Drama, Multiple Intelligences and Maltese Language Teaching in the Early Years

Daniella Micallef
St Benedict College, Kirkop, Malta

Abstract: This article takes a close look at the role of drama in the classroom, used as a teaching tool and technique. The first part of the article distinguishes drama from theatre in order to clarify how drama is used as a pedagogical tool to enhance teaching across the curriculum. The next part focuses on the theory of multiple intelligences and illustrates how drama, in its great versatility, can enhance each of the intelligences. Then, the article takes a closer look at the use of drama in the teaching of Maltese in the Early Years. Two vignettes are presented and dissected in order to illustrate how drama techniques, and the understanding of multiple intelligences, come together in the classroom to enhance the educational experience of the learners.

Keywords: Drama, Multiple Intelligences, Maltese Language Teaching, Early Years

Drama in Education

Drama can be taught as a subject in its own right, and it can be applied as a teaching method across the curriculum. In the nineteen-fifties Peter Slade (1954) was the first to attempt a rationale for developing drama in education as a creative subject in its own right (O'Hara, 2001). However, according to O'Hara (2001) this attempt was "at least partly responsible for dulling the debate and clouding the earlier attempts to see drama as being a learning process and having a central role in the English curriculum" (p. 315).

Later, in the 1960s, drama in education had a social change agenda with the aim of developing critical thinking, among others. At least fifty years have since passed, and although researchers continue to provide evidence of the multifarious advantages of both the teaching of drama as a subject, as well as of using drama as a teaching tool and technique (Neelands, 2004; Fleming,

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Corresponding author: dopiella@gmail.com

2004; Barnes, 2014), it remains marginalised in the curriculum (O'Hara, 2001) and undervalued in schools (Ivy Academy, n.d.). As Fleming (2004) explains, there is, for example, less interest in whether studying Mathematics has a positive impact on performance in Music, than the other way round.

Nevertheless, the positive impact of drama in education has been substantiated by many research reports, ranging from those that examined the differences between experimental and control groups among pupils in UK schools, and the positive impact of dramatic techniques on the results of the experimental group (Fleming, 2004), to those that looked more specifically at how drama helps children with communication difficulties (Barnes, 2014). There are also studies by experts who crossed geographical and cultural borders to examine situations such as in war torn Sierra Leone (Bockarie, 2002), and with young women in Uganda who experience multiple vulnerability and voicelessness (Waite & Conn, 2011). For instance, Bockarie (2002) strongly recommends that every form of media should be utilized to support the concept of peace, including drama in streets, villages and open-air libraries following the total destruction of schools and other buildings by war.

Within schools in the western world, drama can be implemented both as an art, as well as a medium for teaching and learning subjects across the curriculum. In the Early Years, according to Kirkham, Stewart & Kidd (2013), "language, symbolic play and drawing are three important systems of symbolic representation" (p. 297), and they are inter-related (Guss, 2005). Furthermore, drama in education is strongly linked to the emotions, imaginative insight, and the affective development of the child (O'Hara, 2001; Neelands, 2004). Other studies have discussed the relationship between drama and multiple intelligences (Guss, 2005; Masoum, Rostamy-Malkhalifeh & Kalantarnia, 2013). Indeed, there seems to be no doubt that drama in the language arts is a wonderful tool, and that it is beneficial for several cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects. The Arts Council England (2003) emphasises that all pupils should "study aspects of drama throughout their education as part of English and literacy" (p. 6).

In the second part of this article I will focus on how drama can be used in the teaching and learning of a language, in this case Maltese, within the Early Years curriculum. But first I would like to clarify the distinction between drama and theatre, and then I will focus on the relationship between drama and multiple intelligences.

Distinguishing Drama from Theatre

The terms drama and theatre can be confusing for some teachers, as many believe they are one and the same thing. In fact, there is no one particular definition to distinguish clearly the difference that exists, which although

subtle, carries important implications (Clipson-Boyles, 2012). The word drama comes from Greek 'Dran', which means to do or perform. It literally means action. Drama has many forms and must be construed as a generic term taking on many forms, one of which is theatre. According to Clipson-Boyles (1998) drama is "a means by which children can interact (rather than act) during simulated or improvised experiences provided to assist their learning" (p. 2).

Thus, drama is an experience created by the participants, an outlet for self-expression, a performing art and a way of learning. Creative drama focuses on the pleasure of the process, on exploring a topic and sharing insights and questions (Johnson, 1998). By its nature it is exploratory, experimental and task-based. It allows for spontaneity with words and movement, employs brainstorming criteria, involves decision-making processes (Micallef, 2006), and it is a space where the inner-life is articulated and made public (Way, 1967; O'Hara, 2001; De Mauro, n.d.).

Theatre includes drama, but in addition it involves elements such as buildings, actors, scenes and an audience. Theatre focuses on the product in the shape of a polished performance which emphasises standards, performer expertise, accuracy, and it is rehearsed and directed. Theatre performance requires extensive preparation and choreography; it revels in its stars, talents and skills of body and voice. At the same time, the inner-life of the performers remains invisible because the characters they enact are created by a playwright (De Mauro, n.d.).

The main distinction between drama in the classroom and theatre in a school context is that whilst in the former the pupil goes through a process and is directly involved, in the latter this focus does not remain on the pupil but it mainly involves the audience. Drama is a teaching tool that allows students to participate, demonstrate, and observe in a controlled, or non-threatening, environment. It is an effective learning tool because it involves the student intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally (O'Hara, 2001; Johnson, 1998; Guss, 2005). Baldwin and Fleming (2003) believe that drama in education is a means by which individuals develop themselves in several areas, such as: the personal, social and emotional; in the domain of communication, by using language and literature; in Mathematics; to enhance awareness about the world around them; on the physical plain; and in the area of creativity. Certainly, this reverberates the link between drama and multiple intelligences.

Indeed, drama can be fantastically linked to the enhancement of intelligence, especially in its different forms as explained by Gardner (1983) in his theory of multiple intelligences. According to Guss (2005), Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences has had a positive impact on, amongst others, the use of

drama in education, because of the strong case it makes for the value of artistic subjects as viable roads to learning. The next section will illustrate possible links in the classroom between drama and multiple intelligences.

Drama and multiple intelligences

Gardner's (1983) book *Frames of Mind* broke new ground in developmental psychology and the behavioural and cognitive sciences. In it, Gardner also discusses the educational implications of the theory of multiple intelligences, which also changed our conception of how to measure human potential (Hyland, 2000; Guss, 2005). Furthermore, it has exerted considerable influence on how teachers understand learning and therefore on devising more varied teaching methods and transforming pedagogy (Hyland, 2000).

According to Howard Gardner (1983; 2000) every person is born with a potential to develop intelligence, and each one learns in different and distinctive ways. Thus, if students are presented with material that is appealing to them, and which is focused on their capabilities and is assessed through a variety of means, they will perform better. Gardner (2000) proposes eight different intelligences with a possible ninth – Existential Intelligence - to account for a broader range of human potential in children and adults. The eight intelligences are:

1. Linguistic intelligence ("word smart")
2. Logical-mathematical intelligence ("number/reasoning smart")
3. Spatial intelligence ("picture smart")
4. Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence ("body smart")
5. Musical intelligence ("music smart")
6. Interpersonal intelligence ("people smart")
7. Intrapersonal intelligence ("self smart")
8. Naturalist intelligence ("nature smart")

Usually drama is associated with kinesthetic intelligence since it involves movement. But drama, as I illustrate in Micallef (2006), and as other authors have shown (e.g. Masoum et al., 2013; Ivy Academy, n.d.) it can be integrated with all the different intelligences.

Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence refers to the production of language, abstract reasoning, symbolic thinking, conceptual patterning, reading and writing (Stanford, 2003). It includes the ability to use words effectively, and involves highly developed auditory skills. Drama is helpful in the teaching and learning of a language by means of stories and games. Drama is essential to the development of speaking and listening skills, as well as for providing a bridge for other forms of learning, such as the exposure to a wide range of registers (Neelands, 2004).

McCaslin (1990) argues that many teachers see drama as a motivation for reading and the acquisition of a wider vocabulary. McMaster (1998) found that drama is an effective medium for literacy development in nine different areas: affect and motivation that facilitate students' responses in reading instruction; as a source of scaffolding for emergent readers by providing rich background experiences for future reading; symbolic representation, which is the same concept children require in order to understand the alphabetic principle; a meaningful environment where they can practise oral reading repeatedly to develop fluency; opportunities to acquire new meanings visually, aurally, and kinesthetically; knowledge of word order, phrasing, and punctuation that contribute to the meaning of a written sentence; a range of forms of discourse; an opportunity for learners to monitor their own comprehension and develop effective reading strategies; and it provides teachers with immediate feedback about students' understanding of new reading material.

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence consists of the capacity to recognize patterns, work with abstract symbols, and see connections between separate and distinct pieces of information (Stanford, 2003). Individuals with logical-mathematical intelligence appreciate abstract relationships, and are able to see and explore patterns. A simple example of this in Early Childhood and Primary Education would involve actions using numbers, e.g. pupils add, subtract, multiply or divide two given numbers and then gather in a group according to the answer. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence is also promoted by the use of logical sequences of images and scenes. Furthermore, comparing and contrasting objects, analysing character traits, looking at cause and effect, identifying important events in a story and different ways of classifying objects, are activities that support this kind of intelligence. According to Masoum et al. (2013) Mathematics instruction with creative drama method has positive effects on student achievement, attitude and creativity.

Visual/Spatial intelligence involves the potential to recognize and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas. The student in the classroom who has this kind of intelligence can manipulate and create different images by which they can solve problems. Usually they like to learn most when graphs, pictures, diagrams, maps etc. are available for the activity. For this type of intelligence, it would be ideal if a drama lesson starts with different scenes which are created and which are then changed. Movement and tableaux also help to achieve this (Micallef, 2006). The student can design buildings, study a picture and then draw or list the number of things they saw in it after the picture has been removed. Games such as treasure hunts, map board games, and creating maps from stories enhance this form of intelligence (www.opdt-johnson.com/gardner.mi.activities.pdf).

Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence uses mental abilities to coordinate body movement. It entails the potential of using one's whole body or parts of the body to solve problems. Movement, dramatical dancing, improvisation, acting and mime are all examples of drama activities which promote bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. According to Guss (2005) one cannot separate the bodily-gestural symbol system from the symbolic play system. One can see this clearly in students that love to go to the drama lessons, physical education lessons, dancing lessons and in those that prefer to create things (crafts) rather than write. If the students are asked to walk, move or take the shape of an animal or of a toy they would be using this intelligence (Micallef, 2006). Skipping and dancing also form part of bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

Musical Intelligence incorporates the awareness and composition of different pitches, tones and rhythms in music. Individuals who have this particular intelligence love music, but they are also sensitive to sounds in their environments. They may study better with music in the background. They can be taught by turning lessons into lyrics, speaking rhythmically, and tapping out time. This type of intelligence helps the individual to communicate by means of sounds. Tools that can be used to enhance this form of intelligence include musical instruments, music, radio, stereo, CD-ROM, and multimedia.

Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to work co-operatively with others and it is associated with people who try to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people. Activities that require co-operation between learners are ideal for enhancing this intelligence, such as looking for connections between people and products (e.g. tracing a product back to its origin); discuss leadership skills and experience a leadership role (e.g. organising priorities and delegating responsibilities); and re-tell a story from the different points of view of the characters (www.opdt-johnson.com/gardner.mi.activities.pdf). Other drama activities such as improvisation, playmaking in groups, tableaux, taking on roles, and performances are all drama activities which help to reinforce this type of intelligence. These are effective because a learner can be clearly seen at work with his classmates, in activities involving co-operation. Goleman (1995) explains the nature of emotional intelligence which involves empathy, or reading the emotions of others. Thus, interpersonal intelligence involves the capacity of listening to others and being able to take another person's perspective, resolving conflicts, negotiating disagreements and democratic dealing with others (Goleman, 1995).

Intrapersonal intelligence refers to the internal aspects of the self, such as appreciating one's feelings, fears and motivations. In Howard Gardner's view it involves having an effective working model of ourselves, and to be able to use such information to regulate our lives (Hyland, 2000). Many drama

activities and exercises help one to achieve this kind of intelligence. Drama exercises which involve thinking, imagination, verbal fluency, reflective exercises in logs, journals and portfolios will help learners in their intrapersonal intelligence (Hyland, 2000). According to Goleman (1995) handling emotions, or emotional intelligence, also involves, for instance, being better able to express anger appropriately without fighting or destructive behaviour, being better able to handle stress, being less impulsive and having more self-control, acting more responsibly and having more positive feelings about self, school and family. Thus, drama activities that aptly tackle intrapersonal intelligence will also "improve children's academic achievement scores and school performance" (Goleman, 1995, p. 284).

Naturalistic intelligence refers to the ability to recognise patterns in nature, and to sensitivity to features of the natural world. This intelligence helps people to distinguish, classify and use facts from the environment (Hyland, 2000). This intelligence is enhanced when an individual uses an aspect from nature to do something. This can be seen clearly when children go on field trips to categorize something or when observing animals. In other words, if one mentions any aspect from nature or else imitates a sound or movement, one would be using naturalistic intelligence. Poetic descriptions of nature can be used, as well as growing flowers and vegetables, and learning the related vocabulary and idioms (www.opdt-johnson.com/gardner.mi.activities.pdf).

Howard Gardner (1983) believes that each and every one of us is made up of a mixture of intelligences. He says that even though the intelligences are distinct from each other they are never isolated. For example, if one is able to read, they are also able to imitate an animal's movement and they can also be capable of describing the animal. In activities like this, the child would be using the linguistic, kinesthetic and naturalistic intelligence (see Vignette 1 below).

The underlying framework for the use of Multiple Intelligences in the classroom is knowing and being aware of these different learning modes and these different ways of viewing children and the ways in which they exhibit intelligence. This needs to be evident in lesson planning as the teacher strives to addres multiple aspects in the presentation of a particular concept. In this way, the concept is represented in a variety of ways which allows for individual differences and provides greater opportunity for learning and success. The beauty of incorporating Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences into the classroom is that it allows for all children to learn through their strenghts and to share their 'expertise'.

Integrating drama and multiple intelligences in Maltese language teaching

In what follows I will refer to a variety of drama techniques and explain their value in language teaching. I will also describe a number of drama activities and link them to areas of multiple intelligences. Meanwhile, the whole process is aimed at the linguistic development of the children's first language during the Early Years.

As explained by Winston and Tandy (2001) drama activities should be adapted to the children's age and experience and the sequence of activities should be focused, have rythmn, be flowing and they must be varied. Drama provides an interactive context by which the students learn a language and learn the skills of how to use the language. As a result, the students will be empowered to use the language in an active and interactive way. The drama activities described below involve different processes such as, empathy and awareness, organisation, repetition, consolidation, and communication (Clipson-Boyles, 1998).

Vignette 1: Animal Sounds

> Anna Mizzi calls her four to five year old pupils to form a circle while she counts 1, 2, 3. The pupils sit down in a circle on cushions and Ms Mizzi explains that they will first take turns to mention their favourite animal and imitate its sound. The teacher starts by giving an example 'Il-kelb jinbaħ, jagħmel baw-waw' (The dog barks, bow-wow). After each pupil has taken a turn, the students stand up and find an empty space. When the teacher calls 'Statwa' (statue) each pupil has to form the shape of an animal they like. This is repeated several times. Next, the pupils are asked to walk around the room without bumping into each other, and they have to use all the space. They are expected to walk like their chosen animal would do, and simultaneously make the noise of that animal. Then the teacher counts again 1, 2, 3 and by number 3 each pupils has to find a place against the wall and sit down. Now the pupils will work in pairs. Each pair chooses an animal, one of the pupils will imitate the chosen animal sound while the other pupil gets blindfolded and has to follow the sound of the other pupil in the pair. As a final activity the teacher asks the pupils to form an animal choir using rhythm and intonation. The activity is over once the teacher calls out 'Stop'.

The above vignette illustrates a set of drama activities that cater for several objectives. As part of Maltese language teaching the pupils will learn the name of animal sounds, e.g. 'jinbaħ' (to bark), 'ipespes' (to chirp), as well as a range of onomatopoeic sounds (Camilleri, ed. 1996, p. 4). The drama techniques involved are the circle, physical control, and voice control. Several examples of multiple intelligences are involved, namely, naturalistic intelligence (referring to animals and their sounds); musical intelligence (imitating animal sounds using rhythm and intonation); bodily/kinesthetic intelligence (adapting body shape); visual/spatial intelligence (using space in the classroom in various ways); intrapersonal intelligence (deciding on favourite animal), and interpersonal intelligence (working as a group and in pairs). These techniques are further explained below.

The circle is a drama technique which helps the students to see each other well, and it provides a space for equity. The pupils will feel closer to the teacher if she sits in the circle with them. The circle involves movement, because to form it the students have to move around the room, and without any talking they have to make the shape while holding hands. When they are in a circle they put their hands down and sit down on the floor. Thus, in the formation of the circle the children apply kinesthetic intelligence. They will also be using interpersonal intelligence because they will be working as a whole group, and each pupil will need to wait for his turn.

Pupils apply naturalistic and intrapersonal intelligences at the start of the activity because they have to pick their favourite animal, and then they practise musical intelligence and imitate animal sounds. In the actions during which the pupils need to move around, avoid bumping into each other, find a space against the wall, and work in pairs, the pupils will be developing their spatial intelligence. Imitating animal shapes also requires bodily/kinesthetic intelligence. Walking around blindfolded stretches their spatial intelligence, while the fact that they have to listen carefully to the animal sound and

follow it around the room also sharpens their listening skills, which is a part of linguistic intelligence.

A variation on these activities, and one that pushes their bodily/kinesthetic and linguistic intelligences further, would be to ask the pupils to vary their pace as they walk around according to the animal sound they hear. So, for example, if they hear a cat mewing they need to walk slowly, if they hear a dog barking they need to walk faster, if they hear a bird chirping they run on the spot, etc. Additionally, the teacher can use a poem that the pupils can learn to recite, thus further enhancing their linguistic intelligence. The poem 'Fir-Razzett' (On the Farm), written by Many Ann Zammit, and which reproduces various animal sounds, is given below. It should, ideally, be accompanied by an outing to a farm as this would be a boost to naturalistic intelligence.

Fir-Razzett
Ħriġna dawra sar-razzett
Rajna ħafna annimali
Baqar, fniek, tiġieġ u flieles
Papri, mogħoż, nagħaġ u
majjali.

Klieb u ġriewi wu wu wu
Baqra w għoġol mu mu mu
Papra tlaqlaq kwakk kwakk
kwakk
U t-tiġieġa klakk klakk klakk.

Quqqu-qu-qu idden is-serduk
Beqq beqq qalet in-nagħġa
Ħi-ħo ħi-ħo naħaq il-ħmar
U d-dubbien minn fuqu tar.

Mary Ann Żammit

At the end of the session or sessions the pupils are asked to form a rhythm to create an animal choir. The students have to listen to the other children's animal sound. Everyone will give their own personal touch. Students will need to listen to each other. This means that they will again be practising their musical and linguistic intelligences.

Vignette 2: Parts of the body

Katerina Caruana teaches six-year old pupils and today she is focussing on the parts of the body. She calls the pupils to form a circle, with their little chairs while leaving a little space between each of the chairs. Once the circle is well-formed the pupils sit down, and each pupil in turn introduces themselves and give the names of the pupils on each side of them while using the demonstrative pronouns. Next they get up and find an isolated space. Ms Caruana asks them to walk around and as soon as they face another pupil they are to shake hands. After a few minutes the activity changes to a creative one such that instead of shaking hands each pupil has to use a different part of the body with which to greet a peer, such as stamping feet or bowing head. Then the teacher asks them to stand in a straight line, one after the other and imitate the teacher as they imagine they are walking (moving forward) with another part of the body than the feet, e.g. the arms, the nose, the knees, etc. There is some soft music in the background as this is a silent activity, except when the teacher indicates a part of the body. After a few minutes the music stops and the teacher asks them to sit again in a circle. This time she shows words written on flashcards, indicating parts of the body that the pupils have to touch. A stretching exercise is meanwhile adopted such that they make circular movements with various parts of the body indicated. The session ends with a reading and speaking activity. Each pupil is given a couple of flashcards with names of the parts of the body. Each pupil is to read the flashcard aloud, and at the same time use the appropriate demonstrative pronoun.

This second vignette is related to another objective in Maltese language teaching which states that the pupils will learn the name of the parts of the body in conjunction with the demonstrative pronouns 'din', 'dan' 'dawn' and 'dik', 'dak', 'dawk', which in Maltese vary in gender and number (Camilleri, ed. 1996, p. 4). The drama techniques involved are the circle, physical control and movement, and voice projection. Several examples of multiple intelligences are involved, namely, naturalistic intelligence (referring to body parts); bodily/kinesthetic intelligence (using body parts); visual/spatial intelligence (using space in the classroom in various ways); linguistic intelligence (matching demonstrative pronouns to nouns, as well as listening and speaking); interpersonal intelligence (working as a group); and intrapersonal intelligence (contributing to the activity as an individual).

In this example, bodily/kinesthetic intelligence is central because the pupils will be using all the parts of their body as much as possible, including their eyes in order to imitate the teacher in the line activity, and to read the flashcards. There is also more emphasis on linguistic intelligence here because the use of the demonstrative pronouns requires applying the correct grammar rules both at the beginning of the session as well as at the end. The use of flashcards also strengthens their visual intelligence. Intrapersonal intelligence is put to the test at the start of the session when the pupils are asked to introduce themselves, and interpersonal intelligence is practised when the pupils work as a group for a greater part of the time.

A further development to this set of activities involving body parts could be a session to help pupils become aware of pronoun suffixes which in Maltese are very commonly used with parts of the body. Thus, in Maltese it is more appropriate to say 'imnieħri', 'ħalqi', 'widnejja' (my nose, my mouth, my ears) rather than 'l-imnieħer', 'il-ħalq', 'il-widnejn' (the nose, the mouth, the ears) etc. This activity could be introduced by using the first person pronoun, and then moving on to the second and third person pronouns singular, and plural. Movements such as pointing to the body parts of the other persons would be in place, but instead of using the demonstrative pronouns this time the pupils will be using the pronoun suffixes.

Conclusion

Drama lends itself well as a tool in mixed-ability classes, and as several researchers have shown it is particularly efficacious in cases where there are difficulties related to literacy (McMaster, 1998; Barnes, 2014), and with "students considered dysfunctional" (Neelands, 2004, p. 47). Furthermore, it can be practised across the curriculum, including in subjects like Mathematics (Masoum et al., 2013; Stanford, 2003). Drama, by tapping on various

intelligences, helps children understand and communicate learning in a creative way (Baldwin & Fleming, 2003), and consequently promotes a deeper form of learning (Johnson, 1998). Primary school teachers in Malta generally agree with this, on the basis of their own experience (Micallef, 2006). For instance, one teacher that was interviewed (Micallef, 2006) said she likes to use drama when teaching story sums, while another mentioned a particular case of a very reserved child who did very well during drama activities.

This is in line with research results in Ireland. Hyland (2000) outlines numerous benefits accrued from the application of multiple intelligences such as "improved attention, concentration and memory...and...improved grade levels" (p. 64). Irish teachers also said that when multiple intelligences were practised their "students were more interested in subjects" (Hyland, 2000, p. 65) and had a desire to learn more. Furthermore, students reported that thanks to these techniques they "could recall a lot more in the end-of-week assessment" (p. 64).

According to Clipson-Boyles (2012), "Good English teaching is not just about *what* is taught but also about *how* it is taught" (p. 1). Indeed, the same applies to Maltese language teaching as for English language teaching. I hope that the above overview has given enough food for thought to Early Years and Primary school teachers who are willing to consider drama and multiple intelligences as an integral part of Maltese Language teaching.

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