
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Teaching Drama in Moroccan Higher Education: Examining the Disparity between Curriculum Intentions and Pedagogical Practices: The Case of Moulay Ismail University

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| ABSTRACT

The present study examined the significant disparity between curricular intentions and pedagogical practices in drama education at Moulay Ismail University in Morocco. This research uncovered a substantial gap between the designed curriculum and its practical implementation through a comprehensive analysis of official course descriptions and systematic classroom observation. The findings revealed that while course documents demonstrate thoughtfully articulated objectives and genre-specific considerations, actual classroom practices remain largely tied to traditional teaching methods, hampered by various infrastructural and pedagogical challenges. The research identified critical areas requiring intervention at different levels, especially curriculum design, resource allocation and teacher professional development, particularly in professional development. These findings contributed significantly to our understanding of implementation challenges in specialized educational programs and provided practical recommendations for improving drama education delivery in higher education. The study's implications extended beyond Moulay Ismail University, offering valuable insights for other departments of English nationwide facing comparable challenges in drama education implementation.

| KEYWORDS

Teaching Drama; Higher Education; curriculum; Pedagogy; Andragogy

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1.Introduction

Literature education at the tertiary level in Morocco is facing tremendous challenges. The decline in student enrollment rates, lower student engagement, and diminishing interest in reading habits are key characteristics of literature classes today. The state of English literature and its teaching in Moroccan universities is alarming. As Ben Fares (2023 , p. 1) notes, "The gap between students and literature is widening. The malaise is obvious. Some students no longer know how to approach literary texts. They lack clear strategies for reading, understanding, and critiquing a text. Moreover, a sense of the purpose of literary activity is also missing. Why read novels, plays, and poems? What is the purpose of it all?"

Undoubtedly, various factors contribute to this situation. Socioeconomic shifts that impact job markets and employability, the influence of a technologically globalized world on students' lifestyles, and the limitations facing educational systems are but a few. In an attempt to enrich the discussion on current literature education and contribute insights to the debate on the teaching of literature in Moroccan English departments, this paper will examine the teaching and learning process of drama as an academic subject. This endeavor will be implemented through an in-depth analysis of the drama course description issued by Moulay Ismail

University, as well as class observations that aim to examine how closely the intended curriculum aligns with current teaching practices in drama classes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 On defining drama

Drama, as a literary and performative art form, has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate, with numerous definitions offered over the centuries. Critics and scholars have approached drama from various perspectives, leading to a lack of consensus on a single, definitive explanation. Esslin (1987), a prominent theatre theorist, defines drama as a form of storytelling that is enacted through performance, emphasizing its live and communal nature. Similarly, Styan (1960), in his seminal work *The Elements of Drama*, highlights the interplay between text and performance, arguing that drama exists in the tension between the written script and its realization on stage. These differing viewpoints underscore the complexity of drama as both a literary and performative medium, reflecting its multifaceted nature.

Despite the diversity of definitions, the Aristotelian view remains one of the most influential frameworks for understanding drama. Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, defines drama as an imitation of action (mimesis) that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude (Hörcher, 2017) and identifies key elements such as plot, character, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle, with the plot being the most critical component. According to Aristotle, drama is not merely a reflection of reality but a structured representation that evokes emotional and intellectual responses from the audience (Mazur (2020)). This classical perspective has shaped much of Western dramatic theory, providing a foundation for subsequent analyses of the genre.

However, the Aristotelian view has not gone unchallenged. Modern and postmodern theorists have expanded or critiqued Aristotle's framework, arguing that it prioritizes certain types of drama (particularly tragedy) while marginalizing others, such as comedy or experimental forms. For instance, Bertolt Brecht's concept of epic theatre rejects the idea of drama as a mere imitation of reality, instead advocating for a form of theatre that provokes critical thinking and social change (Curran, 2001). Similarly, poststructuralist critics have questioned the fixed boundaries of drama, emphasizing its fluidity and adaptability across cultures and historical periods. These critiques highlight the evolving nature of drama as a dynamic and contested field of study.

In brief, the definition of drama remains elusive, shaped by the diverse perspectives of critics, scholars, and practitioners. While the Aristotelian view provides a foundational understanding of drama as a structured imitation of action, it is only one of many lenses through which the genre can be examined. The contributions of figures like Esslin (1987), Styan (1960), Brecht (1994), and others demonstrate the richness and complexity of drama as both a literary and performative art form. As such, any attempt to define drama must acknowledge its historical, cultural, and theoretical diversity, recognizing that its essence lies in its ability to transcend rigid categorizations and continually reinvent itself. These varied approaches highlight drama's multifaceted nature as both a literary and performative medium, reflecting its ability to transcend rigid categorizations.

2.2 The Importance of Drama in the EFL Context

Literature, including drama, plays a significant role in the language teaching /learning process. A substantial body of research has been conducted on the benefits of literature education worldwide (Carter & Long, 1991; Dewi & Asrifan, 2024; Habib, 1994; Keshta, 2000; Carter and McRae, 2001; Showalter, 2003). Literature in the language classroom has been shown to enhance students' language skills and promote cross-cultural understanding (Collie and Slater, 1987; Carter and Long, 1991). For example, Vethamani (2004, as cited in Du, 2022) highlights the significant role of literature in enhancing language skills, particularly reading comprehension. Similarly, Rachid, Vethamani, and Rahman (as cited in Du, 2022) stress that exposing students to diverse literary genres can strengthen and promote various aspects of development including linguistic, cultural, and personal growth. Furthermore, literature education contributes to students' personal development by equipping them with life skills such as critical thinking, emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-reflection (Sage, 1987). As Du (2022, p. 254) notes, "The reading of literary texts extends beyond linguistic development, offering students a deeper understanding of human experiences and emotions." This highlights the multifaceted value of literature in education. It emphasizes that literary texts are not merely tools for linguistic improvement but also function as a vehicle for fostering empathy, cultural awareness, and critical thinking, making them invaluable resources in language learning and beyond.

While all literary forms offer valuable contributions, drama stands out due to its unique characteristics and benefits. One of the most significant advantages of drama is its ability to provide insights into human experience and condition. Through drama, students gain a deeper understanding of human behavior, emotions, and social issues (Hirsch, 1965). Additionally, drama promotes cultural and intellectual development by requiring readers to visualize and imagine the action, thereby enhancing their interpretive skills. Drama serves as a window into cultural and historical contexts, as plays often reflect the historical, cultural, and socio-political conditions in which they were written (Azeez et.al 2024). Moreover, engaging with dramatic texts fosters an appreciation for the literary and aesthetic aspects of theater, enriching students' understanding of both literature and performance. For combining reading with theatre creates multisensory, imaginative experiences that help reluctant readers comprehend, visualize, and enjoy literature (Brinda, 2008).

In the context of language learning, drama offers specific rewards that extend across multiple dimensions. Firstly, it enhances students' reading skills by encouraging them to interpret and analyze complex texts. Secondly, it improves listening skills through exposure to authentic dialogues and varied speech patterns. Thirdly, drama promotes speaking skills by providing opportunities for oral expression and fluency. Fourthly, it helps students develop non-verbal communication skills, such as interpreting body language, gestures, and facial expressions. Finally, drama enhances pragmatic competence by teaching students how language is used in context, including tone, intonation, and implied meaning (Bataineh, 2014). These multifaceted benefits make drama an invaluable tool in the EFL classroom.

The pedagogical value of drama is further underscored by its ability to foster critical thinking ability, much like prose and poetry (Febriani, Rohayati, & Syafryadin, 2024), creativity and emotional engagement. Teaching dramatic texts has been shown to positively impact students' literary skills, imagination, and appreciation for the arts (Lee et al., 2020). Additionally, drama improves students' oral skills, pronunciation, confidence, and non-verbal communication (Lazar, 1993). As Chougule (2015, p. 88) points out "Teaching drama motivates students to think independently and to enjoy the emotions and feelings that the play arouses". Abraham (2018, p. 138) highlights the aesthetic, intellectual, and emotional pleasure that drama provides, arguing that playwrights use creative and emotive language to express their vision of human experience, which in turn motivates students to engage with the language in a more meaningful way. Similarly, Obediat (1997, p. 32) contends that "drama helps students acquire native-like competence in English, express ideas effectively, and develop proficiency, creativity, and critical thinking skills". This highlights the multifaceted benefits of drama in language learning. By engaging in drama, students not only enhance their English proficiency to near-native levels but also cultivate effective communication, creativity, and critical thinking, making it a powerful tool for holistic language development.

In conclusion, drama holds a unique and vital place in the EFL context. Its ability to enhance language skills, promote cultural and historical understanding, and foster personal and intellectual growth makes it an indispensable tool for language educators. By integrating drama into the curriculum, teachers can provide students with a rich and engaging learning experience that goes beyond traditional language instruction. As research and practice continue to demonstrate, drama not only enriches students' linguistic abilities but also nurtures their creativity, empathy, and critical thinking, preparing them for both academic and personal success.

2.3 The Complexity of Dramatic Works

Reading and engaging with dramatic works present enormous challenges for both teachers and students. It is widely acknowledged that reading plays is not an easy task. As a distinctive literary genre, plays are written and crafted differently from other forms of literature. Leach (2013, p. 24) highlights this point, stating that "conventionally, the play text is set out on the page in a way which may not be particularly accessible to the general reader." This unique structure distinguishes dramatic texts from novels or poetry, making them more challenging to interpret and analyze.

One of the primary reasons for this complexity is the dual nature of dramatic texts. Unlike novels or poems, plays are not solely written to be read; they are also designed to be performed. As Bassnett (1991, p. 111) explains, dramatic texts "cannot be considered as identical to texts written to be read because the process of writing involves the performance dimension." This duality means that dramatic texts exist in a dialectical relationship with their performance, as they are "incomplete or partially realized" (Bassnett, 1991, p. 99). They are often described as "fragmentary" (Bassnett, 1991, p. 103) and "troué" according to Anne Ubersfeld, who argues that a dramatic text displays signs of "perfonnability", or a potential for performance emphasizing their reliance on performance to achieve full meaning. (cited in Pistotnik (1985)). Martineau (1974, p. 58) eloquently captures this idea of incompleteness, stating that "Poetry and the novel are self-contained literary forms whose richness is contained conveniently within the covers of a single book. Not so the play: the book is one half; the stage processes the other; the two halves should not be separated..."

In line with this, Mateo (1995:21) explains this dual nature of dramatic texts as both written works and performance scripts arguing that "drama texts are not only made up of linguistic elements but show a double nature as both literary texts and performance scripts. Therefore, they incorporate a variety of non-verbal signs, such as gestures, actors' movements, postures, costumes, and lighting, all of which contribute significantly to meaning-making (Mateo, 1995). Kowzan (in Bobes, 1987, cited in Mateo, 2010, p. 21) further elaborates on this by identifying 13 types of signs that constitute a dramatic text—namely, the spoken word; tone; bodily expression; gestures; movements; make-up; hair-style; costumes; props; scenery; lighting; music; and sound. These elements highlight the multifaceted nature of drama, which relies on both verbal and non-verbal components to convey its full meaning.

Another source of difficulty in reading plays lies in the intricate relationship between the dialogue and the extra-linguistic context. As Mateo (2010) notes, "the language of the text is closely linked to all these kinesics, visual, and aural elements that are present and constitute the dramatic situation." This interplay between dialogue and performance elements means that readers must imagine the visual and auditory aspects of the play, which are not explicitly described in the text. For example, in Shakespeare's works, the words are not merely records of dialogue but are deeply intertwined with the physical and sensory elements of performance. The same point was made by Zuber (1984, p. 5) who pointed out that drama "does not only exist as a literary work of art expressed in written language and to be appreciated through reading, thinking and discussing; but drama lives in its theatre performance, the total experience expressed in oral and non-verbal language and appreciated by all physical senses

as well as the intellect and emotions" (cited in (Mateo, 1995, p. 24)). This complexity requires readers to engage more actively with the text, making the process of reading plays more demanding than that of reading novels or poetry.

All in all, the complexity of dramatic works stems from their dual nature as both written texts and performance scripts. Unlike self-contained literary forms such as poetry and novels, plays rely heavily on performance elements to achieve their full meaning. This reliance on non-verbal signs, combined with the intricate relationship between dialogue and context, makes reading and interpreting play a challenging yet rewarding endeavor. By understanding these unique characteristics, students can better appreciate the richness of dramatic texts and develop strategies to engage with them more effectively.

2.4 Teaching drama

The use of drama in the classroom, whether as a teaching method or a subject of study, is not recent. In fact, within the context of compulsory education all over the world, its history extends back more than a century (Franks & Bryer, 2019). Integrating drama into English language and literature departments has proven to be highly beneficial for students in numerous ways. While drama shares many advantages with other literary forms, its unique characteristics allow it to offer opportunities that go beyond what other genres can provide.

The teaching of drama in different educational settings, especially in English as a foreign language (EFL) context, "has not been seriously investigated" (Gorjian, Moosavinia, & Jabripour, 2010, p. 1). Traditionally, "many high school students and college literature classes include plays" (Brown, 2000, p. 3). Nevertheless, most teachers, influenced by the New Criticism approach in which they were trained, tend to treat drama in the same way they approach other literary forms, such as novels and poems. These teachers, often uncertain about how to address genre-specific problems (Brown, 2000, p. 3), typically teach drama in English classes by surveying the content, discussing the author, and analyzing the characteristics of the play, such as its characters and plot (Gorjian, Moosavinia, & Jabripour, *Dramatic performance in teaching drama in EFL contexts*, 2010, p. 1).

This approach to teaching drama has long been supported by drama teachers, critics, and scholars who argue that the real potential of drama lies in the literary aspects embedded in the dramatic texts. Elements such as poetic language, imagery, style, and metaphor are often highlighted as key devices and conventions. Figures like Strindberg, Eugene O'Neill, Goethe, Coleridge, Charles Lamb, and William Hazlitt, among others, have emphasized these aspects. Even Aristotle, the founding father of Western dramatic theory, "expresses low opinions of fourth century acting and stage presentation" (Redmond, 1991) cited in (Scolnicov & Holland, 1991, p. 71).

While this literary-textual approach has its merits-helping students appreciate the beauty of language, universal themes, and other literary qualities-it has also faced significant criticism. Opponents argue that drama is not merely literature and that plays are not written to be read but rather to be performed on stage. Treating drama solely as literature, they contend, undermines its essence. Boulton (1968, p. 3) contends that "there is an enormous difference between a play and any other form of literature. A play is not really a piece of literature for reading. It is the literature that walks and talks before our eyes". He further explains that the text of a play is meant to be translated into a physical and visual experience on stage (Gorjian, Moosavinia, & Jabripour, *Dramatic performance in teaching drama in EFL contexts*, 2010, p. 2)

More than that, Nardin (1965) warned that this approach to drama texts was fundamentally flawed. He argued that treating a play as a piece of literature designed to be read and analyzed in isolation "ignores the elements that make a play distinctive". He even goes further to claim that "it turns all plays into closet drama. And to make Hamlet, Hedda Gabler, or Oedipus Rex a closet drama is disastrous both critically and pedagogically". That is, by reducing plays to a "closet drama" (a term traditionally used to describe plays written to be read rather than performed), we might lose sight of what makes drama a distinct art form. Therefore, performance approaches to the teaching of plays can painlessly help students discover the complexities of this art form. This point is made clear by Nardin (1965, p. 593) pointing out that :

When the student picks up a play with speeches and character names and little else, he finds himself far more on his own than he is in the novel, where the author is in general more explicit in telling him what he is seeing and what he is hearing than the playwright is. The student who 'can't read a play' often tells us he 'can't keep the characters straight.' If you can put him in the theatre and expose him to the same text, he has no such trouble, for he has different persons and different voices to help him keep them straight.

This quote highlights the challenge of approaching plays compared to novels. Plays lack the descriptive guidance authors often provide in prose. Students may struggle to visualize characters and scenes, but experiencing the play in a theatrical setting resolves this issue by bringing the text to life through performance, voices, and visual cues. It in fact highlights the importance of combining textual study with live theatre to fully appreciate and understand dramatic works.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study adopted an "ex post facto research design, which allows for the exploration of existing conditions rather than causal relationships. It utilized a qualitative method, combining document analysis, class observation and teachers' interviews to collect

data and provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Triangulation was emphasized to enhance the reliability of the findings.

3.2 Research sample

The study sample consists of two experienced drama teachers who participated in both classroom observations and follow-up interviews. Both teachers were selected based on their substantial experience in drama education, with each having more than five years of teaching practice in the field. The sample includes one female and one male teacher, providing perspectives from both genders. These participants were observed in their respective classrooms to examine their implementation of the drama curriculum and subsequently interviewed to gain deeper insight into their instructional choices and decision-making processes. This dual approach of observation and interview with the same participants allows for a comprehensive understanding of not only what teaching practices are employed but also the rationale for such pedagogical choices. The extensive teaching experience of both participants adds particular value to the study, as it ensures that their insights stem from a well-developed understanding of drama education and its practical implementation challenges.

3.3 Data collection instruments

3.3.1 Document Analysis

Document analysis was deployed in this study in conjunction with other qualitative research methods to provide a more complete picture of the research problem. It focused on analyzing the drama course description of the School of Arts and Humanities, University of Moulay Ismail. It aimed to get insights that are relevant to the study.

3.3.2 Classroom Observation

Classroom observation in this study served as the primary data collection tool to evaluate the extent to which teachers adhere to and implement the guidelines outlined in the official course description. To systematically assess this alignment, an observation grid was designed. It specifically addressed the six key components included in the course description, enabling a structured and comprehensive analysis of classroom practices in relation to the prescribed instructional framework.

3.3.3 The interview

Two teachers of drama were asked to sit for a semi-structured interview to gather data pertaining to their experience and perceptions about this module. It sought to obtain in-depth insights into the various challenges and obstacles teachers encounter during the implementation of the drama curriculum as outlined in the official course description. Through these interviews, we aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of how teachers navigate between curricular requirements and classroom realities while uncovering which components of the curriculum they successfully incorporate and which aspects they find challenging to implement. This qualitative approach allows teachers to articulate their experiences, concerns, and decision-making processes, providing valuable perspectives on the practical realities of translating curricular guidelines into classroom instruction.

4. Findings and discussion

To investigate how drama education is approached in the English department at the School of Arts and Humanities, University of Moulay Ismail, data obtained from document analysis, class observation and a semi-structured teachers' interview. Therefore, a systematic examination and detailed analysis of the drama course description adopted in this department has been implemented and the findings were then juxtaposed with observational data to compare and evaluate the degree of alignment between the prescribed curriculum and current instructional practices. In addition, insights from teachers' interviews shed more light on the issues raised.

This comparative approach not only helps identify the potential gap between the planned curriculum and the delivered or implemented one. The analysis and in-depth discussion in the present study revolve around the following six areas specified in the course description, namely the module objectives, the pedagogical prerequisites, the time allocated, the course contents, the teaching methods, the students' role and the assessment techniques.

4.1 Module objectives

Module Title: Classical & Modern Drama Module Type: disciplinary Semester: Semester 6 Department: English Studies Institution: Faculty of Arts and Humanities
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Following the introductory chart where some generalities and background information are presented such as the name of the module, its nature, the semester where this module is introduced, the department which hosts this module and the institution to

which that department belongs, the course description provides an outline of the course objectives. These objectives, which are in fact learning objectives, comprise seven elements as indicated below.

1. The course is designed as a humanities elective course for students of the language and literature department. It introduces the students to a spectrum of theatrical experiences and plays, preparing them for an informed and lively engagement with the art of modern and classical drama.
2. A study of selected major British and American movements in theatre from Modern and Classical Drama.
3. This course introduces students to drama as one of the dominant literary genres in both ancient and modern worlds.
4. Its primary goal is to help students identify elements of drama as a literary genre and be acquainted with the history and tradition of modern drama.
5. This course allows students to analyze and explore intellectual, social and religious issues relevant to the understanding of modern drama, of classical ages and contemporary times.
6. It is a widespread challenge to long-established rules surrounding theatrical representation resulting in the development of many new forms of theatre, including modernism, Expressionism, political theatre and other forms of Experimental theatre, as well as the continuing development of already established theatrical forms like naturalism and realism.
7. Students should be able to understand the relationship of theatre to the social, environmental and political realities of the period known as Classical or Modern Drama

A close examination of the drama course objectives reveals a number of merits and limitations. Designed within humanities modules for language and literature students, the course immerses students in a variety of plays and theatrical experiences. The primary merit lies in its focus on studying influential British and American theatrical movements from specific time periods, emphasizing selected themes to prepare students for active engagement with classical and modern drama. Further, it clarifies that the course helps students identify elements of drama as a literary genre, familiarize them with the history and tradition of modern drama, and engage in intellectual analysis of social and religious issues relevant to understanding dramatic works across historical periods. More importantly, it emphasizes understanding drama within its sociopolitical contexts, enabling students to appreciate how theatrical forms reflect or challenge their contemporary circumstances.

By encouraging an interdisciplinary approach that connects drama with broader intellectual, social, and religious contexts, and fosters critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the interplay between art and society, the course becomes more engaging and applicable to contemporary times and students' lives. Put simply, connecting theatre to real-world realities makes the course more meaningful and encourages students to see drama as a reflection of and response to societal challenges.

However, several potential objectives for drama education seem overlooked. Additional objectives, such as developing practical theatre skills (e.g., acting, directing, stagecraft), fostering creative expression and promoting cultural awareness through dramatic works can help students enjoy and appreciate such an art. Simultaneously, incorporating social and emotional learning, emphasizing collaborative learning, engaging audiences, encouraging critical reflection, integrating technology, and enhancing performance analysis, could enrich the course.

Concisely, while these learning objectives seem ambitious, aiming to provide students with a deep understanding of drama as a literary genre and its historical and cultural contexts. However, the breadth of topics might challenge students, particularly those without prior exposure to drama or theatre studies. While the objectives emphasize critical analysis and historical awareness, they could benefit from including more practical, creative, or performance-based components to actively engage students in the art form. Balancing depth with breadth and theory with practice would strengthen the course's effectiveness.

4.2 Pre-requisites for studying the module

World Literature in Semester I Guided Reading in Semester II Introduction to Literature in Semester IV The 20th C. Novel in Semester. V
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The second component outlined in this course description relates to the pedagogical prerequisites. These prerequisites refer to the competencies and knowledge students should already possess to effectively engage with the module, comprehend its content, and follow the teacher's instruction.

The first of these pre-requisites concerns the World Literature module that the students should have already been exposed to during the first semester in the Bachelor program, through which students are exposed to various literary traditions. Second, the Guided Reading course in semester two is also the second requirement, which constitutes an opportunity for the students to develop critical and analytical skills that might be transferred to dramatic text analysis.

Furthermore, the Introduction to Literature module in semester four could serve as another opportunity, as it helps build a bridge to drama modules by equipping students with the literary knowledge, analytical skills, and contextual understanding necessary to engage deeply with dramatic texts. It prepares students to approach drama not just as a performance art but as a rich literary genre with its own conventions, history, and cultural significance. By building this foundation, students are better positioned to appreciate, analyze, and even create dramatic works. Finally, The 20th Century Novel module constitutes another opportunity for students to deepen and consolidate their understanding of modern narrative techniques, character development, plot structure and narrative perspective, which can be of great help in drama analysis.

However, although these prerequisites might be considered a solid foundation to help students successfully engage with the drama module, several observations, similar to those expressed by the interviewed teachers, can be made:

- In most of the modules, drama is not given as much attention as that received by other literary forms, such as short stories and novels. Drama has been neglected and in various Moroccan departments, it is not even taught at all.
- The literary aspect of drama is prioritized, and it appears that these prerequisites, which are literature-oriented in nature, may aid in understanding the literary dimensions of drama but offer limited assistance in grasping its theatrical or performative elements.
- Another important limitation or weakness in these specified prerequisites relates to the absence of any module dealing with arts education. It is true that drama is literature, yet it is an art and students who lack artistic and aesthetic competence cannot appreciate drama. So, it would have been better to integrate modules dealing with arts such as poetry, music, theatre, etc.

4.3 Time allocated

Module Component(s)	Lecture Hours	Tutorial Hours (TD)	Practical Hours (TP)	Practical Activities (Fieldwork, Projects, Internships, etc.)	Self-Study	Assessment	Total Hours
Hours	40h	-	-	-	8h	-	48h
Total Hours for the Module	40h	-	-	-	8h	-	48h
Percentage of Total Hours	83%	-	-	-	17%	-	100%

The third component relates to time allocation and distribution related to this drama module. The provided table exhibited the volume of hours devoted to lectures, tutorials (TD), practical exercises (TP), practical activities (such as projects, internships, etc) and students' independent work.

However, the analysis of this table shows a serious inconsistency between what is claimed and how it is distributed. First, it contains theoretical instruction and practical application. Second, it declares that 20% of the total time should be assigned to practical activities. i.e., 9,6 hours should be devoted to projects, self-study, performance, shows, films, etc.

In terms of distribution, however, it is evident that lectures dominate, accounting for 83% of the total course structure, while assessments make up only 17%. Notably, practical activities are entirely absent from this breakdown. Second, the eight hours devoted to assessment is something that has not taken place in reality. As shown in the assessment specifications two hours are devoted to the module final exam. So, the remaining five hours are effectively wasted. Finally, forty hours devoted to the study of four plays, with an average of ten hours per play, is far from being enough to understand fully the dramatic work.

4.4 Content description

Classical & modern drama

Designing 4 plays :

- 2 from British and/or American modern Drama
- 2 from English Classical Drama

The course content is structured around four plays, that equally belong to both classical and modern drama. For classical drama, Shakespeare's Othello and Lear's Daughter are chosen meanwhile Look Back in Anger and A View from the Bridge are selected in modern drama. In fact, the inclusion of both dramatic works that belong to classical and modern drama can help students gain a comprehensive historical perspective while remaining engaged with contemporary forms. This coverage of various dramatic forms helps students understand the dramatic evolution.

Similarly, the inclusion of both American and British drama helps students understand different cultural approaches to drama. However, as articulated by the two interviewees, this text selection seems to have a number of limitations worth examining. First, its exclusive focus on British and American dramatic traditions confines the course within the Western literary canon. As such other rich dramatic traditions from Africa, and Asia, for example, that have gained recognition for their theatrical heritage and innovative dramatic forms, are excluded. Second, there seems to be a potential lack of contemporary relevance. While the course covers modern and experimental theatre, it might not adequately incorporate the most recent advancements in the field, such as digital theatre, immersive performances, or post-dramatic theatre, which are currently reshaping the art form.

4.5 Teaching methods

Lecturing ; Practical activities ; Watching recorded performances
Public Speaking exercises

With respect to the teaching methods and instructional strategies, this course description demonstrates multi-model teaching and learning strategies. The combination of lectures, practical activities and watching recorded performances is promising as it can create an active and dynamic learning environment and cater to different learning styles. Approaching drama through these methods can account for the distinctive features of drama and its elements and aspects. More importantly, the integration of public speaking shows that students' role is no longer passive. Enhancing this skill can equip students with the competencies they need in their studies and their future, fostering deeper understanding, retention and involvement.

However, two major points were drawn from classroom observation data. First, although the document states that practical activities, public speaking and watching performances are part of the teaching practices, the amount of time allotted to this module displays no room for such activities. According to the interviewed teachers, such activities are entirely absent in the drama classroom, primarily because the teaching environment lacks the necessary opportunities or facilities to incorporate them. Second, while lecturing can be effective in delivering historical background and clarifying salient themes raised in the dramatic works, two drawbacks crop up. The first one is that lecturing limits students' engagement as they become mere recipients in front of a teacher imparting knowledge. The second pertains to reducing drama investigation to purely literary textual analysis rather than treating it as a living art form. Despite being aware of this issue, the interviewed teachers admitted they could do little to address it due to class size and time constraints.

Finally, although the course description invites teachers to integrate recorded performances, it has been observed that there is limited technology integration as such document does not specify how technology might be used to enhance dramatic analysis, production and performance. Additionally, teachers' limited access to technological facilities makes this mission impossible. To solve the problem, the following suggestions might be of great help to both teachers and students. Incorporating recorded performances and digital tools (e.g., video analysis software, and online platforms) to enhance dramatic analysis and engagement can be very rewarding. Second, the course description should explicitly outline how technology can be used, such as virtual performances, collaborative projects, or interactive discussions. Finally, providing training and resources for teachers on how to effectively use technology in drama instruction can ensure its smooth integration, enriching both production and performance aspects for students.

4.6 Assessment methods

Finally, the assessment structure presented for this drama course reveals a dual system comprising an end-of-semester exam and continuous assessment including quizzes, oral tests, assignments, presentations, reports and other assessment tools. However, while this framework provides some advantages, but still has a number of weaknesses and limitations. The advantage is that it

includes both summative and formative assessments. While the continuous assessment component allows both teachers and students to get immediate feedback about the teaching/learning process that can aim for improvement, the final exam ensures that the competencies targeted have been mastered.

This approach to assessment, however, has several notable limitations. First, continuous assessment is not implemented in the English departments. Further, there is a lack of exam specifications provided for the final exam, leaving students uninformed about its format, delivery, assessment criteria, and rubrics, which undermines the validity and reliability of the evaluation process. Additionally, traditional examination formats, such as essay writing analysis, fail to effectively assess students' understanding and appreciation of dramatic elements, particularly the performative aspects of drama. This highlights the need for alternative assessment methods that can more accurately capture the multifaceted nature of dramatic study and performance.

5. Implications and recommendations

The findings of this study highlight significant gaps between curricular intentions and classroom practices in drama higher education. To address these challenges and enhance the quality of drama education, the following recommendations are proposed:

● Re-evaluating the role of literature in education

The place of literature, particularly drama, should be reconsidered and given greater prominence within language departments at the university level. Furthermore, efforts should be made to integrate literature more effectively into secondary school curricula. This would ensure that students enter higher education with a foundational appreciation for literary and dramatic texts, fostering a smoother transition to university-level studies. By prioritizing literature at earlier educational stages, students can develop the necessary analytical and interpretive skills to engage meaningfully with dramatic works.

● Increasing exposure to dramatic texts throughout the BA program

To cultivate a deeper understanding and appreciation of drama, a greater number of plays should be assigned and studied across the duration of the BA program. This would provide students with sustained exposure to diverse dramatic genres, styles, and historical periods, enriching their literary and artistic competence. A well-structured progression of dramatic texts, from foundational to more complex works, would help students build the skills needed to analyze and interpret drama effectively.

● Student training in literary and dramatic conventions

A practical way to help drama students is to recognize the importance of equipping them with the necessary skills to read and explore drama as a unique genre, distinct from other literary forms. Drama operates through its own conventions and specificities, such as dialogue, stage directions, performance elements, and the interplay between text and spectacle. Students need training to analyze how dramatic texts are constructed to be performed, and understand the spatial, temporal, and auditory dimensions that shape meaning. By focusing on the performative aspects of drama, students can better appreciate its dynamic nature, exploring how characters, themes, and conflicts are brought to life through action and interaction. This approach not only deepens their literary analysis but also bridges the gap between page and stage, fostering a richer engagement with the genre.

● Revisiting assessment methods to align with the specificities of drama

Current assessment methods, which often rely on traditional written exams, should be revisited to better reflect the unique characteristics of drama. Alternative assessment methods, such as performance-based evaluations, creative projects (e.g., scriptwriting or directing), and reflective portfolios, could be introduced. These methods would not only assess students' understanding of dramatic texts but also their ability to engage creatively and critically with the performative and aesthetic dimensions of drama.

● Establishing teacher training and development programs

The absence of pre-service and in-service training programs for university teachers in Morocco represents a significant barrier to effective drama education. To address this, structured professional development programs should be implemented, focusing on both teaching practices and genre-specific skills. Workshops, seminars, and mentorship opportunities could equip instructors with innovative teaching strategies, such as active learning techniques and performance-based approaches, enabling them to deliver drama education in ways that align with curricular objectives.

● Integrating arts education into the curriculum

Given that drama belongs to the realm of the arts, students require a foundational understanding of artistic and aesthetic principles to fully engage with dramatic works. Integrating arts education into the curriculum would provide students with the necessary background to appreciate the artistic dimensions of drama. Courses or modules on visual arts, music, and theatre history could complement drama studies, fostering a holistic understanding of the arts and enhancing students' ability to analyze and interpret dramatic texts.

These recommendations are not only relevant to Moulay Ismail University but also applicable to other higher education institutions facing similar challenges in drama education. By re-evaluating the role of literature, increasing exposure to dramatic texts, revising assessment methods, investing in teacher training, and integrating arts education, institutions can create a more dynamic and effective learning environment for drama. Such reforms would not only improve the quality of drama education but also contribute to the broader goals of fostering critical thinking, creativity, and cultural awareness among students.

6. Conclusion

This study has shed light on the significant disparity between curricular intentions and classroom practices in drama education at Moulay Ismail University in Morocco. Through an analysis of official documents and systematic classroom observations, it has become evident that well-designed curricula are not being effectively translated into practice due to a reliance on traditional teaching methods, infrastructural limitations, and a lack of pedagogical support. These challenges highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to bridge the gap between the curriculum intentions and what really takes place in drama classes. The findings underscore the importance of re-evaluating the role of literature in education, particularly drama and integrating it more prominently into both secondary and higher education curricula. By increasing students' exposure to dramatic texts throughout the BA program and revisiting assessments, institutions can foster a deeper engagement with the genre. Furthermore, the establishment of teacher training and development programs is essential to equip instructors with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver drama education effectively. Finally, integrating arts education into the curriculum would provide students with the artistic and aesthetic competence necessary to appreciate and analyze dramatic works.

The implications of this study extend beyond Moulay Ismail University, offering valuable insights for other institutions facing similar challenges in drama education. By addressing these issues through targeted reforms, higher education institutions can create a more dynamic and effective learning environment for drama, ultimately enhancing students' critical thinking, creativity, and cultural awareness. This study contributes to the broader field of applied linguistics and teaching methodology in higher education by highlighting the importance of aligning curricular objectives with classroom practices and providing practical recommendations for improving the delivery of drama education in higher education settings.

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