

The study originated from the teacher/researcher's willingness to improve in her profession as well as learn more about the language learning process and LOTE acquisition at a younger age. One of the main problems to solve consisted in the general class attitude towards LOTE activities which were seen somehow as passive and unrewarding. Such attitude would give way to two opposite main behaviour patterns: lack of discipline coupled with a willingness to emerge as negative group leaders and lack of motivation coupled with lack of interest in the proposed activities. The intention on the LOTE teacher's side was that of mediating the two opposite attitudes by utilizing some alternative language learning activities that, even though might be more addressed to involving the whole class rather than be diversified to cater for individual needs and/or expectations on LOTE learning, might as well actively involve a single child with respect to his/her personal learning skills and abilities. It was taken into account that a class of children is made up of a variety of individuals all different from one another, with different skills, intelligence, expectancy, motivation, interests and outlooks. The LOTE teacher's target was being able to involve them all into active learning in an interactive, positive and useful way. It was important in fact to be able to involve, aside the average child with a general positive approach to learning, the less gifted one; the one with learning difficulties; the child who displays little or no interest in LOTE learning for personal or family-shared reasons; the ethnic child who identifies LOTE as "grandma's lingo" that is a family-linked language that tends to isolate the speaker from the main community rather than help to communicate; the child who is still in the process of learning English as a second language to whom LOTE learning might constitute an extra effort in his/her cognitive process and finally the 'gifted' child who likes to emerge and acquire language competence in the shortest possible time. Therefore, after consulting some

relevant literature, interactive learning through drama activities was selected to be applied to the study as an alternative teaching method opposite to the curricular communicative approach based on worksheets, reading passages and dramatizations. It was taken into account that whereas by playing a role children would put into practice the acquisition of both linguistic and extra linguistic competence, by also creating a script to perform they would put into action their writing and reading skills. The drama activities would include: presentation and discussions of topics, brainstorming of target language, cooperative activities, preparation of scripts, discussions on grammar, lexicon and extra linguistic issues, presentation, group evaluation, testing for language use.

Data were collected during the preparation process by using observation sheets where the children were recorded individually on their participation, interaction, commitment, discipline and attitude displayed during the process (Table 1).

The same grids were used to record children's attitude in the control group during their regular class activities based on reading, dramatizing and worksheet completing in a group setting (Table 2).

An evaluation grid was used to collect data on group cooperation, language competence, extra linguistic competence and general attitude for each sample group child on their performance day (Table 3).

The same language competence test was administered at the end of the unit to both the sample and the control group and the scores were rated by percentage of achievement both in the specific grammar item, that was the new learning element in the unit, and for comprehension. (Table 4 and 5).

The results were quite pleasant. In answer to the two main questions:

1. Whether it was possible to engage “difficult” or “less gifted” children into more effective LOTE learning where the whole class would be involved in the same unit at different paces to obtain similar learning outcomes by proactively working in a group, and
 2. whether involving the LOTE class into drama oriented productions might be one of the solutions providing both a more simplified and enjoyable communicative approach to grammar and syntax learning,
- the following conclusions were drawn.

The very brief study demonstrated the validity and merits of drama production activities for a more interactive and constructive approach to LOTE learning on the children’s side. In fact providing the learners with an input that allows them to utilize imagination and creativity in a real or fictional setting for a school activity that even though gives space to some freedom, is in fact thought and planned by the teacher on the class itself, is undoubtedly a priceless learning opportunity that is worth to be attempted for. All the children in the sample class were non only thoroughly involved in their production, but made the important effort to help each other towards their common goal. The weaker part of the group were given lighter tasks to perform by common decision of the group rather than risking to be left out of the learning process. Besides, their participation into the process itself helped them to achieve fair results in the final test in which the achievement of the set grammar target was evaluated.

Moreover, the results answered the question for the main problem – full class involvement into the learning process. Discipline was not a main

issue as the children were too involved into their roles and too eager to achieve to grossly misbehave.

Motivation was raised by the cooperative approach to achieve a common goal and create something worth performing. Language targets were achieved with more ease and less struggling. From the questionnaire given to the sample class to fill-in at the end of the unit it was deducted that the class appreciated the new language approach and were eager to repeat it for future activities.

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Table 1 (sample group)

Table 2 (control group)

Participation	Class percentage	Participation	Class percentage
active	64%	active	26%
good	32%	good	41%
other	4%	other	23%
Group interaction		Group interaction	
active	68%	active	37%
good	25%	good	40%
other	7%	other	23%
Commitment		Commitment	
outstanding	64%	outstanding	22%
good	11%	good	41%
other	25%	other	37%
Discipline		Discipline	
outstanding	86%	outstanding	14%
good	14%	good	28%
other	-	other	58%
Attitude		Attitude	
positive	96%	positive	30%
fair	4%	fair	60%
negative		negative	10%

Table 3 (sample group)

Group cooperation	Class percentage
active	72%
good	25%
other	3%
Language competence	
outstanding	25%
good	57%
other	18%
Extra-linguistic competence	
outstanding	68%
good	22%
other	10%
General attitude	
positive	98%
fair	2%
negative	-

Table 4 (sample group)

Score on test	Class percentage
100%	14%
99-90%	28%
89-70%	50%
69-50%	8%
49% and below	-

Table 5 (control group)

Score on test	Class percentage
100%	-
99-90%	11%
89-70%	22%
69-50%	37%
49% and below	33%