Advanced English: Theater Theme-Based Language Course

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This course is meant for students of the advanced C1 and C2 levels. Theme-based language classes aim at developing written and oral skills through the study of a specific topic.

Course Objectives

This is a 12-week course that uses theatre as a way of deepening understanding and use of the English language.

The three main objectives of this course are:

- To equip students with basic acting techniques in order to perform scenes from the play and also to strengthen oral expression.
- To improve specific areas of oral expression such as intonation/word stress/pronunciation through scene work with a text which highlights their importance.
- To explore both through performance and textual analysis one of Harold Pinter’s most well-known plays; Betrayal.

Course Description

The course will begin by looking at a number of scenes from modern British playwrights. We will look at some of the techniques used by actors when preparing a role and then determine a character’s objective through looking at what actions (verbs) they are using in each scene. In addition we’ll explore the following three questions in relation to the characters: who wants what from whom? What happens if they don’t get it? Why now?

Students will then be given a scene and asked to perform it in three different ways, demonstrating the effect changing the action has on the play and the audience.

We will then move on to explore Betrayal by Harold Pinter, a British play written in the 1970’s.

Students will again be given the opportunity to perform scenes with a partner using various techniques. Students will also research the historical context of the play as well as listen to interviews with Pinter talking about the play. From there we will delve into the themes of the play and discuss to what extent it is still relevant today.
In the final week, there will be an opportunity for students to perform scenes from the play to the rest of the class.

Organization

Activities will cover the four language skills:

- **Speaking**: scene work from modern British playwrights and *Betrayal* by Harold Pinter as well as presentations on either a theme of the play or a comparison with a French play of the same era/theme.
- **Writing**: a discursive essay looking at the themes of the play and discussing which are still relevant to theatre audiences today.
- **Listening**: comprehension and discussion activities based on extracts from the original film of *Betrayal* from the 1980’s. Interviews with Pinter and actors who have worked with Pinter.
- **Reading**: research around the play including; the playwright himself and his style and in what ways *Betrayal* is typical of Pinter’s style and how on the other hand it was seen as marking a change in his writing. Research into the historical context of the play (1970’s London) as well as into themes of gender roles and social class which we see depicted in the world of the play.