s differing motivation to one and the same task. Williams and Burden relates this to a survey of about five thousand British secondary school students, which shows that the students perceive their subjects as belonging to one of four categories; “interesting and useful, interesting but useless, boring but useful, and boring and useless” (Williams and Burden 1997 p.126). About 20 – 25 % of the students in the survey perceived learning a foreign language as both boring and useless, which indicates a very poor motivation in that area.

Arousal is also needed, in the initial stage as well as in the deciding stage and in the effort-sustaining stage. If the inspiration is lost, one gets stuck. One major component of arousal is curiosity, says Williams and Burden (1997 p.126). Many teachers know this, and add a surprise component to their work simply to make the tasks more appealing.

3.1.4 Language classroom climate

The climate of a classroom is decided by many factors, such as the teacher's conscious or unconscious goals and intentions, and the motivation, beliefs and attitudes of both teacher and students. Depending on the belief about what is supposed to take place in a language classroom, the climate of the classroom is perceived by different people as having varying importance. With the belief that language learning is all about memorizing glossaries, then the regard of a proper climate for that might point at sheer discipline and silence. Other beliefs about what could take place in a language classroom accordingly point at a higher perceived importance of the climate of the classroom. Below follows a detailed description of a positive language classroom climate, which is based on the view that even the climate of a classroom could determine what is going to take place in it:

“Language classrooms in particular need to be places where learners are encouraged to use the new language to communicate, try out new ways of expressing meanings, to negotiate, to make mistakes without fear, and to learn to learn from successes and failures. Emotionally, a suitable environment for language learning should be one that enhances the trust needed to communicate and which enhances confidence and self-esteem” (Williams and Burden 1997 p.202).

Such a nice description of the optimum language classroom could make anyone reconsider studying a foreign language, but reality does not meet the description completely. Of course there are language classrooms like this, but the majority are probably far from the climate mentioned above most of the time.

The second section of the background turns the attention to aspects of language teaching, where drama usage might make a difference.

3.2 Part two: The usage of drama in language teaching, or lack of it

3.2.1 Form and meaning

When it comes to learning a new language, of course it is important to learn to speak it, if not completely correctly, then at least correctly enough to make oneself understood. Correct in this case includes form features such as intonation, pronunciation, word order, sentence structure, etc. But the aspect of meaning is as important as the one of form, as is made clear below: “The much maligned example that used to crop up on the first page of all language textbooks, ‘Is this a pen?’, has now disappeared. And why? Not because it was incorrect or meaningless or useless, but because it was unnecessary and inappropriate” (Maley and Duff 1996 p.8).

Maley and Duff (1996) give the example of asking that question to a London docker, while taking a pen out of your pocket. They describe how such a question, grammatically correct as it is, asked under such circumstances, most probably would be interpreted as a provocation or insult. They further claim that there has to be a meaningful correlation between an utterance and its context, and underline it by referring to a typical classroom situation; a teacher tries to illustrate the present continuous tense by opening and closing a window, walking a few steps across the floor, etc. Maley and Duff say that the students usually lose the interest quite quickly “because it seems pointless to describe what is going on in front of your eyes” (1996 p.9). Similar actions can become interesting, and questions about them can become meaningful, they claim, simply by adding the condition “that the observer should not know in advance why the actions are being performed” (1996 p.9). Pair exercises with one student miming and the other trying to work out in detail what is going on, help “ensuring that language is used in an appropriate context” (1996 p. 9).

3.2.2 The ludic gap

As was outlined in 3.1.1, children play their way into language, and attain by that a surprisingly high level of proficiency. Crystal describes the state of matters as follows: “at the stage when children arrive in school, their linguistic life has been one willingly given over to language play” (1998 p.184), and that “language play is one of the more enjoyable reasons why anyone should want to engage in the task of language learning” (1998 p.220). It is common knowledge that the curiosity, inventiveness, and linguistic playfulness of many, if not most, children vanish during the first school years. Crystal says that the school world is alien to many children, because “the teaching of reading has focused on many things – but not language play” (1998 p.184), and he speculates about this being one reason for the slow progress towards advanced language skills many children show.

Even if many teachers know, as Crystal points out: “that one will make most progress when teaching can be related to what the student already knows” (Crystal 1998 p.184), teachers often display a prevalent disregard from the possibility that playfulness might be an efficient tool for learning. In school, there is often an intrinsic seriousness in language learning, from early stages to the highest, which might be one reason why students perceive language learning as ‘boring and useless’, as was described in 3.1.3.

3.2.3 Decontextualising

The main difference between most pre-school learning and school experiences is that the former is contextualised, in that the learning includes knowledge that is meaningful and useful to the children. The latter is decontextualised, in that the learning “occurs separately from the actual thing or process that is being studied and

therefore requires specific and conscious effort to maintain involvement” (Long 2000 p.105). The matter of de- and contextualising is related to the discussion on form and meaning in 3.2.1 above, where the suggestions on drama activities including miming aimed at putting the learning in a meaningful context.

Long says that it can be argued “that education must inevitably involve the developing of abstract learning, since it is impossible to experience personally the basis of every new item of knowledge that will be useful to us” (Long 2000 p.105). On the other hand, he says, relying on Bruner (1966), learning in school could still be achieved by using forms of direct experience or learning by discovery. Of course, drama is not the only example of this; there are other ways of creating a meaningful context, such as inviting relevant people to school, but that falls out of the focus of the essay.

3.2.4 The sense of agency

Williams and Burden discuss the ‘sense of agency’ notion, which concerns the way people perceive their own role or position of power in what is happening. One important factor in the sense of agency is the sense people have of “whether they cause and are in control of their actions, or whether they perceive that what happens to them is controlled by other people” (Williams and Burden 1997 p.127). Several researchers claim that this is an important determinant in motivation, they say, which again can be related to the ‘boring and useless’-scenario mentioned in 3.1.3, where 20 - 25 % of the five thousand students in a British survey perceived foreign language studies as both boring and useless. Probably, a majority of the students had not chosen the foreign language studies by free will, but were forced by the curriculum to participate in compulsory foreign language studies.

The third section of the background deals with drama usage in school, intended to increase e.g. students' motivation and their sense of agency.

3.3 Part three: Suggested drama activities, and examples of factual usage of drama in school

3.3.1 *New Ways of Using Drama and Literature in Language Teaching*

In this instructive book, a number of suggested drama exercises of different kinds are presented by Whiteson for any language teacher that feels tempted to use drama in the classroom. Most of the exercises are related to or based on the usage of literary texts, poetry, film, and plays. All exercises are given a basic procedure, which is described in the text, together with some caveats and options, and further reading.

One of the exercises is called "Interacting with literature via student-produced videos" (Whiteson 1996 p.106). It aims to develop students' interest in literature, and to have them use their language skills in the process. The task is for groups of students to produce videos based on a short story or a chapter from a novel that they have read. This task gives them the opportunity to analyse the plot, the characters, the points of view, and the language of the story. But, most important: "they are using their language skills to participate in a creative process similar to that of the author whose work they are reading" (1996 p.106). The instructions encourage the participants to change whatever they find appropriate in their video version. The source text is meant as an inspiration, not as something to copy, and each group in the class might interpret the text differently.

Another one is called "Append a scene" (1996 p.114), where the focus is on communicating in the language, reading aloud and acting, practicing to write

creatively and to give critique on others' writing. Here the students may add a scene to an existing play, by writing in pairs or groups, and then playreading their scenes in class, which will form a base for discussion.

A third exercise is called "Acting it out" (1996 p.116), and is intended for a miming session. The aim is to learn to mime expressively, and to become sensitive to dialogue. Groups of students are asked to read and act sections of a play, one section per group, but everything in the play, including dialogue, is to be acted out by miming. When one group is acting, the rest can talk out loud and guess how the parts of the play are connected.

3.3.2 *Redcoats and Patriots*

In his book, Taylor describes how he introduced and used drama into the social studies curriculum during one year, in his class of seventh-graders (12-year-olds) in a New York school. The school was, as he describes it, characterized by the 'empty vessel view' of students, and the teachers accordingly used conservative working methods. On the back cover blurb, the presentation text says that Taylor was: "inviting his students to become participants in history rather than mere observers of it. His students [...] engage with the subject and with each other in ways previously unimaginable" (Taylor 1998 back cover). This enthusiastic conclusion – probably written by someone at the publisher's house to increase the number of copies sold – should be seen in the light of prevailing traditional teaching methods of the US. Nevertheless, the book provides interesting reading on his project of social studies, carried out with drama as a working method.

The aim of the project was to let the students (twelve pupils; the class was divided in social studies for administrative purposes) work with the The Boston

Massacre during the Independence war 1775 – 1783. Taylor describes how he, despite difficulties, managed to engage the students, and they eventually did a number of things they were not used to do in class, such as:

- take on roles as historians of the future, citizens of Boston, British soldiers, and patriots
- decipher and interpret authentic materials
- narrate and reconstruct historical incidents
- create scenes and tableaux
- carry out research on characters and topics of their choice
- write reports, journals, letters
- speculate, solve problems, make decisions
- reflect on their own and others' work
- make connections between their discoveries in drama and their real lives

(Taylor 1998 p vi)

Taylor himself acts as supervisor, inspirer, and data-collector for his research. He is also the one who moves things forward by asking questions, and on top of that, he takes on two roles in the drama scenes, the narrator and a patriot who turns out to be a traitor who gets killed by the other patriots.

According to Taylor, the project's success was based on the fact that the students took on their roles to the point of living them and by that encountering real life phenomena such as loyalty and treachery, which made them deal with these notions seriously. In the foreword, O'Neill describes drama as "a social and inclusive art", which "creates a sense of community", and he moves on to say that the drama both provides the students with a world of possibilities and invites them to take action in it (Taylor 1998 p.vii). The back cover blurb writer again says that the students' creativity and curiosity play a major role in the process of generating "a curriculum that reflects their potential and celebrates their strengths" (Taylor 1998 back cover), which this group of twelve-year-olds accomplished together with their teacher.

Redcoats and Patriots is evidently not an example of drama usage in a language class, but it serves as a general example of drama as a working method in

school, and a successful one, too. As was mentioned in 3.1.2, it could be argued that life should be taken as a starting point for drama, not a particular subject, and Taylor's example certainly meets that requirement.

3.3.3 The play between life and language – non-linguistic factors in foreign language learning

The text in question is a course assignment essay written in Sweden by an English C student (Hermansson 2004) at Dalarna University. It includes a report of a school musical project, initiated and carried out by the same student at a lower secondary school, although there he is the teacher. The essay also includes thoughts and opinions of five students, who participated in the musical, collected in interviews two years and a half after their participation.

The theoretical references in the introduction of the essay point at the areas of drama, language acquisition, learner competences, motivation, cultural distance, perceived purpose, social context, and social interaction, where scholars as Hitchcock & Hughes, Lightbown & Spada, Hedge, Wessels, Gass & Selinker, and Burke & O'Sullivan are quoted.

The author of the essay, Hermansson, discusses language learning or acquisition in relation to a social context, and describes how the created world of the musical is as good a social context as any authentic context, when it comes to second language learning. Hermansson says:

“Working with a script, getting into character, researching themes and settings and going through endless rehearsals strengthen many competences that make a good language learner. [...] I realise how much drama is a simulacrum of real life and to what extent it is connected to language. Working with drama, learners go in and out of characters and gradually build up self-confidence. Making mistakes is a natural thing in drama, which makes it undramatic. Other competences as trying and communication are necessary and playful” (Hermansson 2004 p 5).

He further brings up some factors, important for language learning, such as short- and long-term motivation, risk-taking, positive anxiety, and extroversion, and claims that understanding of nuances in pronunciation, tone and stress come natural in drama, “as a result of the objective oriented process” (2004 p.6).

Hermansson also agrees with some scholars that students feel less threatened when corrected while working with drama, since the setting has an authentic atmosphere, and the students often want their peers to really understand what they mean.

“Drama is first and foremost a communicative method of learning languages” (2004 p.5), Hermansson says. During the process students develop an ability to use language communicatively, and they cultivate “linguistic, pragmatic, strategic and discourse competences as well as fluency” (2004 p.5).

The drama project was a one year long work with the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical *The Beautiful Game*, carried out with forty Swedish 15-year-old pupils in two English classes together. In the end of the year they performed the full-scale musical on three occasions, in front of some hundred spectators. The preparations included a lot of research on Northern Irish culture and politics, discussions of themes, characters, and conflicts, scriptwriting, and music orchestration, during which they mostly spoke English.

Two and a half years after the project, Hermansson interviewed five of the students that took part in the project, with the intention of listening to their own reflections on their language development during that year. By then they were all 17 or 18 years old. The significant core words of the interview answers are: life, context, purpose, and real, and Hermansson concludes that the students felt that English was used for real purposes. His detailed conclusion includes some significant parts, worth mentioning here:

Creating a simulacrum of the target language's natural setting, students enter new identities in an environment and situation beyond the ordinary. Working with drama the students experience real life pressure, community, creativity and objective orientation, which changes the teacher role from teacher/instructor to theatre director. As a result a new atmosphere, which stimulates positive risk-taking, is established. The students experience real life communication situations where they can and must express themselves, building up both self-esteem and courage, which in turn stimulates the language acquisition. Furthermore, working intensively with drama the students entered a new identity and experienced the target language emotionally and culturally. The students experienced that they had to live the characters, enter their lives, languages, and make it theirs. [...] getting into character, the students had to understand why their second identities expressed themselves in a certain way. They felt they had to find the nuances in tone, mood, temper and register in order to really enter the characters. [...] ...they accomplished something close to first language acquisition strategies. (Hermansson 2004 p.12-13)

It is somewhat complicated to define the strategies referred to in the last line, because whatever strategies children use when acquiring their first language, they are very difficult to measure or document. A lot of research has been done on first language acquisition, and there is evidence of a general order in the acquisition of the grammar of languages, based on factual linguistic actions and the performance of small children, but determining what strategies lie behind these actions is far more difficult. It is further very difficult to decide whether these presumptive strategies are conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional. Therefore, it is preferable to interpret the last sentence of Hermansson's as describing the general atmosphere in which the students developed their language, that is to say, that they were in a *situation* close to the one of first language acquiring children. Such a situation is usually characterised by learning from hearing and trying, by the lack of formal correction, and by a meaningful social context to interact with. According to Hermansson, these conditions characterised the drama project.

Having described drama and language play in general, certain aspects of language teaching which could be related to drama, and some examples of drama

usage in school, the essay now turns to the hypothesis and the study, with its results and discussion.

4 Aim repetition, and hypothesis

The specific aim of the essay was to take a closer look at the phenomenon of how student reluctance or readiness to speak a foreign language in school might depend on how threatened or secure the students feel, which in turn might depend on the kind of role they are supposed to act.

This implies that the study aims to look at Swedish teenage students' willingness to use the foreign language English in a school setting. The students' readiness to speak English will be compared, while they act as themselves in the school-task 'group discussion', and act as a chosen character in another school-task, 'drama improvisation'.

Below are listed the three study questions, which could be important to have in mind while reading about the study. These questions will be dealt with and answered in the discussion chapter.

1. Based on the background standpoints about drama, could it be expected to find that the Swedish students in the study display a difference in readiness to speak the foreign language English in the tape recordings of the two different tasks?
2. If so, could this be related to what role the students act, i.e., themselves or a character that has been taken on?
3. If provided with the possibility to act as somebody else, do Swedish students display a greater readiness to speak the foreign language English?

Therefore I hypothesize that Swedish teenage students are more willing to speak English when using an alternative identity, e.g., when acting as a chosen character, than when they speak it as themselves.

5 Method

The class study was carried out on two subsequent Thursdays in April, in a 7th grade class in a medium-sized town of central Sweden. The school has approximately 400 pupils, of ages six to sixteen, representing the grades from pre-school up to 9th grade. The area where the school is situated is fairly middle class, and the percentage of immigrants in the area is quite low. The school has a cultural profile with an emphasis on art, music, and drama.

One teacher of English at the school arranged to have my study in one of his classes, consisting of 22 thirteen-year-olds, 12 girls and 10 boys. This class had 50 scheduled minutes of drama each week, carried out in Swedish. The English classes were based on communication and discussion and less on textbook usage.

My intention was to visit the class on two occasions and thereby perform two sessions of the study. During session one, the students were supposed to sit in groups and discuss their opinions on some topics, as themselves, which was an ordinary schoolbook task of a kind the class was used to working with. During session two, they were supposed to act out some drama improvisations in groups, now as chosen characters. The class had never done anything like that in an English lesson before. I intended to tape-record three groups in both sessions. The students had various experiences of being recorded, and they had made some recordings in school before.

Before my first visit in the class, the teacher and I did some preparations. We decided on an appropriate schoolbook task, intended for 'authentic' group discussion. The group setting intended for the study was going to be the same as their ordinary class seating, which had been decided earlier by the teacher in consultation with the class. Further on, three tape-recorders were provided

beforehand, and we agreed upon the Thursday English class as being the one best suited for this kind of study. They then had a long lesson between 9.30 and 10.50 with enough time for discussing and acting. Thursday is also a day well into the working week, with the approaching weekend within sight, and in general, people's spirits are usually highest in the late morning hours. The pupils were informed that a teacher student was going to do an investigation in their class, and that no one was forced to be taped.

At the first session, the teacher got the class started by having them all sing together, with himself as an enthusiastic leader and participant. After that, the class was divided into groups, of which three were given the tape-recorders. The students were given some minutes to get familiar with the discussion task. Then the groups with tape recorders were placed in different rooms. Each group performed their group discussion, and had it recorded, which demanded 5 – 20 minutes. The discussion topics were of a kind that required the students to express personal opinions, which involved their feelings and standpoints. Terrifying and disgusting things were being discussed, as well as reasons for keeping a diary or growing up in the country (see appendix 1). I did not check out what they were doing during the session; two groups stayed in other rooms, the third was in the class-room where I also stayed, but I was occupied with consulting the teacher, or else my notes, and gave no attention to that group.

The procedure of the second session was the same as that of the first session concerning groups, the usage of technical equipment, and my not taking part. Even this time the 'warming up' was some all-class singing, to have a similar procedure as the first time. They were now given some drama improvisation tasks, copied from an instructive drama book. The scenes were written for two actors, but

the students adapted the scenes to the size of their groups, e.g. two parents and teenagers instead of one of each sort. Of the six scenes on the paper, the students were supposed to pick the ones they liked, and act out as many as they managed for approximately 20 – 40 minutes. After some minutes of preparation in each group, in different rooms, they all started acting the improvised scenes, and three groups had it recorded. The four scenes the three groups with tape-recorders actually picked, were of the themes 'conflicts between teenager and parent' (two scenes), 'between coach and teenager' (one scene), and 'between teenagers' (one scene) (see appendix 2).

6 Results and discussion

This section consists of two sub-sections, dealing in turn with the general and specific levels of the essay. These levels are related but still different, in that the discussion deals with general aspects of, and questions about, language learning, drama, and the two large-scale drama projects in school. More specifically, the discussion also tries to relate the general findings to the single comparative study, its questions and results .

6.1 General discussion

In the first sub-section, the discussion looks at the theoretical descriptions from the background, concerning a possible connection between drama and language learning. The general questions of the essay were:

1. What is drama?
2. How can drama be used in school?
3. What effects does it have on students?
4. What does drama give that "traditional" teaching does not?

These questions could be answered in a concentrated way: drama could be regarded as a communicative learning method, which can be efficiently used in school, resulting in higher motivation and achievement among students, because drama provides them with a meaningful context. The essay though intends to discuss the matter more thoroughly.

With the purpose of relating the essay questions to the background material, core notions from the background are repeated here:

language play & language learning, drama purpose and goal, motivation definitions, language classroom climate, form vs. meaning, absence of fun, decontextualizing, sense of agency, suggested drama activities, and actual drama projects.

Within the framework of the essay, drama is to be understood as a tool for working with learning in general, and for working specifically with language learning. Remembering Maley and Duff's suggest about aiming at life as the starting point for drama (Maley and Duff 1996 p.15), and the intention they talk about to develop ideas by drama usage (1996 p.4), there is reason to believe that the drama tool could be an efficient learning means. We all want life to be meaningful. It could even be argued that we live by that meaning, because people who see no meaning in life get depressed and sometimes kill themselves. Small children perceive life as meaningful, since they learn directly, and incessantly, from a meaningful context, which is called contextualised learning by Long (2000 p.105). When we learn things, as small children, we take part. At that age we cannot learn from what we do not take part in, where taking part is based on what we register by any of our senses. Possibly, we construct a foundation early in life, upon which we later build our opinion on how learning is supposed to take place. Early life experience tells us: "if you take part, you learn", and this is why we all, children and adults, lose interest when we sense that a subject does not really concern us. Since drama is intended to engage a whole group

of people, odds are in our favour that our intrinsic taking part requirement is being met when we are involved in drama activities.

The essay has given a couple of examples of how drama can be used in school, i.e, the projects carried out by Taylor (1998) and Hermansson (2004). In both cases the teachers intend to give the students a chance to learn from within, or a contextualised learning situation. Although the subject targets differ – a historical event within social studies compared with second language development – the projects share features. In both cases the students did background research to better understand the historical context, they discussed and reflected upon characters, conflicts, and their own efforts, they wrote scripts, and they took on roles. Other ways of using drama in school could be single-initiated exercises, like the ones Whiteson (1996) presents in her book. These exercises do not aim for a deeper knowledge within a certain subject, but nevertheless, they aim for the students' active involvement, or again, they aim for a contextualised learning.

There is reason to believe that drama affects students in a constructive way. The examples of drama projects give plenty of positive outcome descriptions. The descriptions at the same time point to what drama gives that traditional teaching does not. Taylor's students "engage with the subject and with each other in ways previously unimaginable", and "make connections between their discoveries in drama and their real lives" (Taylor 1998 back cover; p.vi), which many students would say they never do in school. Hermansson mentions other effects of drama, which probably would not appear as characteristically in a traditional teaching setting: "Working with drama, learners go in and out of characters and gradually build up self-confidence. Making mistakes is a natural thing in drama, which makes it undramatic. Other competences as trying and communication are necessary and playful"

(Hermansson 2004 p.5). Here a parallel is visible to some personality factors Gass and Selinker (2001 p.359) mention as influencing language learners, namely extroversion / introversion and risk-taking. They also point out the difference between short- and long-term motivation (2001 p.354), where the former includes reasons as not getting into trouble, satisfying the teacher, or getting a good grade. Long-term motivation, on the other hand, includes reasons further away in time, or deeper inside the personality, as aiming for a certain education, or memorizing hundreds of names connected with a collection mania. One could assume that the students in both projects experience a presence of long-term motivation, since they all share the long-term project goals, which they feel responsible for.

Presumably, drama usage in school does not automatically conjure up positive effects in a teacher – student setting, such as high motivation, extroversion, positive anxiety or risk-taking. The outcome could probably not only rely on drama's intrinsic contextualising quality, it is also dependant on other factors, such as the teacher's general attitude, the cooperation climate, attitudes from, and actions taken by other teachers and school managers, etc. But, on the other hand, if the usage of drama is initiated with positive intentions and its course is prepared in a conscious way, it is highly likely that a successful outcome will take place.

6.2 Study results and discussion

The second section of the discussion focuses on the outcome of the study, after which comes a recapitulating discussion. The study questions are also repeated here for greater clarity:

1. Based on the background standpoints about drama, could it be expected to find that the Swedish students in the study display a difference in readiness to speak the foreign language English in the tape recordings of the two different tasks?

2. If so, could this be related to what role the students act, i.e, themselves or a character that has been taken on?
3. If provided with the possibility to act somebody else, do Swedish students display a greater readiness to speak the foreign language English?

It was hypothesized that Swedish teenage students are more willing to speak English when using an alternative identity, e.g., when acting a chosen character. The study was carried out to see if it was possible to find supporting factors in a real-life Swedish classroom, in an English lesson. The focus was not on single student performances, but on the general atmosphere of the two sessions.

6.2.1 First session results

The first session resulted in three tape recordings of students performing group discussion of topics from a schoolbook, as themselves. For full topic details, see appendix 1, but, as was mentioned earlier, opinions on terrifying and disgusting things were being ventilated, together with opinions on diary-keeping and where it is preferable to grow up. The constellation of the groups is shown below:

- Group 1 1st session (Gr **A**) consists of five boys
- Group 2 1st session (Gr **B**): five girls
- Group 3 1st session (Gr **C**): six girls and one boy

Common for all three discussion groups is that one student read out loud the topic questions as they are written on the paper in front of them, one question at a time. Gr B works through the topics at a high speed, while Gr A and Gr C use much longer time, comparatively, for their discussions.

Although the three groups carry out their discussion with variations in depth of discussion and thus length of discussion, many features of their recordings are similar or identical, i.e. found in two or all three of the recordings. Typical features found in the discussions are:

Hesitation
 Laughter and giggling
 Whispering in / switching to Swedish
 Short sentences / one word utterances
 Using onomatopoeia
 "I don't know", "Next"
 Shifting voice (just one group)
 Searching for words

All three groups do hesitate to various degrees, they all giggle and laugh in a way that indicates nervousness. All groups use Swedish when mentioning disgusting things, as "ärtsoppa" (pea-soup), "baja-maja" (mobile privy), "pyttipanna" (dish of potatoes and pork), and "pölsa" (dish of poorer meat and barley grain). Only one student in Gr C actually follows the instructions to *describe* something disgusting, in that she describes a disgusting teacher she once had, but the other students just mention items or notions in short or one-word sentences.

The usage of short sentences is a general feature in the three recordings, which probably indicates that the students are not fully comfortable with English. A few students do use ordinary length sentences, but most of them speak in short, or even in one-word sentences. An example of short sentence usage is found in Gr A, when they discuss terrifying things. One boy says: "...I don't know. I was...I was going to sleep. And my brother stand backside the door. And he comes and [...] it was dark in the room and UAAAAH! That was really scary!" This could be contrasted with an example of long sentence usage in Gr C, when they discuss diary keeping. The only boy in that group says: "I do not keep a diary because I have two (ehm) smaller (hmm) brothers in my family, and it would be a catastrophe (pronounced in the Swedish way of stressing the first syllable) if someone of them would lay the hands on my...on the diary, so I prefer to keep the thing secret for myself".

Particularly Gr B display a lack of readiness to use English, with long pauses, nervous laughter, searching for words, and Swedish whisperings: "Jag vet

inte vad jag ska säga” (I don’t know what to say), “Hörs det vad man viskar?” (Can they hear if you whisper?), “Ska vi ta nästa?” (Let’s take the next, right?). They also deal with the topics in the quickest possible way. A typical Gr B turn-taking runs as follows: One girl says: “And (addressing someone by name)?” Another girl says: “What do you think?” The addressed girl answers: “I don’t know. It’s really hard to say”. One of the others says: “Good!” Then follows a pause, where mumbles and giggles are being heard. Then someone says. “Next question!” As a tool for making the conversation go on, though, the students in Gr B help each other. When somebody does not find a certain English word, somebody else chips in the right word, e.g. “fainted”, or: “hurt his head”.

Group C also search for words, make pauses, giggle a bit, but in this group some students do try to express their experiences and opinions, with hesitation or with greater readiness. One girl who speaks quite reluctantly, and in incorrect English, still manages to get her message across. She tells a terrifying experience: “Ehh...I know! When I...flög (flew)...(switches to Swedish for a while, starts over again in English)...when I [...] from Iceland in...shit!...aeroplane, OK, and...when we was in...I say, we have to land in Copenhagen,...because it’s so much snow and...maybe you can’t land in one or two hours”.

Group A do not hesitate and laugh nervously as much as the other groups do, and they actually do try to fill out the time with speech. A couple of them use some imagination when speaking; they do not speak very fluent English, but to compensate for that, they shift their voice to e.g. the formal and serious voice of a grown-up man, or the secret and mysterious voice of a good story-teller.

Gr A and B also use onomatopoeia to describe events or things they want to clarify, or to replace an English word which they do not know. Examples are

ghostly “oooh”s, “uuuhhh”s, and screams and noise to illustrate terrifying things, “bzzzz” to hint at insects, and “niiiiieeee” in a high pitch, to illustrate mosquitoes.

6.2.2 Second session results

The second session likewise resulted in three recorded tapes, with students performing improvised short scenes, where they took on the roles of teenage children confronting parents, a coach, or other teenagers. Appendix 2 contains the complete role instructions, but in short, the counterparts should try to persuade each other on various topics, e.g. buying a dog or not, sharing some question answers or not. The scenes were numbered 1, 9, 34, and 95, and in the essay they are called the party scene, the dog scene, the cheating scene, and the coach scene, respectively. The second session the group constellation was a little different:

Group 1 2nd session (Gr **D**) consists of four girls
 Group 2 2nd session (Gr **E**): three girls
 Group 3 2nd session (Gr **F**): four boys

This time there is no reading out loud of instructions on the tapes. Their preparations for the scenes are made before switching on the recorders, and on the tapes are only the different scenes. All examples of group improvisations mentioned in the text are also listed in appendix 3. The three groups get involved in their acting to various degrees, displaying various levels of enthusiasm and expressions of feelings, with Gr E as the least, Gr F the intermediate, and Gr D the most enthusiastic group. Still, there is a great difference to the recordings of the first session, in that the typical features of the second session recordings are of another kind. Typical features of the three improvisations are:

Varied pitch and tone (indeed!)
 Exclamations
 Getting into roles with enthusiasm
 Real-life argumentation / negotiation

Expression of feelings
 Deviations / expansions of the role instructions
 Imaginative remarks and suggestions
 Fluent dialogue

One group, Gr E, perform their scenes relatively quickly, compared to Gr D and Gr F. Gr E act scenes 1 and 9, the party scene and the dog scene, during which they make some pauses in their speech, but on the whole, they display a clear and fluent dialogue in correct English sentences, a calm but realistic argumentation, and they manage to solve the conflicts in the scenes in a peaceful way. Group E's closing lines of the dog scene run as follows: (after some negotiations about the hair problem, the costs, taking the dog out, etc) Teen 1: "No, it's going to be fine, please! We promise we will take care of it!" Mother: "And are you going to pay for your own [...]?" Both teens: "Yes, yes!" Mother: "Okey!" Both teens: "Gasp! Yeeeee! Thank you mum! I love you!" Group E might be rather concerned by the correctness of their speech, perhaps in a way that stops them from getting too absorbed by the acting. To sum up the performance of Gr E, they do not get involved in the setting to the point of starting to yell, but, on the other hand, not all teens and parents yell at each other when discussing different standpoints.

Gr F get more involved in the scenes they have chosen, scenes 9, 34, and 95, or the dog scene, the cheating scene, and the coach scene. Their argumentation is characterised by a relatively fluent dialogue, in spite of the not-so-correct use of English. They are apparently not embarrassed to use an English they know is not correct, but focus on the flow of the argumentation, and on developing the characters. In scene 9, when confronted with the father's refusal to buy a dog, one of the sons says: "We're gonna help him so he don't pee on the floor, he pee outside, no, he pee on the toilet!" The other son gives his support: "Yeea! We can learn him to

do that!" The improvisation of group F displays imagination, expressions of feelings, and a developed negotiation.

In Gr D, finally, the students get into their roles with the highest enthusiasm. They act scenes 1 and 9, again the party scene and the dog scene, and they take pleasure in acting as dramatically as they can manage. Gr D have a very fluent dialogue, in fact, they have so much to say that they often talk at the same time, and they get very excited in their efforts to persuade each other. They include all sorts of arguments in their negotiations in a very imaginative way, and react accordingly, by putting on various pretended feelings, such as cunning, anger, determination, begging, deeply hurt feelings, etc. Exclamations are very common in Gr D, and they often scream. In the party scene, two of the girls act parents and the two others act teen daughters. When the parents refuse to let the daughters go to the party, Daughter 1 says: "you're a nice dad, but you're stupid, you're embarrassing! Right! Mum, you're not really a good cook, and that's it!" Mother (with trembling voice): "You're hurting my feeling! You're really hurting me now! How embarrassing for me! [...] You don't love me!" One daughter: "Yes, but.." Mother: "You won't go to the party!! [...] Go to your room! It won't be any party for you!" A lot of screaming and upset voices. Daughter 1: "We have a window! We can climb out!" Mother: "No, I'll lock the window!" Daughter 1: "We can break the window!" Mother: "Now, go to your rooms! You won't get any money in this month!" Evidently, Gr D take pleasure in their dramatic acting.

The Gr D students scream a lot during their improvisation, which perhaps could be due to the fact that all four of them are girls. Gr E, on the other hand, is also an all-girl group, and they do not scream at all, while the boys in Gr F, the all-boy group, do scream at some points, where their acting reaches excited heights. The

matter of screaming or not during improvisation seems not to be determined by the group gender, but rather on how involved in the acting the students get, which in turn might depend on personality and cooperation factors.

I did not discuss the aim of the study, nor the results, with the students. The teacher, though, had a little discussion with the class after the second session, to gather their opinions on the two tasks. He asked them which of the two occasions they found most relaxed, or when it was easiest to speak. Not everyone answered, but quite a number did, and they all said it was the improvisation session that was easiest. When the teacher asked why, some students said it was because no one told them what to say. The teacher contrasted that opinion with the fact that no one did that the first time either. Some students then answered by saying that in the second session, they just said anything they came to think of. Then the teacher put it: "But why was that easier?" One girl answered promptly: "Because you are somebody else. You are not yourself, and that's much easier!" Other students added that it did not matter what they said the second time, it was just fun to talk.

6.2.3 Recapitulating discussion

In order to relate the study findings back to the initial parts of the essay, it is worth focusing on the remarks and statements of opinions about drama, meaning, motivation, and goal orientation. Drama was said to be a method or tool for developing ideas and working with problems, a method with life as its starting point and with the participating people in focus. The two examples of drama projects in the background certainly fit into this definition, since they were both carried out with the focus on the participating students and were both adapted to their levels and skills. Further, they were both based on real life events and with the future life of the

students in mind, and they were both intended to develop the students' ideas in numerous areas and to work with relevant problems, connected with the projects. Turning to the results of the study, it is possible to argue that, in spite of the minor size of the improvisation task, the students did develop ideas and did work with problems too, and that the task had a real life take-off and focused on the participants, just as the large-scale projects did. This can be said because the improvisation task was designed for intermediate English speakers, both with regard to language difficulty and the setting of the scenes. The topics of the scenes were also well chosen for the participants, in that the students know well what it is like to be a teenager. During the improvisations, they had to handle imagined problems, get into characters, and try to develop their ideas to solve the small-scale stage conflicts. Further on, the improvisation task did give the class an opportunity to try a wider model of communication than the traditional one-way, one-to-thirty classroom communication.

The aspects of meaning in relation to learning were said to be crucial, first, meaning understood as the relevance of the content of a text or a task, second, meaning with regard to what you learn in what context; i.e. de- / contextualised learning, and third, meaning related to the presence or absence of the sense of agency people feel in different circumstances. The study results point towards the possibility of these claims being true. The students in the study most certainly found the content of the improvisation task more relevant than the one of the discussion task. Concerning de- or contextualised learning, the two tasks probably both provided contextualised learning, since they both invited the students to contribute with their personal remarks and expressions, thereby giving their peers a chance to learn from them. Presumably, the outcome was that they learned more from the improvisation

task, since their level of engagement in the task was generally higher or much higher in that task. When it comes to sense of agency, the students almost certainly experienced that to a higher level in the improvisation task than in the discussion task, because in the discussion task, the topics were given to them, and there was not a great space for development of the topics. In the improvisation task, on the other hand, they felt more in command of what was taking place, and they were free to both pick from six scenes, and to develop the scenes they picked in whatever direction they would like. As Crystal (1998 p.184) pointed out, there is much progress to be expected when the teaching is related to what the student already knows, and since most students have an intrinsic knowledge of the necessity of learning in a context to keep their motivation and interest, then giving students opportunities of learning in context would increase the prospects of progress.

When it comes to motivation, it is a factor which was described as an ongoing circular process, shifting between the core stages 'reasons for doing something', 'deciding to do something', and 'sustaining the necessary effort'. The reasons to do something were said to be extrinsic or intrinsic, i.e. coming from outside a person, or coming from within. Arousal was said to be a crucial factor connected to motivation, as was curiosity and the perceived value of the actual activity. Based on the results of the study, it could be argued that all these claims are true. Both recordings consist of activities being performed, and in both cases the students evidently had reason enough to listen to their teacher and I, to start doing what the tasks told them to do, and to keep on with that until they had finished, although the difference in enthusiasm shows that the students were motivated to different degrees. Both activities were initiated from us, the teacher and me, but the generally high level of enthusiasm in the improvisation bears witness of a high level

of intrinsic motivation. The acting out of imagined characters appealed to the students, so that they found it amusing and interesting to go on with it, i.e. the perceived value of the activity was higher in the case of improvisation than in the discussion.

Goal orientation, finally, was said to exist in two main types, performance goals and learning goals, or aiming for looking good contrasted with aiming for a deeper knowledge. It could be argued that both tasks are written by people who intend to increase students' skills, and thereby the tasks have learning goals. With the result of the study in mind, it seems as if the improvisation task score the highest points of learning goals, because when the students are deeply engaged in an interactive activity, chances increase that they will learn something from it and remember that for a longer time.

The results of the study show that the Swedish students participating in the study do display a difference in readiness to speak the foreign language English in the tape recordings of the two different tasks. The difference in readiness could certainly be related to what role the students act, i.e, themselves or characters that they chose to act. The students display a much greater readiness to speak English when they are provided with the possibility to act as somebody else. Most certainly, the students also perceived the improvisation task as the one they were most motivated to accomplish, since they saw real-life connotations in it.

It is worth focusing again on the ideal language classroom climate mentioned in 3.1.4. Williams and Burden (1996 p.202) pointed out that encouragement is an extremely important factor in language classrooms. Learners should ideally be encouraged to use the new language in many ways, without fear, and the necessary atmosphere for that would be one that strenghtens the learners'

self-esteem, and their confidence in their own capability to learn and develop. The language classroom, where the study of the essay was carried out, seemed to be one with a climate generally in tune with the description above, i.e. the teacher, together with the class, had created a positive, encouraging, and allowing atmosphere. The results of the study still point at the possibility of enhancing this climate by using improvisation tasks, which invite the students to dare to use their skills even more freely.

There are some factual conditions of the study, which could give other results, if they were arranged differently. If the sessions had been carried out in the opposite order; the improvisation first and the discussion the second time, it could have resulted in a greater readiness in the group discussions. Another possibility would be to give the class a total freedom to set up scenes and choose characters. Then the improvising students might be speaking English with an even greater readiness than they did in the study. A third possibility would be to carry out the study in two different classes with different atmospheres, either the whole study in two classes, or one session in each class, but that option would probably be afflicted with troubles concerning the contact with the respective teachers. No teacher wants to be seen as uninspiring and discouraging, even if students often claim that they have exactly that kind of teachers.

It could be questioned, though, why drama is not used a lot more in language teaching, if the result could be expected to be as good as in this study, and in the two projects mentioned earlier. A qualified guess would be that not so many language teachers are aware of the drama resources, and an even lower number of them are educated and trained in it. Some teachers, untrained in drama, might have tried single drama exercises, experienced a chaotic situation, and decided never to

try it again. To become successful in conducting drama activities, one needs to get familiar with the concept in advance, through some sort of training or education, as is the case with most techniques and approaches.

It is also important to remember that all students or learners are different. They all bring to class their different skills, knowledge, imagination, memories, backgrounds, etc. This is the reason why Edge says that we, the language teachers: “must not see the learners in front of us as language learning machines” (1993 p.10). This implies that their language learning needs have to be met in different ways. It could also be the case that some students, in some class settings, do not enjoy the idea of communicating in the foreign language with others, sometimes especially not with people from other cultures, as Allwright and Bailey point out (1991 p.164). They presume that such students: “lack the self-confidence and self-esteem to deal well with social encounters in general” (1991 p.164). This may well be the case, but it could be argued that such students in particular would benefit most from participating in a well-conducted long-term drama project, which would allow them to try out their communicative skills, while they so to speak hide their inner selves behind a pretended character.

7 Conclusion

The essay set out to look at language play and drama in the language learning context, and to present a minor study in the field. It could be concluded that language play is a fundamental characteristic of human communication, well worth remembering for language teachers when outlining their teaching. Further, it could be concluded that drama activities have an intrinsic contextualising quality, in that they bring a real-life setting to the learning situation, which makes people relate to it and get involved to a higher degree than in a traditional school setting. The presented drama projects and the results of the study show that well prepared and positively intended drama activities are likely to result in deeper language knowledge and increased communicative skills. The study also indicates that Swedish teenage students of English speak English in class with a greater readiness when they are provided with the tool of putting on and acting out imagined characters.

8 Appendices

Appendix 1 Schoolbook discussion topics

The group discussion topics are taken from a lower secondary school book, *Kangaroo*, where they read as follows:

- 1 What is the most terrifying thing that has ever happened to you?
- 2 Do you keep a diary? Why? Why not? If you do, how often do you write in it?
- 3 Describe something you find revolting or disgusting.
- 4 Where would you prefer to grow up – in a town or in the country? Give reasons.

Appendix 2 Improvisation topics

The improvisation scene instructions are taken from a book, intended for intermediate English students, *Improvisation starters*. The scenes the students picked are listed here:

Scene 1. The scene: A teenager is discussing with his father his intention to go to a party next week.

Teen's Objective: The party promises to be especially wild because adults will not be present. Get your father's permission to go.

Father's Objective: You're very reluctant to allow your son to go to any unsupervised party since you're concerned about the presence of drugs or alcohol at such parties. Refuse to let him go to the party.

Scene 9. The scene: A teenager is discussing with his father the possibility of buying a dog.

Teen's Objective: Promise that if you're given the permission to buy a dog, you will take very good care of it.

Father's Objective: You don't want a pet in the house. Refuse to give your permission.

Scene 34. The scene: A teen meets another teen outside his history class minutes before class is to begin.

First Teen's Objective: You did not study for a test that's being given in class today. Convince the other teen to let you see his answers during the test.

Second Teen's Objective: You are a model student, and you would never dream of cheating.

Scene 95. The scene: During his team's last time out, a basketball coach is talking to a player whom he's about to send into the game. Their team is losing by one point, and only five seconds remain on the game clock. This player is the last eligible player; everyone else has fouled out.

Player's Objective: You can't wait to get into the game and score the winning basket. Convince the coach to let you take the final shot.

Coach's Objective: you're only putting this player in the game because he's the last eligible player. Insist that this player pass the ball to someone else if it should come to him.

Appendix 3 Transcripts from recorded tapes

Discussion transcripts

Short / long sentence usage:

Gr A, discussing terrifying things. One boy says: "...I don't know. I was... I was going to sleep. And my brother stand backside the door. And he comes and [...] it was dark in the room and UAAAAH! That was really scary!"

Gr C, discussing diary keeping. The only boy in that group says: "I do not keep a diary because I have two (ehm) smaller (hmm) brothers in my family, and it would be a catastrophe (pronounced in the Swedish way of stressing the first syllable) if someone of them would lay the hands on my...on the diary, so I prefer to keep the thing secret for myself".

Dealing with topics quickly / with effort:

Gr B discussing terrifying things. One girl says: "And (addressing someone by name)?" Another girl says: "What do you think?" The addressed girl answers: "I don't know. It's really hard to say". One of the others says: "Good!" Then follows a pause, where mumbles and giggles are being heard. Then someone says. "Next question!"

Gr C discussing terrifying things. One girl tells a terrifying experience: "Ehh...I know! When I...flög...(switches to Swedish for a while, starts over again in English)...when I [...] from Iceland in...shit!...aeroplane, OK, and...when we was in...I say, we have to land in Copenhagen,...because it's so much snow and...maybe you can't land in one or two hours".

Improvisation transcripts

Peaceful / dramatic conflict solving

Group E's closing lines of the dog buying scene run as follows (after some negotiations about the hair problem, the costs, taking the dog out, etc):

Teen: "No, it's going to be fine, please! We promise we will take care of it!"

Mother: "And are you going to pay for your own [...]?"

Both teens: "Yes, yes!"

Mother: "Okey!"

Both teens: "Gasp! Yeeeeeaa! Thank you mum! I love you!"

In the party negotiating scene of Gr D,

Daughter 1 says: "you're a nice dad, but you're stupid, you're embarrassing! Right! Mum, you're not really a good cook, and that's it!"

Mother (with trembling voice): "You're hurting my feeling! You're really hurting me now! How embarrassing for me! [...] You don't love me!"

One daughter: "Yes, but.."

Mother: "You won't go to the party!! [...] Go to your room! It won't be any party for you!"

A lot of screaming, and upset voices.

Daughter 1: "We have a window! We can climb out!"

Mother: "No, I'll lock the window!"

Daughter 1: "We can brake the window!"

Mother: "Now, go to your rooms! You won't get any money in this month!"

Imaginative argumentation

Gr F acting the dog scene; one of the sons says:

“We’re gonna help him so he don’t pee on the floor, he pee outside, no, he pee on the toilet!”

The other son gives his support:

“Yeea! We can learn him to do that!”

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