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**Exploring Peer Learning in the Drama Classroom
with Neuro Linguistic Programming
and Reciprocal Teaching**

Peadar Donohoe, Cork

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This paper charts my classroom use of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) communication techniques and subsequent adaptation of Reciprocal Teaching (RT) tools to encourage deeper reading in the classroom. I share a detailed account of my action research in the Advanced Acting section of The Gaiety School of Acting, Cork, from January 2003 – May 2003. Significantly, the RT tools are dialogical and language based and, therefore, relevant to foreign language learning where they provide a cognitive scaffold for students' talk, thinking and actions. With the NLP and RT learning tools the students consciously engaged metacognition: thinking about thinking. In applying the metacognitive strategies of NLP and RT, their assumptions and hypotheses regarding text were challenged and this aided them in a transition from apprentices to self-regulated performers.

*I hate everything that merely instructs me
without augmenting or directly invigorating
my activity. (Goethe)*

1. The Essentialist to the Constructivist

When I first started working as a Teacher of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) I approached my practice as an essentialist: looking at teaching basic skills and building upon them gradually. This essentialist approach worked fine when I tutored students individually but I was continually put to the test when it came to transmitting lessons to mixed ability groups. In mixed ability language groups the learning has to be stimulating for the more experienced student but not overly challenging for the less experienced. When I took this approach into drama classroom scenarios, this problem was even more exacerbated. When I began my tenure as Director of Courses for the Gaiety School of Acting in Cork 7 years ago, there was just one section for each age range and there was no testing in the enrollment process. A typical class would be composed of students with many years of experience learning alongside students with no experience. As the years passed pitching learning tasks to students of varying abilities became less problematic as classes became more popular. I was able to divide the classes into sections based on ability and experience. For example, where we once had one section for 13 – 17 year olds, we now

have four. Even so, as the students graduated to the more advanced levels there was a divide between students who were less and more knowledgeable of specific drama tools.

Over time the mixed ability classroom led me to eschew the essentialist approach for the constructivist. One of the central tenets of constructivism put forth by von Glasersfeld (1987) is that knowledge is actively constructed by the learner, not passively received from the environment. Initially this constructivist approach began as circle time in the 13 – 17's Advanced Section, where I would lead students in discussions whose focus would be to: analyse text for clues to character motivation, problems with actor concentration, dramatic use of voice, research of the play's timeline, effective substitutions, etc. These discussions could be individually and simultaneously instructive, argumentative, illuminating and informative but never boring. It was in these discussions where I often found my inspiration for the next term's learning task. For example, in one discussion students were eager to plot and write their own play. Then in the following term we looked at storytelling by examining the journey of the archetypical hero based on the work of Campbell (1988). (These student-inspired explorations are possible because in the Advanced Acting classes I have some students who have been with me for seven years. Hence, I often address their particular needs and wants.)

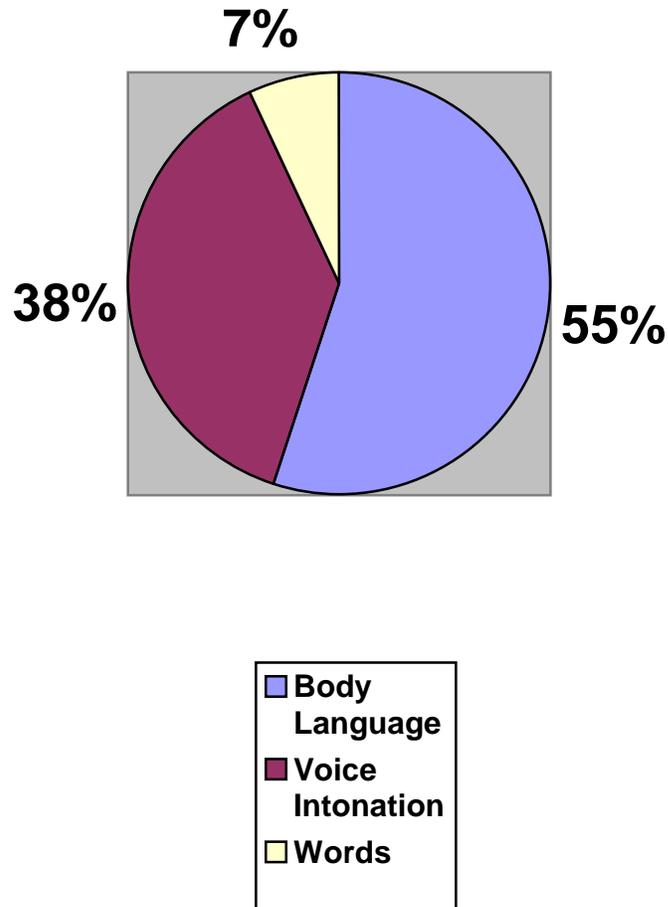
Further inspiration came to me in the past year as I have been a student of the Masters in Education programme at University College Cork. As part of two action research projects I addressed the difficulty of making learning stimulating for all in the mixed ability classroom. In these projects I addressed a basic, yet very important problem in my advanced drama classes for the Gaiety School of Acting in Cork: Circle time, in which the whole class was involved in discussion concerning character and text, did not give enough scaffolding and time to aid each student explore their individual and partnered text assignments. Students were making cursory assumptions of text and character that led to performances that were sometimes not correct because of weak text analysis. To attempt to solve this problem I assigned the students tasks based on Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) and Reciprocal Teaching (RT) learning strategies.

2. Neuro Linguistic Programming

2.1 Origins

The origins of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) are in the early seventies with the collaborative research endeavours of John Grinder, who was then an assistant professor of linguistics at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and Richard Bandler, who was a student of psychology at the university. They modeled patterns of language and behaviour from the works of Fritz Pearls (founder of Gestalt Therapy), Virginia Satir (a founder of Family Therapy and Systematic Therapy) and Milton H. Erickson, M.D. (founder of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis). Their first book together, *The Structure of Magic* (1975), was a demythologising of the idea that certain people have a ‘way with things’ and some don’t. It contended that these people communicated specifically in language, voice intonation and body behaviour that could be organised into a working model for anyone to use in a way or ways that had the potential to be productive and enriching.

In NLP research literature reference is often made to the article “Inference of Attitudes from Nonverbal Communication in Two Channels” (Mehrabian and Ferris 1967). The authors put forth that communication is much more than the words we say. Their research showed that in a presentation before a group of people, 55 percent of the impact is determined by body language (posture, gestures and eye contact), 38 percent by tone of voice and only 7 percent by the content of the presentation itself.



As a language/drama teacher I was attracted to NLP because of the emphasis on communication with body and voice. I envisioned that these strategies would aid my students' awareness of their bodies and voices as communication tools. With the mentoring of Eoin Fitzpatrick of the NLP Institute of Ireland (the only officially recognized institute for NLP training in Ireland) I adapted eight different NLP learning strategies for my research. In order to keep within the prescribed length of this paper I cannot share and disseminate the action research of all the NLP communication tools I actioned in the classroom. However, I will share some of my findings on the NLP exercise of 1st, 2nd and 3rd position which, with its dialectical emphasis, inspired me to introduce reciprocal teaching strategies.

2.2 1st, 2nd and 3rd Position

1st, 2nd and 3rd Position is an exercise that is commonly used to mediate negotiations and inter-personal disputes. In the first position of this exercise each person verbalises their own views, wants and desires, in the second position they take on the perspective of the person they are disagreeing with and in the third position both parties step back from the dispute and talk about the situation as if they were non-involved parties. The scenarios for using this exercise are wide-ranging. It can be used for business, distressed families, understanding other cultures, inter-departmental disputes, etc. For my classroom I adapted this as a character analysis exercise. The students were asked to imagine their characters, which could include characters from a foreign cultural context, and put them in improvisational scenarios. They improvised scenes based on text information. In the 1st position students played their character, as they understand him/her. In the second position they replayed the scene but as each other's characters. And finally in the third position they discussed and analysed their performances in 1st position and 2nd position. The following is a selected transcript of a student's learning using this exercise (the student names are protected throughout the paper):

Linda (working on the character Lady Bracknell from Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*): In doing the second position I realised how aggressive my character was. Outwardly, she seems like a little lady. And actively seeks that she is perceived as such. But in watching Anne (Linda's scene partner) play the part I realised it's because she is full of inner fears. Fear of not measuring up to her class. That she'll be found out by others as not being the real thing and undeserving of her place in society. That she'll be seen through for the shallow creature she really is. I realise from watching her (Anne) that I'm not acting on these fears enough.

I found this astute psychological analysis was common with the use of 1st, 2nd and 3rd position. It illustrates why I find it so valuable as a character study tool. Linda realised that her performance was not heightened enough; there was something missing: what Stanislavski called "The Subtext of Behaviour" (Moore 1984). Stanislavski, the founding father of method acting, stated that: "...without the subtext, action remains flat and will not involve the spectators. When the actor has a profound understanding of the character's motivations for her action then she will understand the subtext. A good performance creates a confrontation between text and subtext – that is between what the character says and what she really thinks and feels but for some reason cannot say directly." (Moore 1984: 68 – 69)

In watching Anne in 2nd position and partaking in the follow-on discussion in 3rd position, Linda came to realise that there was a good deal lacking in her performance. After this exercise, Linda began to work on externalising the character's fears to feed her performance.

I found 1st, 2nd and 3rd position extremely useful for student learning because:

- Students received direct feedback from a peer.
- This peer feedback in 2nd and 3rd position was more acceptable and more likely to be actioned than if it came from the teacher (which was confirmed by written feedback and student's request for similar exercises in future study).
- The student's assumptions about how the character should be played were challenged in a constructive way.
- In many instances they found the subtext of behaviour (crucial to a good performance but often missing in student work).
- Discussing characters in 3rd position led to further discoveries concerning character and text.

Coincidentally, while I was conducting this research, I was introduced to Reciprocal Teaching Strategies and a link was made.

3. Reciprocal Inspiration

Reciprocal teaching (RT) is a cognitive strategy developed by Palinscar and Brown (1990). This procedure is designed to involve teachers and students in a dialogue about text material whose aim is simply not just to translate/decode text but to aid the student's comprehension through comprehension fostering strategies. The knowledge formation in this setting becomes a shared rather than a solo undertaking. RT learning strategies take their cue from the socio-cultural learning perspective where knowledge is viewed as a construction of groups. Like 1st, 2nd and 3rd position, RT strategies place a large emphasis on peer feedback and discourse. In carrying out these learning strategies there are several central principles and steps that must be adhered to. Brown and Palinscar (1985) list them as follows:

- The teacher must model the activity one by one so as to make it explicit to the students;

- Students should be encouraged to intervene during every activity and should be in the know of the range of options of that particular strategy;
- Students must see for themselves that the strategies are working;
- The teacher should gradually wean students to other more advanced students who will assume the role of the teacher;
- The teacher should act only as a scaffold/coach after his responsibilities are handed over to the student-teacher, coming into the picture only and if necessary;
- Eventually the teacher should fade out of the picture and stay in the background to monitor and provide feedback.

When I was introduced to these RT activities, I found they had a lot in common with 1st, 2nd and 3rd position. Both activities fostered a cognitive apprenticeship in which there was:

- A language based structure for questioning and organising thinking;
- Peer learning;
- Metacognition: thinking about thinking;
- A socio-cultural approach to learning where knowledge is formed by the group.

Recognising the complementary elements of these strategies, I was inspired to use the RT learning strategies as a classroom aid with the same group of students in the following spring term.

Below are brief synopses of the two RT strategies that I used:

SQCP:

Simplify: To identify and integrate the most important information in the text.

Question: Students generate questions and identify information that is significant enough to provide the substance of the question.

Clarify: Ask students to grapple with text that is difficult to understand (new vocabulary, unclear reference words and unfamiliar and difficult concepts).

Predict: Ask students to hypothesize what the author will discuss next in the text.

And

TAG:

Tell something you liked about a performance, artwork, creative writing, etc.

Ask a question about the piece.

Give a constructive suggestion to further the work.

As with NLP I saw RT as an aid to text comprehension. Tovani (2000: 17) points out in *I Read It, But Don't Get It – Comprehension Strategies for Adolescent Readers*, that text becomes inaccessible when students:

- Don't have the comprehension strategies necessary to unlock meaning.
- Don't have sufficient background knowledge.
- Don't recognize patterns.
- Lack purpose.

I recognised in Tovani's observations the fundamental problems I encountered with promoting text study in the drama classroom. My students, who are private fee-payers and are not marked on text, rarely would read the entire play. And because students were not motivated to read the text, they lacked purpose to research the plot and world of their characters. This, in turn, led to performances that were distinctly lacking in subtext. I saw in the strategic reading techniques of RT, tools which could aid students to focus on the meaning and ideas in the text and hence, a way to utilise classroom text analysis more effectively while making the learning process a socially enriching one. I also envisioned that the socio-cultural underpinnings of RT might be a beneficial aid to the students. Socio-cultural theories put forth that mind originates dialectically through the culture in which that mind inhabits. In organising this group participation I was hoping to foster a community of learners versed in RT strategies that allowed students of varying "Zones of Proximal Development" to work together. Vygotsky's (1978) "Zones of Proximal Development" refer to the difference between what a student or learner can do by themselves and what they can do with the assistance of tools and others. I envisioned that the RT structures would help to generate the scaffolding where they consciously engaged metacognition, thinking about thinking. In applying these metacognitive strategies, their

assumptions and hypotheses regarding text and character would be challenged, and the hope was that, in this socio-cultural context, new and correct knowledge would be formed in the dialectical discourse.

4. Setting the Scene (Previous Scaffolding)

The Advanced Acting Section for 13 -17 year olds was the group in which I initiated this action research. This is a bright group of students, including a few who have been with me for at least 7 years. Students who are admitted into advanced acting training bring their own genuine interest about the art of drama and have a strong desire for gaining new knowledge and experience in the craft. All students in the advanced drama class have to be able to show that they have the necessary skills to be able to participate in advanced acting training. They need to be able to demonstrate spontaneity, the ability to take direction, to take the lead in exercises (not just be a follower), make verbal and physical offers that demonstrate innate creativity and the ability to work with others. Also, the students of the advanced drama class are instructed in using the GOTE (Goal, Other, Tactics, Expectations) system developed by Cohen (1992) in order to discuss, approach and develop their scenework for performance (to view a copy of the GOTE please see appendix p. 23).

In my experience the students understood the GOTE system conceptually and a few could put it into practice with very little help from me but the majority hadn't used it enough. I felt incorporating reciprocal teaching techniques might be a key to enhancing their practical use of the GOTE system.

5. RT Classroom Practice

Part of the students' learning objective involved working on selected monologues and scenes for the theatre. The groups were put into reciprocal teaching teams of four. Initially, students were assigned a partner for monologue and/or scenework and then assigned another partnered pair as their reciprocal teaching partners. I endeavoured to assign partnered pairs according to their level of experience. For example, I matched a pair of students with relatively little experience of dramatising text to a pair of more experienced

students. In aligning partnerships in this way I was taking the socio-cultural approach to classroom that is deeply indebted to Vygotsky:

...any function in the child's cognitive repertoire appears in the developmental and social process; that is knowledge is acquired in mutual interaction with a more knowledgeable other. (Englert & Palinscar 1991: 227)

6. Deeper Reading in Action

Taking my cue from Brown (1994), who has put forth that designing aids and tools to perfect the mind is one of the primary goals of educational research and practice, I adapted SQCP (Simplify, Question, Clarify, Predict) and TAG (Tell, Ask, Give) for deeper reading of scenework and analysing performance. The deeper reading tools of SQCP and TAG facilitate the creation of dialogue sessions whose aim is to explore individual perspectives and to generate meaningful dialogue. The ultimate goal is to achieve a deeper understanding of the text that will contribute to character portrayals that are infused with behavioural subtext and, subsequently, heightened performances.

As we had to analyse text prior to performance, SQCP was actioned first. Below is the SQCP handout adapted for drama:

6.1 SQCP (For Drama Text Analysis)

Summarizing

Identify the most important information and communicate it in a succinct fashion.

Questioning

Think about what you know, need to know or would like to know about a passage, the character(s) and relationships. What might the character's goal be in the scene? What tactics might s/he use? Generating questions helps promote purposeful reading.

Clarifying

In one sentence sum up the intent of the author and the character respectively.

Predicting

First: form a hypothesis about where the script “is going.” Second: where is the character you are portraying going and what may come of any relationships that s/he has? What can this character expect/hope for the future? Predicting encourages thoughtful, strategic reading.

To facilitate the modelling I gave the students a text based example from a *Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams for SQCP use. My inspiration and cue for this comes from Collins & Others (1989: 58), who argue that a conceptual model is crucial to a learner attempting complex skills for it provides him with: firstly, an “advanced organizer”; secondly, “an interpretive structure for making sense of the feedback, hints, and corrections from the master”; and thirdly, “an internalised guide for the period of relatively independent practice”.

In this sample inquiry, which I created as a model for the students, I took the perspective of an actor who is working on developing the character of Stanley Kowalski:

Summarizing: Stanley is angry about losing control of his household and is confronting Blanche.

Questioning: Samples of relevant questions:

Is Stanley afraid of losing control?

Is he afraid of Blanche?

Who or what does he control?

Clarifying: Sum up the author’s and character’s intent in one sentence.

Author Intent Examples:

Tennessee Williams may be trying to share with us that:

- We have a tenuous control of our lives and it takes very little to upset the balance.
- We are fragile beings in need of love and support.

Character Intent Example:

Summing up the intent of the character in one sentence can keep us clear as to what motivates the character. In the case of Stanley Kowalski I might say:

- He wants everyone to notice him.
- He wants to be in control.

Predicting: I encourage the students to take imaginative leaps as to where the play is going (the following predictions are those of the students taken from a transcript):

- Stanley will kick Blanche out.
- Stella (Blanche's sister) will kick Stanley out.
- Someone's going to die. (Following the sharing of this prediction the students asked me to tell them the ending. I told them to read the text! They responded with groans and rueful laughter.)

After the students analysed the text model I then coached a team of four with SQCP. The rest of the class observed as we discussed applying SQCP to a particular text extract. Following this I assigned the reciprocal teaching teams. I then let them work in their teams with supervision. As they became familiar and more proficient with the feedback tools I began to fade the supervisory role. Following this they presented their scenes for the class.

Below is an extract from a transcript of one team's use of SQCP:

The RT team of Catherine, Amy, Andy and Lucy

Teacher: How did you find SQCP?

Catherine: Asking Questions. Andy asked, "Oh, is she in denial?" And that got you thinking about all this kind of stuff. And it changed your goal. Getting three people's idea instead of your own stretched it all out. Asking questions is very important. It really helps to have someone else's perspective on it.

Amy: I think it's great. You start off with one idea of where the script is going to go and then everyone kinda pools his or her ideas together and then it changes completely. And it ends up being better than it was before.

Teacher: Could you give me a specific example?

Amy: We thought Andy and Lucy's characters were married and having an argument but we weren't quite sure why. But as we discussed it, read it again, we realised that they weren't

married at all. And the girl was angry because her boyfriend wouldn't commit. And we got this from mixing ideas up together.

Teacher: Would you say that the multiplicity of views widens your own resources?

Lucy: Yeah. I think it's better because it's small group versus big group. In the big group you have all these ideas.

Teacher: You can have too many ideas?

Lucy: Yeah.

Andy: And you may not get a chance to speak.

Catherine: I think that Andy gave us really good predictions because it helps us understand our goals more when someone else is talking to you about it.



Students using SQCP

This pooling of ideas is very important to uncover deeper understanding of their character's world. If Andy and Lucy had performed their scene, as they understood it, their work would have been flawed because of their assumptions. Their reciprocal teaching partners' view of the scene challenged their assumptions and aided them in choosing the correct understanding of the relationship between the two characters.

Lucy points out that the size of the group is extremely important for this sharing of ideas. Andy concurs and points out that the smaller group size allows all the students to have a voice.

Questioning played a huge factor in the success of SQCP text analysis. In almost every transcript it appeared as a crucial factor in aiding the students to determine the correct path for their characters.

I think it is important to note that I totally underestimated and was surprised by how much time SQCP would take. The students had to spend three sessions with it (four and half hours) as opposed to the one I intended. Ultimately, it was worth it, because as I watched their performances evolve, it was clear that they had a deeper psychological understanding of their characters that in turn fed the subtext of behaviour.

Once SQCP had been actioned we moved on to performance analysis with TAG.

6.2 TAG (For Performance Analysis)

Tell something you liked about the scene (i.e. the tactics, the accent, the blocking (stage movement), the emotional intensity, etc.)

Ask a Question (i.e. What was your Goal? What were your tactics? How are you vulnerable? Where does the scene take place? What is the scene activity? etc.)

Give a Suggestion (i.e. You may need to find a goal that will make you more active. You need more tactics to achieve your goal. Maybe you could do something to help identify where you are?)

As with SQCP, this was modelled, coached, supervised, faded and finally the work was presented at the end of class. Below is a transcript of TAG use.



A student getting on her feet with TAG

Transcript: Circle Time Discussion, Selected feedback discussing use of TAG with GOTE with scene study:

Teacher: Julie, how did you find the use of TAG?

Julie: I found it really useful.

Teacher: How did you find it useful?

Julie: ...everybody has a different opinion on each scene. All the ideas were shared. And they told you something positive, which is good, makes you feel good.

Teacher: So the fact that it keeps it in a positive framework is a very important aspect.

Julie: Yeah. With the TAG everyone gets an equal amount of advice.

Teacher: Did anyone else have a comment? (Ryan raises his hand)

Ryan: I think it was really good. I think it was one the best exercises I think we've done. Because it really helps you. And it's not like a teacher telling you (Ryan assumes a declaratory voice), "Hey, you did this wrong. I prefer if you did it this way." It's just kind of suggesting something (uses normal voice). "Maybe if you moved your arm to the right it would help." And then you can try it and if you don't like it. You know, it's fine. Nothing's lost.

The role of positive feedback in TAG was the most commented aspect of it. I also observed that the informality of the feedback allowed the students to be open and receptive to their partner's comments. Ryan's comment about the teacher admonishing the student was particularly interesting. He obviously finds the constructivist underpinnings of the exercise much more beneficial than the traditional didactic form.

7. Feedback Analysis

Below is a table of student responses to individual questions about RT use. Twelve feedback forms were completed. Each sheet had seven questions. The table below graphs the response to the first six questions. Question seven required an involved answer and was not suitable for graph form. Each of the questions follows and there is representational feedback for each. (Refer to Appendix p. 25 to view the questionnaire.)

RT Feedback

Question	Positive	Negative	Mixed	No Ans.
1	11		1	
2	12			
3	11	1		
4	11	1		
5	11			1
6	9		2	1

1. Overall, what do you think of reciprocal teaching? (Becoming a teacher to your peers)

Linda: They (reciprocal teaching partners) were honest but not harsh and their suggestions were beneficial.

2. Did you find the use of SQCP beneficial to the understanding of your scene and/or monologue? If yes, how? (Please be specific with at least one example.)

Ryan: Yes, it helped to understand my character, their feelings and goals.

3. Did you find that you were inspired to pick up the full text of the play?

Mickey: You are hungry for more information about your character and everybody wants to perform to his or her best ability.

Linda: The scene I'm doing is incomplete. SQCP inspired me to go out and find it.

4. Did use of TAG help to clarify and strengthen your scene or monologue (i.e. Establishing character actions, blocking, establishing the where, etc.?)

Catherine: The use of TAG really made our scene interesting in terms of blocking. (Blocking is stage movement)

5. Did you find SQCP and/or TAG beneficial to your understanding of your character? If yes, how? (Please be specific with a least one example)

Linda: Yes, people gave lots of beneficial tips as to how my character should act.

Amy: Yes, I learned to act more as the character and to apply more actions.

Andy: SQCP helps you to predict, which causes questioning.

6. Do you think that use of SQCP and TAG is a more efficient way to run a scene class compared to presenting one scene at a time while the rest of the class watches? (Whether your answer is yes or no, please explain why.)

I was hugely interested in the response to this question as this was the reason why I adapted reciprocal teaching for the drama classroom.

Of the twelve questionnaires returned 9 responses to this question were very positive, one respondee thought it was good either way, another left the question blank and another gave an answer that had nothing to do with the question. Below are some selected responses:

Catherine: Yes, because we all get to practise our scenes every week.

Andy: Yes, because you get to discuss your piece more.

Brian: It can work well if the whole group watches and gives opinions.

Judy: Yes, because I think it's a lot quicker and more effective.

Amy: Yes, because I would generally be more comfortable in a small group suggesting ideas and less intimidated.

Linda: Yes, there is constant work and continuous progress. It's just a better way of utilising time.

7. Are there any recommendations you would make to the teacher in his future presentation of reciprocal teaching techniques?

Linda: I would recommend changing around the partners every 2 weeks to see how different couples would react – so you get an overall view of the audience's perception of the scene.

Brian: It is very good but can sometimes drag on too long, making it boring.

Linda's response inspired me to rotate partners in the next term's class. I thought her idea had the possibility of reaping more rewards in the socio-cultural approach. Unfortunately, when this was actioned, the students complained that their new partners were not familiar with their scene and hence it slowed things down. For the purposes of working on a particular text, it appears that keeping the same team for the duration of a particular text study works best.

Brian's complaint about the duration did not surprise me as I noted that the males didn't engage in the discussions as intensely as the females. I sat in more often and supervised when there were males in a group. I speculate that women are more fluent in communication skills than men and that men tend to like to learn more by doing. As another student, John, shared when commenting on the amount of time spent with RT: "Not as effective as it is not always taken seriously but you get more in." (From Feedback) I speculate that he was a bit bored by the physical inactivity. When I asked him what he meant by "more in" he conceded: "You learn more."

8. Discussion

The response from the feedback sheets and transcripts was overwhelmingly positive. The feedback indicates that the students were not reading in a cursory manner and making slight assumptions. They were digging deeper for understanding and some were even inspired to pick up the source text for their own pursuit of additional information. The students delved deeper in the text because SQCP and TAG, with their emphasis on peer learning in a socio-cultural context, fuelled the desire to know what comes next and how the story ends.

The social emphasis of RT techniques gives the teacher tools to scaffold what cognitive theorists describe as intrinsic motivation, motivation that comes from within, as opposed to extrinsic motivation, rewards and punishment meted out by the teacher. I saw that this social emphasis gave the students the scaffolding to become better learners and more aware of language use in text.

My version of SQCP and TAG for drama is just one example of how RT strategies can be adapted to individual classroom needs. They could be made task specific for any number of language learning outcomes. For example SQCP, in the case of a language or literature classroom, could be structured as follows:

Summarise: Describe your understanding of the text.

Question: What don't you understand? (i.e. Words, Plot, Sentence Structure, Idioms, etc.)

Clarify: In one sentence describe what the text is about.

Predict: What do you think will happen next in the text?

Or in the instance of the grammar class it could be actioned as follows:

Summarise: Identify all the phrasal verbs in the passage.

Question: What don't you understand? What would you like clarity on? Would you like more examples of use?

Clarify: As simply as possible define phrasal verbs.

Plan: Write your own 1 page story with at least 5 phrasal verbs.

And to build on the exercise above the students could use TAG for feedback on each other's written work:

Tell: I like the use of phrasal verbs, I liked the creative use of language, I like the central idea, etc.

Ask: What does this phrasal verb mean? Is placement correct in the overall sentence structure? Could there have been a better choice of a phrasal verb?, etc.

Give: Try this phrasal verb instead. Review the usage.

9. Conclusion

Vygotsky (1978: 52) stressed that learning is a social and cultural act and that “All higher mental functions are internalised social relationships”. I think it is important to note that educational theorists are calling for a more social emphasis in education. I would like to draw attention to the research of a US longitudinal study, conducted by Schweinhart and Weikart (1997), which demonstrated that children who had participated in a curriculum with a socio-cultural emphasis had better outcomes as 23 year olds than children who were taught in the traditional didactic manner.

In the case of my students the RT strategies gave birth to astute text and character analyses whose aim was to aid the learner make the transition from apprentice to self-regulated performer. Looking at it from the traditional didactic point of view, you could make the observation that, as the teacher, I was sidelined and made superfluous, outside of my contribution as facilitator and observer. But as a practitioner of what works within a classroom, I noted that this social-cultural approach to learning was extremely stimulating for all of us. This evidence was brought home to me in our performance showcase. Our total class and rehearsal time per term is thirteen and half hours, with our last class utilised as a performance day. Our average showcase for thirteen to seventeen year olds ranges from thirty to forty minutes. At the end of the spring term in which RT was actioned, we produced a showcase of 1 hour and 15 minutes in duration. What was exceptionally surprising about this was that, because we had spent so much time discussing and actioning RT strategies, we had less than half our normal rehearsal time. But not only did we have plenty of material for the showcase, we also had above calibre performances which was noted by our regular attending audience. I put forth that the metacognitive strategies of NLP and RT enabled the students to dig deeper into the text, resulting in performances rich with subtext and understanding. It was the structured inquiry and its emphasis on social learning which gave the students tools to self-regulate their performances and make the transition from students to autonomous learners. I believe encouraging social learning strategies is important in any classroom context, but in classroom settings where interpreting text correctly is tantamount for understanding, then it is crucial.

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Biodata

Peadar Donohoe is the Director of Courses for the Gaiety School of Acting since 1996. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts from the University of Massachusetts. He received his advanced acting training at HB Studios in New York City. He has acted in, directed or produced almost 100 shows for the stage. About 9 years ago an Irish girl enticed him with the magic of herself and Ireland and he has been living there since. Currently he is a student of the Masters in Education programme at University College Cork where he is studying the art of teaching.

Appendix

1. The GOTE sheet (adapted from Cohen (1992))

GOTE is an acronym for Goal, Other, Tactics and Expectation; in combination, these are the four co-ordinates of the actor's approach to any role. The GOTE sheet is the actor's basic list of questions whose answers will create the foundation for approaching a specific character.

Read and be familiar with the play you are working from and answer the following questions as the character would:

1. Basic Information about the character

Name:

Age:

Marital Status and History (use a separate sheet of paper):

Educational Level:

Economic/social Status:

Status: Is your character a high or a low status person within the play? Are they somewhere in between? Once you've meditated on the status of your character, then write about how this status may manifest itself in the context of the character's voice, body and social interactions with other characters of varying degrees of status (Basically you're considering how the character's perceived or unperceived status affects their outward behaviour in the context of the play).

2. Goal: What do I really want? When do I want it?

3. Other: From whom (in the scene and/or play) do I want it or make happen to? Who in the play can help me? Who in the play can hurt me? Who is an obstacle? Why? What are my deepest fears?

4. Tactics: How can I get it? How (and whom) can I threaten? How (and whom) can I induce? Name at least 5 tactics that you will pursue in the scene:

5. Expectation: Why do I expect to get it? Why does it excite me? What will I do when I get it?

2. The GOTE sheet (Modelled Example of Use)

1. Basic Information about the character (the following character is from Tennessee Williams' *A Street Car Named Desire*):

Name: Stanley Kowalski

Age: 25

Marital Status: Married

Educational Level: 10th Grade

Economic/social Status: Poor

2. Goal: What do I really want? When do I want it?

I WANT TO HURT HER. I will do it now.

3. Other: 1. From whom (in the scene and/or play) do I want it or want to make happen to? 2. Who in the play can help me? 3. Who in the play can hurt me? 4. Who is an obstacle? 5. Why? 6. What are my deepest fears?

1. Blanche. She can help if I can just convince her to shut up. 2. My wife Stella can help if she just gets rid of Blanche. 3. Blanche can hurt me if she tries to convince my wife to leave me. 4. Just Stella being in my house is an obstacle. I want her gone. 5. My deepest fears are that she'll convince Stella to leave me. That Stella will choose her over me. 6. That no one really loves me. Just like my mother and father never loved me.

4. Tactics: How can I get it? How (and whom) can I threaten? How (and whom) can I induce? Name at least 5 tactics that you will pursue in the scene:

I will intimidate her with the closeness of my physical presence.

There will be a strong tone of sarcasm in my voice.

I will grab her by the wrist.

I will push her away.

I will shout at her.

5.Expectation: 1. What is it? 2. Why do I expect to get it? 3. Why does it excite me? 4. What will I do when I get it?

1. To have everyone respect me and think I'm the greatest. 2. Because I always have, I see it as my right. 3. It makes me feel superior and confident. 4. I will be content and at peace.

3. Reciprocal Teaching Feedback Form

Advanced Acting - Sections 1 & 2

This term we have been using GOTE (Goal, Other, Tactics, Expectations), SQCP (Summarise, Question, Clarify, Predict) and TAG (Tell, Ask, Give). Following are a few questions which enquire about your experience and use of these systems. Your feedback would be most appreciated.

1. Overall, what do you think of reciprocal teaching? (Becoming a teacher to your peers)

2. Did you find the use of SQCP beneficial to the understanding of your scene and/or monologue? If yes, how? (Please be specific with at least one example)

3. Did you find that you were inspired to pick up the full text of the play?

4. Did use of TAG help to clarify and strengthen your scene or monologue (i.e. Practical use of the GOTE, Blocking, Establishing the Where?)

5. Did you find the use of any or all aspects of SQCP and TAG beneficial to your understanding of your character? If yes, how? (Please be specific with a least one example)

6. Do you think that use of SQCP and TAG is a more efficient way to run a scene class compared to presenting one scene at a time while the rest of the class watches? (Whether your answer is yes or no, please explain why.)

7. Are there any recommendations you would make to the teacher in his future presentation of reciprocal teaching techniques?