Bilingualism in a Plurilingual Canada Podcast Series

Process Drama in the Core French Classroom: Using Global Simulation, by Joseph Dicks

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Summary
Joseph Dicks talks about process drama, an approach teachers can use in the classroom to engage their students in highly interactive, imaginative, language rich, and student-centered activities. In particular, Joseph gives a step-by-step guide for using a particular kind of process drama called global simulation.

Facts
• In French second language, students’ lack of ability to communicate and their perception that tasks are difficult are factors that negatively affect attitudes and enrolment in French classes. Positive attitudes and high levels of motivation have been observed in FSL programs where students are actively engaged in interesting activities.
• Process drama is an approach teachers can use that has been demonstrated to have a positive effect on motivation in first language classrooms.
• The essence of process drama is that students are engaged in a cooperative activity wherein they create their own fictitious context, identities and scenarios. Students do not need essentially to perform for an external audience but they do need to perform among themselves - an internal audience. The underlying principles of process drama are play and make believe, learning in context, ownership of learning, and use of signs and metaphors to communicate and interpret meaning.
• A certain type of process drama you can use is global simulation. In global simulation, participants create a universe (e.g., a village, a hotel, an apartment building, a summer camp) where they make believe in order to create and bring to life various characters and events.
The steps involved in a global simulation are as follows:

1. **Present the concept of a global simulation**: First, explain to your students that they will be creating a place. They will identify the place and describe people who live in that place, and they will create activities and events that happen there. They will role-play situations that occur there and film some of the role-plays.

2. **Identify a theme/context for the simulation**: You must then guide your students in a brainstorming of various possibilities for the place, as well as relevant themes and topics.

3. **Identify and describe activities**: Once the place is identified, help your students identify activities that could take place there (e.g., swimming, painting, video arcade, basketball, chess, and movies) and services that might be offered (e.g., restaurant, hair salon, library, health centre, driver education).

4. **Design the physical space**: The entire simulation can take place in the classroom or other rooms in the school can be used (e.g., gymnasium, theatre, cafeteria, entrance ways). Your students will decide what the various rooms will be, where they will be located, and what services/activities will take place in those rooms.

5. **Identify people and create identities**: Have each participant choose a character and create a portrait that includes both physical characteristics and personal likes, dislikes and disposition.

6. **Create scenarios and dialogues**: Have participants then create situations and dialogues that might occur between/among the characters.

7. **Act out scenarios using signs and dramatic techniques**: Your students can use simple costumes, objects, sounds, gestures, images and dramatic techniques to act out their scenarios. Some of these techniques are: Choral Speak, Masks, Mimed Activity, and Still Image.

8. **Film the role plays**: Your students can practice their role plays often but you should film them only once using a digital camera. A story-board that simply lays out each scene, the position of the camera, what is happening, who says what, and what sound or other effects are needed is very helpful in planning the film shoot. You can show the recorded performances in class, share it with other classes, or even do a screening for parents.

**Further Reading**


