Moving toward Language Acquisition: A Case Study Adapting and Applying Laban Movement Analysis in the International English as an Additional Language Classroom

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Abstract : The purpose of this research project is to understand how focusing on movement can help English language learners acquire better reading, writing, and speaking skills. More specifically, this case study tests how Laban movement analysis, a tool often used in dance and physical education classes, contributes to advanced-level high school students' English language acquisition at an international Swiss boarding school. This article shares theoretical bases for and findings from a teaching experiment in which LMA categories (body, effort, space, and shape) were adapted and introduced to students to encourage basic language acquisition and also cultural awareness and sensitivity. As part of the participatory action research process, data collection included pseudonym-protected questionnaires and written/video-taped responses to LMA language and task prompts. Responses from 43 participants were evaluated to determine the efficacy of using this system. Participants (ages 16-19) were enrolled in advanced English as an Additional Language (EAL) courses at a private, co-educational Swiss international boarding school. Final data analysis revealed that drawing attention to movement using LMA language as a stimulus creates better self-awareness and understanding/retention of key literary concepts and vocabulary but does not necessarily contribute to greater cultural sensitivity or eliminate the use of problematic (sexist, racist, or classist) language. Possibilities for future exploration and development are also explored.

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