Teaching ancient Greek Theatre in Secondary School

Submitted by Christina Gkatzioli to the University of Exeter
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Christina Gkatzioli
Abstract

Teaching ancient Greek Theatre in Secondary School

This dissertation starts by examining how ancient Greek Drama can be introduced in secondary school. A first look is taken at the history of theatre and drama as an educational subject up to the present day. Specific mention is given to the controversy between drama and theatre in the 1990s, and how it affected the progression and significance of the subjects in the curriculum. In addition, a re-examination takes place regarding theatre’s significance in adolescent development. The latter possesses several aspects that bear much poignancy and importance for the investigation which follows. The main concern of the research was to raise certain questions that will allow students to engage effectively in ancient Greek Drama whilst considering the historic-political background of the art, its form and its possible relevance to our times. The idea was that through providing a wider perspective, students would be able to reflect and form a clearer view of the subject. To explore and investigate these aims, an action research project was undertaken. The enquiry was driven by three main research questions that tackled the above concerns. Three projects were implemented in the same secondary school on the study of an ancient Greek play. The first two consisted of class work on the play Medea, whilst the third also included the attendance of students at a performance of Iphigenia at Aulis, directed by Katie Mitchell at the National Theatre in London.

Analysis of the data collected revealed that the three projects allowed active participation, reflection and a first engagement for students with this historical theatre form. At the same time weaknesses are revealed and certain areas proved to be dysfunctional or impractical. The discussion, situated in the last chapter, tries to review the structure of the research and to identify the elements that could have been improved. As a result, recommendations are listed to revisit fundamental questions that were raised at the beginning of the research. A change of focus is recommended to embrace the issue of why English students should engage with the art form and in which ways they can benefit best. In the light of these results, school conditions are taken into consideration in a discussion of new research methods and further practice.
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