

# Chapter 1 : Introduction

## 1.1 Rationale and Background

Teaching and learning second language (L2) grammar has always been a critical concern in language classrooms. The school curriculum in many countries, including India, acknowledges the structural approach to language teaching, which explicitly focuses on teaching grammatical concepts. Explicit grammar teaching emphasizes providing precise and detailed explanations of the grammar rules and thus prioritizes accuracy and comprehension (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Ellis, 2005).

The notion of explicit grammar teaching lacks support from numerous scholars (i.e., Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 1994). The basic argument for their discontent is that it becomes an additional burden with little or no relevance for the students to learn each grammar rule separately. Moreover, students fail to effectively apply the memorized rules or find their usage in real-life applications. As a result, many English educational institutions ceased to provide grammar instruction by the 1960s. One of the reasons was the lack of research on English grammar (Hudson & Walmsley, 2005). On the contrary, scholars alternatively favoured explicit grammar teaching to enhance language learning (White, 1987; Larsen-Freeman, 1995). Supporting the teaching of grammar explicitly, Genc (2018) states that the structural approach provides a framework for teaching foreign languages that emphasizes the significance of knowing the target language's structure. We extend Bleghizadeh's (2010) argument that grammar cannot and should not be sacrificed in the language classroom.

With the emergence of construction grammar in L2 teaching and learning, grammar teaching has taken a different approach. *Construction Grammar* suggests that learning grammar involves understanding how linguistic forms (like morphemes, words, and phrasal patterns) are associated with their semantic or discourse function (Ellis, 2013). Therefore, language instructors who believed in the concept of construction grammar shifted their attention to usage-based models of language teaching and started implementing innovative approaches in the research and pedagogical practices in teaching and learning L2 grammar. However, recent research studies underline the inefficiency of any single method in imparting second language skills to the diverse nature of students, and the learners and teachers need to have many options from which they can select one that works for them (Pouya & Reda, 2020). Moreover, it was found that any method for second language study can only be effective when learners' engagement with texts is performed because they have a genuine interest in them and are willing to explore their meanings, and they feel motivated to write since they have some valuable information to share (Dean, 2003). Therefore, the need for an alternate method to teach grammar more engagingly and provocatively was realized. To overcome this limitation, the later researchers proposed the postmethod pedagogy. Postmethod pedagogy is a quest to find an alternative to method rather than an alternative method (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). The necessity to transcend the conventional understanding of method arises from the fact that there were inherent disparities between the conceptualization of method and its implementation by the educators (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). The postmethod pedagogy empowers language educators to formulate theories of practice specific to the classroom and facilitates the creation of innovative, location-specific practices.

Drama in Education aligns well with the postmethod conditions. It stands out as a unique field combining performance and teaching methodologies, focusing on process-oriented theatrical strategies tailored to involve diverse learners actively (McAvoy & O'Connor, 2022). In the field of L2 teaching, Drama in Education has garnered significant interest in recent years (Stinson & Freebody, 2006; Piazzoli, 2010; Abenzoza & Decoursey, 2019; Alam et al., 2020; Baldwin & Galazka, 2021; Piazzoli, 2022; Jacobs, 2023; Piazzoli & Dalziel, 2024). Several practices have been developed within the pedagogical discipline of Drama in Education, including process drama, creative drama, roleplay, simulation, language games, and performance-oriented drama. Regardless of variations in their approach, all of these practices serve the common purpose of enhancing language skills among learners. Such variations indicate how every type of drama in L2 instruction has value because it creates circumstances for cross-linguistic interactions and promotes genuine communication between teachers and students. As a result, the typical classroom interactions are radically and productively changed (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). For the present study, we employed the practice of process drama to investigate its efficacy in teaching English grammar. Nowadays, the practice of process drama is used so widely in educational settings that the term has become almost synonymous with Drama in Education (Taylor & Warner, 2006). *Process drama* is a practice in which individuals, including the teacher, collaboratively engage in dramatic activities to collectively explore and make meaning of a given situation or context (Bowell & Heap, 2001). Through process drama, the participants are involved in a series of connected activities so that students create meaning for themselves by engaging in the activity which matches their cognitive ability.

The application of process drama in L2 classrooms is not a recent development. The pioneering work by Kao and O'Neill (1998) states the effectiveness of process drama, indicating its meaningful application within such educational contexts. Subsequently, the scholars (i.e., Stinson & Freebody, 2006; Piazzoli, 2010; Piazzoli, 2011; Rothwell, 2011; Hulse & Owens, 2017; Alam & Al-hawamdeh, 2022) recognized the significance of employing this method for various constructs such as oral communication, vocabulary, and intercultural awareness. After a thorough review, it also becomes evident that process drama may have facilitated implicit grammar teaching due to its inherent characteristics. However, our comprehensive investigation only partially succeeded in uncovering any study that employed the technique of process drama specifically for explicit grammar teaching. Consequently, we decided to integrate the practice of process drama to teach English grammar, adapting it to the structural approach of L2 teaching. Given the students' prior exposure to the structural approach of grammar learning, we deemed it essential to adhere to a similar approach when developing process drama-based lesson plans. By capitalizing on their familiarity with the approach, we aimed to optimize their engagement and comprehension within process drama activities for learning grammar.

## 1.2 Theoretical Bases

Process Drama for language learning became a growing field of study by the end of the last decade of the 20th century. It started being implemented in the classroom to facilitate a better language-learning environment. Process drama goes beyond mere improvisation, role-play, or else to generate the targeted experience. Process drama is not merely about performing a play

in front of spectators or creating a drama with a certain climax; rather, the final result of process drama is always the experience itself and the reflection it can provoke (O'Neill, 1993).

Wagner (1988), while emphasizing its significance, reported that training in drama produces positive effects on oral language, reading, and writing. Further, Kao and O'Neill (1998), in their seminal book on process drama for second language learning, provide key elements to incorporate in the drama classroom for the second language, viz., the introduction of the drama, contexts, roles, tension, non-verbal activities, questioning, and reflection. Their work opened up the possibilities of working on L2 learning through process drama. Process drama can be grounded in the following theories that have their roots in education and psychology.

### **Social Constructivism**

Social constructivism builds on the idea of constructivism, which posits that individuals possess the ability to form their distinct understanding of reality, thereby emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and expecting the existence of diverse approaches to acquiring and comprehending knowledge (Blyth, 1997). Building on the idea of constructivism, social constructivism asserts that the construction of knowledge by learners is a result of their engagement in social interactions, the interpretation of information and the development of understanding through these interactive experiences (Vygotsky, 1962). Vygotsky introduced sociocultural theory, which implies that a theorist following this approach considers the wider social context of a learning situation. This theory analyzes an individual's thinking and development by observing their engagement in activities that are culturally structured within the larger social framework in which education occurs.

Traditional Second language classrooms were primarily teacher-centric, focusing on mimic and drill approaches to language learning. When the practitioners shifted their approach from

behaviourism to social constructivism, the shift in the ownership of the learning happened from teacher to students, and context-based language teaching came into the picture. The activities to be performed by the students in the L2 classroom should be structured in a sociocultural context. One of the key elements of Drama in Education is context, and the students can better perform the drama activities that relate to their social and cultural understanding. Therefore, we have taken the social constructivist approach, in particular sociocultural theory, in the present study.

### **Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning**

Multimodal learning environments enable the presentation of instructional elements through multiple sensory modes, including visual, aural and written channels (Sankey et al., 2010). Each sensory mode helps students to construct meaning for themselves. Multimodality in educational practice was discussed heavily in the work of Richard E. Mayer, which gave birth to the cognitive theory of multimedia learning (CTML). According to the notion, students learn more profoundly than they could have by using words or pictures alone because they try to make meaningful connections between words and visuals (Mayer, 2009). In language education theory and research, *multimodality* typically refers to the synchronization of several distinct signification systems to convey a single message or meaning, or at least one that is cohesive (Dressman, 2020).

Classroom drama has been recognized as an instructional approach incorporating a multisensory educational pedagogy mode (Neelands, 1984; Bolton, 1998). Drama enables learners to communicate, express, and interpret their surroundings both individually and collectively using a range of modalities (Schroeter & Wager, 2017). Due to the nature of Drama in Education, students are engaged in multiple modes; for instance, drawing in role, writing in

role, audio narration, and mime are some of the different drama strategies which go beyond words to engage learners with the subject matter. This nature of drama aligns precisely with CTML. Therefore, this study has also been conceptualized on the cognitive theory of multimedia learning.

### **Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning theory defines learning as creating knowledge through transforming experiences (Kolb, 1984). *Experiential learning* is a pedagogical approach that underscores the fundamental significance of experience in the educational process. Drama in Education focuses on the process of meaning creation through different drama conventions, allowing learners to witness different experiences. Therefore, experience remains at the core of Drama in Education, just as the experiential learning theory.

Experiential learning necessitates a shift in the teacher's role, transitioning away from the role of the traditional expert to serve as facilitator, guide, and helper (Spruck-Wrigley, 1998). Drama in Education provides an opportunity for teachers to change their stance in multiple ways. Hence, the theoretical foundation of the current research draws on the experiential learning theory in approaching second language learning through Drama in Education.

### **Affective Filter Hypothesis**

The affective filter hypothesis captures the relationship between affective variables and the process of second language acquisition by positing that acquirers vary with respect to the strength or level of their affective filters (Krashen, 1982). Krashen places three primary constructs as the affective filters– Motivation, Self-confidence and Anxiety.

Research in Drama in Education has shown that it helps learners enhance their motivation and self-confidence and reduce anxiety. Recently, there has been an emphasis on the use of

emotions in school education and in an L2 classroom (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Elahi et al., 2018; Simons & Smits, 2021). Emotions are deeply connected to learning. Emotions play a crucial role in learning, as they are closely linked to attraction, motivation, and cognition. Positive emotions like curiosity, wonder, joy, and excitement enhance attention, cognition, and memory, thus facilitating learning (National Steering Committee for National Curriculum Frameworks, 2023). Drama provides an opportunity to celebrate emotions in the second language classroom, providing students with motivation and confidence to engage in activities without losing their public self-image. Therefore, this study heavily relies on the theoretical foundation of the affective filter hypothesis.

### **Construction Grammar**

Since the present study attempts to understand the efficacy of DIE in teaching L2 grammar, the theory of construction grammar provides a solid basis for the selection of DIE as the pedagogical approach. According to construction grammar, children pick up language by referencing similar situations from experiences they have shared—usually with siblings, parents, or other caregivers. A young learner needs to be generally sociocognitive and actively participate in these shared experiences in order to acquire language (Hilpert, 2014). Drama in Education creates an opportunity for the learners to engage with their peers and facilitator to explore different situations, challenging their socio-cognitive abilities to experiential learning and contributing to their language development. Once the learners are exposed to the language during these activities, they can find the pattern underlying those language constructs with the help of the teacher, who will shape the session to reach their learning objectives.

## 1.3 Aims and Objectives

This study aims to understand the pedagogical application of Drama in Education in a second-language classroom with middle school students. We try to understand the role of drama practice in developing the students' grammar. Additionally, we are interested in understanding the change in the classroom atmosphere when we use drama instead of any other traditional language teaching method. The present study also aims to understand the difference in the behaviour of the students taught using Drama in Education in comparison to students taught using the traditional method.

The present thesis addresses the following research questions:

1. How does Drama in Education affect middle school students' grammar learning outcomes?
2. How does Drama in Education transform the L2 classroom environment?
3. What are the challenges of applying Drama in Education in an Indian classroom?

There is also an additional aim to create educational materials for teaching grammar using the practice of process drama. To do so, we have developed a framework for developing process drama, and based on that framework, we have created sixteen process drama sessions, eight on teaching tenses and eight on teaching parts of speech.

The world faced a pandemic when this research study was in progress. Formal and informal learning heavily relied on online platforms. One of our studies also aims to explore the application of Drama in Education in online mode to teach English language, especially grammar, to middle school students. The online case study aims to answer the following questions.

1. Can Drama in Education be applied in an online classroom?

2. What are the potential benefits and challenges Drama in Education can have in online learning?
3. How do learners perceive the use of Drama in Education in online mode for second language teaching?
4. What is the perception of learners' parents on using Drama in Education in online mode for second language teaching?

## 1.4 Research Paradigm

Drama in Education is a field which equips students with multiple experiences. Therefore, it becomes crucial to collect data in more than one way. To comprehensively understand the application and utility of Drama in Education, we used a mixed method of data collection. We followed the quantitative data collection method to understand the method's efficacy in grammar teaching and students' growth in using grammatical concepts. However, the experience was entirely new for students, and I, as a facilitator, also had an enriching experience. Therefore, we used observation and field notes as a tool to collect qualitative data to analyze the process in detail. Notably, observation and field notes are influenced by my reflective practice as a facilitator. Data collected through quantitative methods, as well as observation and field notes helped us understand the efficacy, potential applications and challenges of implementing the process drama in an L2 classroom.

Additionally, to understand the use of DIE online for L2 teaching, we employed qualitative methods using semi-structured interviews and a reflective journal as tools for data collection. Therefore, the research paradigm for physical classroom experiments is both positivist and interpretivist, and the research paradigm for online experiment is interpretivist.

## 1.5 Context for the Research

We conducted three case studies to address our research questions. Due to the pandemic, the first case study could be conducted in online mode, since lockdown was imposed and schools and formal education shifted to online teaching. Online mode was the only option for us to conduct classes; therefore, we adapted our framework accordingly. This context has become our first case study, gathering students from various regions of India, resulting in a heterogeneous and multicultural cohort. Despite differences in mother tongue, students were already learning English as a second language in their respective schools. The students were exposed to learning through online channels. However, they were never exposed to drama activities online. In this case study, we examined the application of process drama for teaching English language skills, including grammar, using two applications- Zoom and WhatsApp. Further details about the online study have been provided in the fourth chapter.

The other two case studies were conducted in a traditional, physical setting, involving middle school students from two different schools belonging to two different parts of India. The second case study was situated in Chhattisgarh, a central Indian state, within a rural school operated by the central government. Here, students speak Chhattisgarhi as their mother tongue and learn English as their second language. Similarly, the third case study took place in Bihar, an eastern Indian state, within a rural school administered by the central government. Here, the students speak Bhojpuri as their mother tongue and learn English as their second language.

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

The study holds significance in the context of second language teaching for Language educators, curriculum designers, policymakers and software developers. It attempts to provide

an alternative to the traditional method of English grammar teaching. This study adds to the continuing conversation on creative and efficient teaching strategies by demonstrating the practicality of using drama as a teaching practice for grammar instruction in second languages. The L2 teaching practitioners can utilize the method to make their classes alive, engaging and enjoyable. Moreover, the study provides a framework for developing process drama-based lesson plans to teach English as a second language. This framework will aid teachers in structuring their sessions and optimally implementing the practice. It provides evidence-based insights to curriculum designers, empowering them to create curricula that embrace creative and captivating methods of teaching grammar in a second language while simultaneously meeting the needs of various educational contexts. It offers crucial insights for creating well-informed educational strategies by illuminating the efficacy of drama in the instruction of L2 grammar. Policymakers can use these results to strategically design teacher training programs and allocate funds for infrastructure that helps integrate drama into language curricula. The study also supports programs that help language teachers advance their careers and give them the skills they need to effectively teach drama-based lessons. Moreover, investigating drama within an online environment provides valuable perspectives for policies that embrace technology in language instruction. Developers can leverage the research to design adaptable tools that cater to diverse educational settings, fostering interactive and engaging features.

## 1.7 Relevance to National Education Policy 2020

The integration of art in many forms, including visual and performing arts, is a key focus of the National Education Policy 2020, Ministry of Human Resources Development (Now Ministry of Education), Government of India (2020). Art-integrated learning is an educational

approach that facilitates experiential learning, leading to an enhanced understanding of concepts and the cultivation of critical thinking and creativity (CBSE, 2019). This approach offers students experiential and enjoyable learning experiences by emphasizing meaningful connections between arts knowledge and other subjects (National Steering Committee for National Curriculum Frameworks, 2023). In addition, the National Education Policy 2020 has explicitly promoted the extensive use of experiential learning and the incorporation of art across several academic fields as a pedagogical approach (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020). Process drama encompasses a range of artistic mediums as pedagogical approaches to accommodate the requirements of a wide array of learners. The primary emphasis of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 (NCFSE 2023) lies in the process rather than the end result. Hence, this study using process drama effectively addresses the requirement outlined in the policy paper, which emphasizes that the process, rather than the outcome, holds paramount importance in the acquisition of artistic and linguistic knowledge.

The objective of the thesis is in accordance with the vision of NCFSE 2023, which emphasizes the development of learners into individuals who possess a comprehensive range of skills, good health, ethical values, creativity, rationality, compassion, and care. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 in India emphasizes the adoption of pedagogical approaches that prioritise experiential learning, integration, inquiry-driven learning, discovery-oriented learning, discussion-based learning, project-based learning, arts-based learning, sports-based learning, and activity-based learning. Implementing such pedagogy is expected to yield enhanced effectiveness and increased engagement and enjoyment in learning. Moreover, the use of Drama in Education nurtures the learners' innate inquisitiveness to

actively participate in the social and practical realms. Given its foundation in the aforementioned pedagogical approaches, Drama in Education assumes a position of utmost significance within the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023.

The significance of the NCFSE 2023 is emphasised by its assertion that in order for information to be dynamic and engaging rather than passive and stagnant, children must approach knowledge with a sense of curiosity and wonder (National Steering Committee for National Curriculum Frameworks 2023). Middle childhood learners focus on developing their analytical and logical skills in relation to words and grammar (The National Steering Committee for National Curriculum Frameworks, 2023). Instructors should strive to enhance their ability to recognise fundamental linguistic elements, such as words and sentence structure, and encourage them to apply them in oral and written expressions. Furthermore, the provided information should contribute to the enhancement of both fluency and accuracy in the target language. In order to improve language proficiency in reading, speaking, and writing, it is crucial that linguistic elements such as punctuation marks, gender usage, sentence structures, and tenses are readily recognised in the material. Therefore, incorporating Drama in Education along with explicit grammar teaching capitalises on the points mentioned above in the paper and would facilitate the cultivation of learners' intricate grammar skills.

The educational significance of establishing frameworks for Art Education that prioritise artistic processes, including imagination, creativity, production, performance/presentation, response, review, and finding connections, has been acknowledged by art curricula worldwide. This ensures that educators and learners concentrate on all facets of growth (cognitive, affective, psychomotor, socio-emotional, and language) while acquiring artistic skills.

Hence, the current study holds significant relevance within the framework provided by the NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023, advocating for the integration of drama and arts into education to facilitate holistic learning experiences and skill development.

## 1.8 Outline of the Thesis

This work is divided into six chapters. Chapter I is the introduction to the thesis. It starts with a rationale and background of the study. The chapter also presents theoretical bases, articulating the fundamental concepts and principles that frame the study's context. It clearly outlines the aim and objectives of the study and highlights the significance of the research work in the context of language teaching and National Education Policy 2020.

Chapter II synthesizes the relevant literature published in the twenty-first century, preceded by an overview of the development of Drama in Education for second language teaching in the twentieth century.

Chapter III provides a framework for developing lesson plans to conduct DIE session in L2 teaching. The chapter also presents the lesson plans for teaching English tenses and parts of speech.

Chapter IV presents a study investigating online DIE for L2 learning, implementing a fifteen-day program via Zoom and WhatsApp. Qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, highlighted positive learner and parent perceptions, demonstrating the viability of online DIE. Despite the success, challenges for both facilitators and students in virtual sessions were acknowledged.

Chapter V of the thesis examines two case studies, which serve as the second and third case studies within the thesis. The second case study assessed the efficacy of Drama in Education

in teaching English tenses to Chhattisgarhi-speaking middle school students in east-central India. A sixteen-session workshop demonstrated improved tense understanding, as evidenced by a significant pretest-posttest difference. Observation and field notes underscored heightened student participation and enthusiasm for DIE. The third case study explored process drama's effectiveness in teaching English parts of speech to middle students in eastern India. By employing a quasi-experimental design, the study showcased significant growth in the treatment group compared to traditional methods. Observation and field notes revealed learners' positive reception to process drama-based pedagogy.

Chapter VI presents a concise overview of the key empirical findings and summarizes the key findings from the study. The conclusion chapter provides insights for educators, researchers, policymakers and software developers to bring efficacy in second language teaching and learning through adapting and developing the Drama in Education.