CHAPTER ONE

OVERARCHING STATEMENT: HOW DOES DRAMA ENHANCE CHILDREN’S LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT?

Each of us brings something different to our work in drama, and this difference is determined not just by what we know, but who we are and where we have come from. Everyone will take a different journey, and encounter a range of obstacles, challenges and supports along the way (O’Neill, 1995, p. 3).

Historical evolvement of research topic

I have chosen to begin the illustration of my research journey with some stories that are pivotal to the direction of my teaching and learning. As Meek (1991) states:

Stories are part of our conversation, our recollections, our plans, our hopes, our fears. Young and old, we all tell stories as soon as we begin to explain or describe events and actions, feelings and motives (Meek, 1991, p. 103).

Pivotal tale 1A

I began my teacher-training course in Primary teaching education in March 1975. My first practice teaching session was in May of that year. I was placed on a year three/four (nine and ten years old) composite class. My first lesson for the practicum supervisor was drama, because he said he would like to see me teaching something I was interested in. I cannot remember the exact details, but the supervisor’s report (Appendix B, p. 258) suggests it was an improvisation in which children collectively made a fictitious
machine using movement and sound effects—an idea gained from a drama workshop for adults that I participated in during the previous summer holidays.

Thus, the use of drama as an important aspect in my teaching programs began.

Pivotal Tale 1B

In 1979, one year after graduation, I taught a year five (ten and eleven years old) class of 2nd and 3rd phase ESL\(^1\) (English as a Second Language) learners—predominantly Vietnamese and Lebanese refugees (actual ages unknown). For example, some of the boys' voices had already broken BUT on their Australian visas, they were eleven years old. Perhaps there was an unspoken understanding between the authorities and parents that if they had all escaped with just their lives, the children might as well start again with plenty of time to learn English before their final years of high school. And it was just the excuse I needed to plead that the obligatory basal reading scheme was not suitable for these children. They really were emotionally beyond the abridged versions of *Goldilocks and the three bears* and/or blonde and blue eyed Susan and Bill playing ball with their dog Skip, as Mummy cooked and Daddy mowed the lawn.

*So began my journey into using “real” books.*

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If some twenty years on I had renewed acquaintance with colleagues from this era and told them my research topic was “*How does educational drama enhance children’s language and literacy development?*” it would probably come as no surprise.

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\(^1\) Although acknowledging that ESL learners have different language learning experiences, and hence are not a homogeneous group, there are three broad categories of ESL learners. First phase learners' understanding and production of spoken and written language is very limited. Second phase learners' understanding and production of spoken and written language is limited to a range of familiar social and educational situations. Third phase learners are generally competent in most social situations but require assistance with English for specific academic purposes. (NSW Department of Education, 1983).
Nevertheless, tales that are more recent have influenced the direction for my research. In 1993 I enrolled in postgraduate studies (M.Ed.) and began my inquiry into the theoretical underpinnings of educational drama and literature-based reading programs. Again, two pivotal experiences from this era have influenced my recent research.

**Pivotal Tale 2A**

In 1994, my daughter—seven years old at the time—brought home the award winning book *Greetings from Sandy Beach* (Graham, 1991). When I asked if it was a good book, she replied, “It’s not a book! It’s my reader for Mr. “X”. I haven’t borrowed a book from the library this week.” Although Sarah’s “reader” was in fact a meritorious picture book narrative, after two years at school she approached books in the classroom as different from books in the library or home. This may have been because books used in her previous classes were readers to accompany basal reading instruction schemes. Although the current teacher used “real” books, the teaching/learning activities that accompanied them were the same as for the basal readers.

These activities were based on a method of reading instruction that viewed reading as a system of pattern matching—the emphasis being on decoding words in isolation from meaning. Nor did other activities bear any relation to the meaning of the book, for as Sarah said as she sat at the kitchen table doing her homework (a wanted poster for “a character of your choice”), “I don’t get it! Why are we doing a wanted poster because no one gets lost in this story and no one’s a ‘baddie’?" This approach to reading instruction does not “perceive readers as active contributors to the process of making sense out of print” (Parker, 1985, p. 8), nor does it attend to the meaning of the story.
Although at our kitchen table the story’s meaning was explored, it was in a one to one situation that subversively attended to the meaning by a critical examination of what the homework was not fulfilling in terms of reading—if reading and meaning are taken as synonymous.

*My exploration into pedagogically appropriate teaching/learning activities for the reading of literature began to gather momentum.*

**Pivotal Tale 2B**

Contrary to child rearing advice books circa 1995, bribery was a big feature in our household. Appealing to both my son’s intellect and stomach we would visit a bookshop to buy a book followed by a chocolate milkshake in the café next door if he willingly attended his weekly speech therapy session. This week it was accompanied by fistfuls of tissues as we laughed our way to the point of tears through *Our excursion* (Walker & Cox, 1994). It had just been short-listed for Australia’s most prestigious children’s book award—the National Book Council (NBC) “Children’s Book of the Year Award”. In that year, the NBC was celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Soon after the short-list announcement, a booklet (Creative and Practical Arts Association, 1995) was distributed to all B.Teach students in a second year subject of which I was a team teaching member at the time. It was designed to address the integration of literacy and the creative arts in primary teaching programs. The booklet is a “recipe book” for what to do with books nominated for that year. The suggestion for *Our excursion* was to combine the notion of the NBC’s 50th anniversary with a dance activity for this book. This was to be done by asking children to start reading (sic) from the beginning and count each word. When they reached the 50th word they were to
circle it and then continue counting to the 100th word—circle it and so forth in multiples of 50 until the conclusion. The children were then to select one of these fifty-word segments and develop a movement sequence (Creative and Practical Arts Association, 1995, pp. 42-43). I nearly cried, but for very different reasons from that in the café—what an example of the “basalisation” of literary texts and where was the art?

That night I sat down and prepared a drama program for the book Our excursion, which I then presented to all the B.Teach students for their two hour tutorial on integrating drama in literature programs. The drama aimed to demonstrate how a pedagogical approach could be achieved that did not relegate literature to the basal readers it was meant to replace, using in this case educational drama as the teaching/learning activity.

And so began my exploration of the link between educational drama as a pedagogically sound teaching practice and the development of language and literacy within reading programs.

With the exception of Chapter Seven all drama programs represented in this portfolio are designed to investigate how drama enhances language and literacy development during the reading of narrative literature. This deliberate path emanates from my belief that replacing basal reading schemes with literature without a change in the pedagogical practices used with these literary texts relegates the use of literature to the same form of reading instruction it is meant to replace. Based on the research of both sociopsycholinguistics and critical reading theorists, the reasons for using literature as opposed to basal reading schemes begins this discussion.
The arguments for quality literary texts

Notwithstanding that both factual and fictional literature can be integral parts of many key learning areas, this portfolio addresses only those issues that relate to the reading of narrative fiction within mainstream primary teachers’ reading programs. This overarching statement summarises the major theoretical principles pertaining to this.

Based on research about the reading process (for example, Cambourne, 1988; Goodman & Burke, 1980; Holdaway, 1979; Smith, 1971; Weaver, 1994 & 1998), it is argued that quality literary texts, as opposed to basal readers, better enhance children’s reading. This is because the linguistic discourse is differently structured, with the emphasis being on developing a story, as opposed to a “laboratory-style approach to reading, which utilises graded texts with a focus on systematic phonetic development” (Creighton, 1997, p. 440).

The arguments against basal readers

As explained in, for example, Parker, (1985) and Hood, Solomon and Burns (1996), basals are written to complement a theory of reading instruction which views reading as a “bottom up” process. The bottom up process views reading as a linear progression from letter, to word, to sentence to whole text. Instruction based on this belief has its focus on graphophonics, particularly in the early stages of reading development. The view is that reading is a set of sub-skills that need to be taught in a sequence and in isolation from the text as a whole. Little, if any attention, is given to syntax or semantics. As decoding and word recognition are seen as prerequisites for meaning, the type of reading material used focuses on these subsets and the particular skill to be
emphasised. Vocabulary is therefore both limited and tightly controlled and so often fails to make sense beyond the sentence level (Goodman, 1988; Unsworth & Williams, 1990).

In contrast, psycholinguists such as Goodman (1986) and Smith (1971) argue that reading should be viewed as a “top down” process. One of the essential differences between bottom up and top down theories is not just the emphasis on comprehension, but rather an acknowledgment that comprehension, (the meaning derived from text), is reading (Cambourne, 1988, p. 159). Top down theories argue that word recognition drill in isolation to the whole text is not reading, because gaining meaning from the whole text in order to both decode and encode is at the heart of learning to read. The ability to predict what a text is likely to be about is an important factor. In order to make a prediction and then confirm or reject it on the basis of what is read, the reader must be able to utilise the three cueing systems; semantic, syntactic and graphophonic (Goodman, 1993).

Sociolinguistic theory (Halliday, 1985; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Kress, 1985) has also influenced recent understanding about the reading process and hence appropriate pedagogical practice (for example: Knobel & Healy, 1998; Unsworth, 1993). This theory not only recognises the importance of the prediction process in gaining meaning, but also has its emphasis on understanding the purpose of particular texts in relation to the wider socio-cultural framework from which they emanate. Hence, contributing factors such as the reader’s prior knowledge and understanding of the topic (pragmatics) are also essential pre-requisites in terms of gaining meaning from a text.
In summary, research based on a socio-psycholinguistic theory not only disputes the teaching of reading as a discrete set of sub-skills but as well the reading material used, for as Tunnell (1989) states:

*Basal materials often produce distorted abstractions, loss of contextual meanings, and loss of grammatical functions due to letter-sound relationships taught in isolation or words used out of context* (Tunnell, 1989, p. 474).

Notwithstanding that talented authors sometimes write basal readers, the arguments against the use of basal readers remains.

**Beware! Famous authors...infamous basals**

It seems that publishers of basal reading schemes are also aware of the research opposing the use of basals. Reading schemes such as *Story Chest* (Shortland, 1984 and last reprinted in 1989) and *The PM Library* (Randell, Giles & Smith, 1995), simulate literary narratives. *Story Chest* for instance, employed famous and talented professional authors of children's literary texts. However, authors (for example Joy Cowley and Margaret Mahy), who are otherwise successful in writing quality children's literature, have written material to fulfil the requirements of a reading pedagogy based on bottom up sub-skill instruction. For example, one of Margaret Mahy’s contributions, titled “The spider in the shower” in the *Story Chest* (1984) series is, I would argue, inferior writing to her independently published stories, such as the widely acclaimed *A lion in the meadow* (Mahy, 1969). “The spider in the shower” is a short, controlled, repetitive
story with a limited vocabulary—the emphasis being on the rime\(^3\) “ower”. For instance, the focus is on this frequently repeated ditty:

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\begin{align*}
  \text{There's a spider in the shower}, \\
  \text{A spider in the shower}, \\
  \text{It makes a (lion/wolf/brown bear/crocodile) cower}, \\
  \text{To see a spider in the shower.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Mahy, 1984, pp. 1-12)

Goodman (1988), suggests that schemes such as *Story Chest*, are as unsuccessful as their historical counterparts because: “Basals have tended to isolate sounds, letters and words from the ... (language) system and they have given little attention to the systems and how they relate in natural texts” (p. 37). Presumably the intent of this text is to practise the intra-syllabic concept of the rime “ower” in shower and cower. “Cower” is semantically correct, but in terms of pragmatics it is erroneous, for as one child said when the word was explained, “I wouldn’t be cowering I’d be running!”\(^3\) In 1999, this basal series is still used in some Australian primary schools.

Chapter Three demonstrates how attention to phonological awareness can be achieved using the quality literary work *Something from nothing* (Gilman, 1992) with drama activities that enhance reading, and by implication, meaning. If a change in resources is not accompanied by changed teaching practices, literary texts are at risk of being “basalised”.

\(^3\) *Rime:* The rime (the old English spelling of rhyme) is the final part of a single syllable word. For example, in the words flower, shower and cower, the *rime* is “ower” and the *onset* for each is “fl”, “sh” and “c”.

\(^3\) Margaret Meek (1988) states that “any significant reading research I have done rests on my having treated anecdotes as evidence” (p. 8). In my capacity as a reading helper at my children’s school, a nine years old boy made this observation.
The basalisation of literature

If we are going to maintain children's interest in literature, we must ensure that teachers focus on the 'meanings' in the story. There needs to be provocation and discussion about those meanings, which will entice children to become critical and appreciative readers (Rivalland, 1990, p. 208).

Common to all definitions of literature by many experts who excel in both the literacy and literary fields, (for example Chambers, 1991 & 1993; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Meek, 1988 & 1995; Saxby, 1991; Stephens & Watson 1994), is the affirmation that literary texts comment on human experiences. Literary texts encourage readers to interpret and develop their aesthetic response through an interaction with the text. Iser (1974) refers to this interaction as the “dynamic process of recreation” (p. 288). Saxby’s (1991) definition on literature acts as a synthesis:

If literature has integrity—that is, if it explores, orders, evaluates and illuminates the human experience, its heights and depths, its pain and pleasure aesthetically and according to the creator’s genuinely felt response—the end product becomes an image of life, and potentially a metaphor for living. The range of such images is as vast as human society and culture (Saxby, 1991, p. 4).

However, simply including literature without a pedagogical approach that sanctions such a response relegates not only the literature, but the program itself to those of basal reading schemes—the very thing it is meant to replace because the emphasis is not on meaning.
Reading for Meaning: The textual features of literary texts

*It is pointless to spend time selecting something to read if we never
‘read’ what we’ve selected* (Chambers, 1991, p. 11).

Many Australian syllabi and curriculum documents emphasise the importance of using literature as opposed to basal reading schemes. In addressing the narrative form the *English K-6 syllabus* (Board of Studies NSW, 1998)\(^4\) states:

*Literary texts are an important part of the English program. The engagement of a student with a literary text can be a powerful and evocative experience that shapes the student’s imagination and thought.*

*Reading quality literature can have a significant impact on how students see and relate to the world around them* (Board of Studies, 1998, p. 67).

The key word in the above quote is “engagement”. Replacing basal readers with “real books” (such as *Greetings from Sandy Beach*) does not necessarily engage students, and by implication enhance reading, unless accompanied by both an understanding of the purpose of texts and the subsequent pedagogy for teaching them. Hanzl (1993) argues that some teaching/learning activities “seem alarmingly similar to the meaningless comprehension exercise and word lists so often used in the past with basal readers” (p. 89). For children to understand the structure of literary texts the focus must be on the meaning of the story. Meaning is achieved through both story and linguistic discourse developed within the parameters of the principles of narrative. As Saxby (1991) explains: “reading, which is more than mere ‘barking at print’ requires a transaction with the author’s text” (p. 4).

\(^4\) The mandatory syllabus for schools in New South Wales, Australia.
Narrative is a valued component in current reading programs because narrative is story—a fundamental aspect of the human culture (Booth, 1987; Bruner, 1986; Wells, 1986). To further readers' understandings about narrative, features intrinsic to the telling of a story must be explicitly addressed in teaching programs. These features described by Saxby (1991) as “the craft of literature” (p. 3), include the technical considerations of how a story is constructed in terms of: idea or theme, plot or story, characters, setting, point of view, pace, style, levels of meaning, and narrative discourse (Saxby, 1991, pp. 3-18). If these aspects are to be recognised, it is necessary to give careful and pre-planned thought to the way that such texts will be examined. These specific features distinguish narrative from other forms of literature and hence require a different response from that made to factual texts.

Responding to literature

Central to contemporary theories within the broad framework of literary theory is Rosenblatt’s thesis (1978) that all literary texts rely on a transaction between the author and the reader.

Within a classroom context (in particular, shared reading experiences), this also includes the transaction that individual readers bring to a text. Therefore, the emphasis is on preparing teaching/learning activities that engage children in responding to the text both individually and together. Seminal to Rosenblatt’s concept of transaction is the identification that transaction differs depending on whether the reading is primarily for

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5 The term “shared reading” as used throughout this portfolio, is defined thus: Shared reading—when the teacher or proficient reader reads aloud to a group or whole class. Students may be grouped so that they can see the text and the teacher can model reading strategies, read for enjoyment, or highlight particular features of the text (Board of Studies NSW, 1998, p. 98).
efferent or aesthetic purposes. An efferent response requires the reader to take away information from a text in order to learn something and many tasks such as story maps and character webs fall into this category. In contrast, an aesthetic response has a more immediate purpose with its focus on feelings and opinions during the reading of the book. Rosenblatt (1978) states:

*As the student vicariously shares through literature the emotions and aspirations of other human beings, he can gain heightened sensitivity to the needs and problems of others remote from him in temperament, in space, or in social environment; he can develop a greater imaginative capacity to grasp the meaning of abstract laws or political or social theories for actual human lives* (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 274).

Rosenblatt recognises the value of both stances, but emphasises the aesthetic experience because “it is the kind of reading most neglected in our schools” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 271), and an aesthetic response has implications in terms of how teachers enhance children’s ability to respond critically (Rosenblatt as cited in Karolides, 1999).

**Critical literacy and the reading of literature**

Integral to critical literacy is the concept that the social, political, cultural and linguistic background of the author and the reader must both be considered and acknowledged (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993 & 1997; Heath, 1983; Luke & Freebody, 1997). This concept has influenced the pedagogical approach taken in reading education in recent years. Developing students’ critical thinking is central in achieving critical literacy. The ability to go beyond the surface meaning of a text—to unpack the themes and issues in visual, spoken or written texts—is seen as important because every text is a product of
the particular context in which it is created (Barthes, 1977; Janks, 1993; Kress, 1985). Furthermore the genre of the text, in this case narrative, predicates the way it is to be read (Halliday & Hasan, 1985) and hence the role of critical literacy practices. However, as Knobel and Healy (1998) state “critical literacy is something of a chameleon, changing from context to context and from one educational purpose to another” (p. 2). Clearly, many components make the whole in terms of what critical literacy is. Just as the modes of listening, speaking, reading and writing should not be artificially segmented in presentation to students, neither should the varying aspects of critical literacy.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of explaining how the drama programs in this portfolio relate to critical literacy, Shor’s (1992) definition (and the one referred to in for example, Hertzberg & Ewing, 1998), is selected to highlight the way that narrative texts can be analysed and evaluated:

... analytic habits of thinking, reading, writing, speaking or discussing which go beneath surface impressions, traditional myths, mere opinions, and routine cliches; understanding the social contexts and consequences of any subject matter; discovering the deep meaning of any event, text, technique, process, object, statement, image, or situation; applying that meaning to your own context [my emphasis] (Shor, 1992, p. 32).

However, both the type of teaching/learning activities, and the book that children engage in, will affect the type of response. Furthermore, and as Luke (1995) cautions, educators should go beyond addressing the meaning of texts. He states:
(When the stress is only on meaning it could) lead to an uncritical reinforcement and reproduction of the text as bearer of incontestable ‘truth’. ... Reading is not just about meaning. Students need to develop the social strategies for ‘doing things’ with meanings and for second guessing and reconstructing of those meanings (Luke, 1995, p. 178).

In “doing things” students can learn strategies to resist and challenge aspects in texts such as, for example, stereotyping that we all—including teachers and parents—at times accept often without question.

This portfolio demonstrates how drama enables students to examine critically the meanings of literary texts through their own reconstruction of the issues and themes of the story. With the exception of Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf (Dahl, 1984), which is detailed in Chapter Nine, all other drama programs have been written for books that depict cultural diversity from a variety of angles. The “Onion tears” drama program, referred to in Chapters Two, Five and Nine, and the “Six perfectly different pigs” drama program referred to in Chapters Five and Eight, directly examine cultural diversity issues. In contrast, the “Something from nothing” drama program, referred to in Chapters Three and Six and the “Our excursion” drama program referred to in Chapters Two, Four and Five are planned for books that are more implicit in addressing cultural diversity. Although the settings and/or characters are representative of our culturally diverse society, the themes and issues inherent in the story do not explicitly address this aspect.
Literature exploring cultural diversity themes

In the books *Onion tears* (Kidd, 1989) and *Six perfectly different pigs* (Geoghegan & Moseng, 1993), the focus for the drama programs is on issues of cultural diversity. Such texts provide the opportunity to explore a culture either similar to or different from one’s own (Au, 1993; Hanzl, 1997; Rochman, 1995). Caution needs to be taken however, if the narrative is to be used essentially for efferent purposes (for example, insights into diverse cultural practices), because the aesthetic transaction with the narrative may be overlooked. Similarly, and to avoid misrepresentation of fact, due either to artificial patronising and/or stereotypical generalisations, the fiction needs to be distanced from fact (Derman-Sparkes, 1989). The amount and occurrence of efferent learning about a particular cultural group, will depend on the representation of facts within the fictitious story. Otherwise we risk having children believe (or even being taught by their teachers) that, for example, all Greek Grandmothers wear black clothes, and all Vietnamese eat and like Pho soup. For instance, reading *Onion tears* as the basis for examining Vietnamese culture in general, and the cuisine and origins of names in particular, would be quite misleading even on a superficial level.

Although food is a central focus of this book, the author’s symbolic use of food is first to address a major and recurrent theme—emotional abuse (teasing and bullying) based on the unknown. Second, it is used as possibly the most powerful metaphor in this book—the ease with which tears result from cutting onions as a contrast with the inability to release emotions. Similarly, the meaning of names is explored as a basis for exploring the themes of identity and isolation. *Onion tears*, however, is based on factual material in that the central character Nam-Huong is a Vietnamese refugee who
came to Australia by boat and on arrival lives with an “adopted” aunt. Nevertheless, it is in the telling of the fictitious story that generalised factual circumstances of refugees are poignantly realised, primarily through an aesthetic response to the author's text.

The other text, Six perfectly different pigs, is a picture book. It conforms to the fable genre of literature and, as is common in this genre, the animals have anthropomorphistic characteristics. Most fables explore a universal truth usually in the third person. This picture book is about six pigs, each of whom has different physical features. Each is dissatisfied. The pig with the straight tail is particularly unhappy, and is subject to emotional abuse. Although a reading would be possible without the illustrations, these pictures do engage the reader with the story because “they operate in terms of contrapuntal arrangement of mutual correction; their words and pictures give us different insights into the same events” (Nodelman, 1988, p. 243).

In many books however, the illustrations are an essential element of the story and this is the case for the other two books used—Something from nothing and Our excursion. Both books are examples of how the written and visual text in many modern picture books are inextricably linked.

**Picture books**

The first time through, I am faced with the uniqueness of the picture-book form itself. I have a compelling curiosity to read on to find out what happens next, but this works against the pictures, which would have me stop and search. The immediate tension is resolved by skimming words
and images to get a general idea of what the book is about and what I might make from it, but more than that. Then I'll skim it all over again.

The third time through I read the words and look at the pictures much more slowly, to begin the process of discovering what relationship(s) they have. There is a range of possibilities, some much more obvious than others. The pictures may elaborate, amplify, extend, and complement the words. Or the pictures may appear to contradict or 'deviate' in feeling from what the words imply. A variant of this happens when the words and pictures counterpoint each other so that two separate stories run in tandem (Doonan, 1993, p. 18).

In this portfolio, the drama programs developed for picture books demonstrate how children’s understanding of the multiple themes and stories within many picture books can be enhanced. In addition, children’s own skills are developed in both oral and written storying. Using drama, aids children’s understanding about the unique purpose and hence construction of picture books.

The purpose of picture books

Although wordless picture books are fairly recent (1960’s to the present), books with both written text and illustrations are not (Meek, 1991). A major purpose for using picture books in primary schools has always been that the pictures support the written text, thus helping emergent readers to predict the likely story and aid in their reading of the written text. However, the construction of many contemporary picture books differs from those in the past, because they can be read on a variety of levels. This is partly a
function of our movement away from linearity to the more multi-dimensional in all our viewing and it is here that illustrations play an important role. The illustrations can, for example, extend the written text and/or provide a different narrative and in doing so add another dimension. This has not only changed the purpose for using picture books, but also the age group for whom they are applicable—they are multigenerational (Cart, 1997)—so no longer remain the perceived domain of the very young or emergent reader. In many modern picture books the use of written language is both minimal and the vocabulary often uncomplicated. However, frequently the themes do not match this simplicity. The term ‘multilayering’ (multiple themes in both the visual and written text) means that these superimposed meanings both allow and invite children to examine and construct different meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Meek, 1988), when the purpose of the illustrations is analysed. It is important to acknowledge this changing use of illustrations if their purpose is to be understood.

**The purpose of illustrations**

The illustrations in modern picture books such as *Something from nothing* and *Our excursion*, which are used in this portfolio, not only support the written text but elaborate and extend the theme/s of the story. For example, both books use the function of composite text, meaning the “union between what the words say and what the pictures show... , (the meaning of which) exists nowhere but in the reader/beholder’s head” (Doonan, 1993, p. 83). In both texts these functions of elaboration and extension are even further developed.

For instance, in the book *Something from nothing* there are three main stories, but only one of these stories has written text to support it—the “primary” story. The other two
stories juxtapose and/or mirror the written story, and can only be understood by reading the illustrations. All stories are inextricably intertwined but at the same time each retains its own identity. Similarly, *Our excursion* contains multiple stories that extend and embellish the story told in the written text. Of particular significance in *Our excursion* is the use of illustrations to portray each child’s personality—the naughty, the “goody goodies” and the repugnant. Unless the illustrations are read, the complete meaning of the written text will not be realised.

In essence, the illustrations in many contemporary picture books replicate the function of extended prose in novels by providing the metaphorical framework inherent in the telling of narrative. The drama programs detailed in Chapters Two, Three, Four, Six and Eight use a variety of drama forms and strategies that directly attend to specific features of both the written and visual text to enhance children’s reading of them. In addition, in the case of *Something from nothing*, Chapter Three demonstrates how the linguistic features of the written text can also be examined using Readers’ Theatre. Whilst engaged in the process of enactment specific reading skills are consolidated—in particular aspects of phonological awareness.

### Phonological awareness and the development of reading

Phonological awareness is the awareness of the sound in words (Neilson, 1999). Most writing in literacy development acknowledges that phonological awareness is an important aspect of literacy development (Strickland & Strickland, 1996; Weaver, 1998). However, which children require explicit instruction in phonological awareness concepts, the way these concepts are taught and in what aspects of a literacy program
they are taught have caused much debate (Emmitt & Hornsby, 1996; Hornsby 1999; Smith, 1999). Whilst acknowledging that the modes of listening, speaking, reading and writing should not be artificially segmented in presentation to students, the emphasis in this discussion is on reading and writing.

Chapter Three demonstrates how phonological awareness concepts can be incorporated within a drama program. In the book *Something from nothing*, the use of alliteration, rhythm and rhyme is a predominant feature. Furthermore, the metre remains constant, which adds to the overall effect of the story. To attend to the above mentioned features, a Readers' Theatre was designed for this book. Readers' Theatre requires the participants to read the text several times. During repeated readings of a text, specific linguistic aspects can be highlighted and consolidated (Cusworth, 1991; Wolf, 1998). Whilst acknowledging that most monolingual children (English speaking) involved in this Readers' Theatre (usually about six to nine years old) would not require an explicit emphasis on phonological awareness, this is not the case for some ESL children (Au, Carroll & Scheu, 1997; Gibbons, 1991), and for children either monolingual or bilingual who have speech impairments and therefore often literacy-related difficulties (Parsons, 1984; Stackhouse, 1992). In addition, the repetitious refrains in this text make it particularly suitable in a shared reading situation. For as Edwards (1995) states when writing about the needs of ESL children in particular:

*Stories which have a strong element of repetition, rhythm and rhyme help children to predict what is coming next and to develop phonological awareness. The teacher can read up to the repetition or rhyme, then pause to let the children take over* (Edwards, 1995, p. 20).

Apart from one class where the children were told by their class teacher “not to interrupt
Ms Hertzberg while she reads”, all groups have spontaneously joined in by about the third time the following refrain is read:

'**Hmm**, he said as his scissors went snip, snip, snip and his needle flew in and out and in and out, ‘There's just enough material here to make... a wonderful (jacket/vest/tie/handkerchief/button)’ (Gilman, 1992, pp. 5-22).

In Chapters Three and Six, the articles show how the features of the written text in *Something from nothing* (Joseph’s story), are further attended to when the children write the narration for their mice story. It is intentional that both the written narration and spoken improvisations replicate the use of rhythm, rhyme, and point of view used by Gilman in her written text.

Phonological awareness is also the language and literacy focus for another drama program (Chapter Seven) in which children are involved in the construction of a magic spell to reverse a wicked one. In this case, the drama strategies of teacher in role, still image and mime are used. The major emphasis is on the intra-syllabic aspects of “onset” and “rime”. Emphasis on the intra-syllabic form in the teacher’s reading program⁶, and hence its use in this drama, correlates with research that supports its importance in early reading development; (for example Adams, 1990; Bowey, 1991 &1996; Mason, 1991). On the importance of rime Bowey (1991) states:

*Once children have acquired the vital insight that letter patterns represent sound patterns they are likely to further analyse familiar letter patterns to induce both the alphabetic principle and their own grapheme-

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⁶ The teacher's reading program referred to here is the one for which this drama program was first developed. Details are provided in the Preface for Chapter 7.
phoneme correspondences. For instance, children who have been taught to focus on rimes would understand why rhyming words like 'cat' and 'hat' share the pattern 'at'. When they encounter visually similar words like 'cat' and 'cap', they are likely to reflect on the internal structure of the rime units 'at' and 'ap' and generate their own grapheme-phoneme correspondence (Bowey, 1991, p. 143).

On the importance of alliteration Mason (1991) states:

Awareness of alliteration... together with sensitivity to rhyme have been found to be important early indicators of young children's reading development and are likely to facilitate reading development (Mason, 1991, p. 4).

It is this attention to alliteration and rhyme in the spoken form, and onset and rime in the written form that provides the English focus for the drama program in Chapter Seven. However, some of the words often suggested by children (as is the case in the example cited in Chapter Seven's article), are nonsense words and this needs explanation in terms of meaning.

**Phonological awareness and meaning**

The use of nonsense words in some of the research on phonological awareness is of concern, for as Mason (1991) states:

Unfortunately a number of significant studies ... required them (children), to read nonsense words or to use words that were not likely to be known by the younger children (e.g. piety). These investigators, like many of those examining the use of grapheme-phoneme knowledge have
ignored the fact that written language like spoken language, is a means of communication (Mason, 1991, p. 12).

Not only does this have vital implications in terms of the validity of these research studies but, as well, the use of nonsense words in general classroom practice is of particular importance for bilingual learners. Often the problem is not only with the words themselves, but with the way the words are “taught” because many real words are relocated into the nonsense category in isolation drill exercises. A misguided and often uninformed argument against whole language teaching (Emmitt & Hornsby, 1996) is that the whole language philosophy either does not teach or is against the teaching of phonological concepts. This is simply not true (Weaver, 1998), but because instruction is not isolated into discrete sets of sub-skills using basal readers, the focus on this aspect may not be as noticeable. Because of this continuing debate (Hornsby, 1999; Taylor, 1998), teachers of whole language methodologies are being more explicit in their explanation of how and where phonological awareness fits within their program and for which children it is appropriate.

Since whole language methodologies promote the use of authentic contexts, the provision of teaching/learning experiences that promote meaningful responses to texts are critical.

**Responding to literature through talk**

Research on the reading practices between carers and very young children at home, and the positive impact this has on future literacy development (Heath, 1983; Holdaway, 1979; Wells, 1986), has influenced teaching and learning activities for whole class
shared reading sessions (for example, Chambers 1991 & 1995; Meek, 1991). In terms of response, the important feature of shared reading within a home environment is the spontaneity and discussion that relates both to the text itself, as well as the intertext (Dombey, 1988; Smith & Elley, 1995). Reader response approaches take many forms (Chambers, 1993; Sebesta, Monson, & Doces Senn, 1995; Spiegel, 1998), but in essence they aim for children to critically respond to what they are reading, which involves delving below the surface and making connections with their own experiences.

Chambers “Framework Approach” (1993), is one such example. This approach uses guiding questions to promote in-depth discussion. It challenges students to attend to the linguistic features of the text and reinterpret the meaning based on their own prior knowledge and experience. Nevertheless, within a classroom setting, no matter what the question and hence discussion that ensues, the concern remains as to whether all children are actively involved. As Vaughan (1992) states:

In nearly every class there is a youngster eager to argue. Your first impulse will be to silence him or her. I advise you to think carefully before you do. That is probably the only child really listening (Vaughan, 1992, p. 6).

Similarly, in response activities the concern is not with the child engaged in the argument—to the contrary. The argument is part of the response process. Rather the concern is for the non-responsive comments and/or those who do not participate. As Sebesta (1997) states, when writing about reader response approaches in general:

You can decode and comprehend and still not care. You can become adept at answering thought questions without really responding from the heart or the creative mind (Sebesta, 1997, p. 545).
Guess what’s in the teacher’s head and/or “give ’em what you think they want to hear”
is a real issue for many teachers and students. Really saying what one thinks, rather
than what one thinks might be the “correct” thing to say to the teacher and/or in front of
peers, can be hard for some children especially when dealing with issues in which
opinions are varied and emotions can run high.

The following example (a poem), explains this from another perspective—a student
responding in a way he thinks the teacher/s and other adults would like.

My World

My world would only be,

Where I could be forever me.

My world could only be,

Where we could be forever free.

Where sexism and racism are no more.

Where all countries are not at war.

Where all the hungry may feed.

Where there is no more greed.

Where there is no more pollution,

And to every problem a solution.

And no more violence,

Only eternal silence.

(Liam\textsuperscript{7}, 1998. 11 years old)

\textsuperscript{7} All names of participants are pseudonyms throughout this portfolio. The poem is available from the
writer of this portfolio.
Several months before my latest research project in 1998, Liam wrote this poem for a competition. By chance, I read it in a back issue of the school's newsletter. When interviewing Liam at the conclusion of the project I began by asking him to read this poem, because I wanted to acknowledge his considerable writing talent before asking him questions about the role he took in writing the narration for the “Our excursion” drama program (Hertzberg, in progress).

After Liam read his poem, I asked him why he wrote it. (All words emphasised are his emphasis).

Liam: I thought it is a good topic, it's always brought up in the news and the tabloids and things.

Margery: It's a topic that interests you is it—issues that concern you?

Liam: Yeah. Well actually, I entered it not because of what I would like, but just what the teachers would like.

Margery: Oh is that right?

Liam: Yes. Yes.

Margery: Can you explain that more?

Liam: Well um I knew that if it was going to be something that I would be really interested in they might not like it, so I thought that if I did something that all the teachers would like I might have a chance of winning but I won a certificate for being a finalist (Audio interview, 12/9/98).

For children to be critical readers and thinkers, educators need to plan teaching/learning experiences that actively involve children in an exploration of the issues and then make public (if they choose to), their genuine response and opinion. It is the ‘how teachers can tap into this potential’ that is important. How can we encourage children to read literary texts critically, and by implication empathise with others, without the lesson
turning into a moral dilemma type activity that is both teacher-centred and teacher-led, with responses linked to 'guess what's in the teacher's head' being regurgitated, rather than genuine engagement with the text? Educational drama is just one way of doing this because by adopting roles children are involved in exploring situations from different angles.

Critically reading literature: Using educational drama

Even now ... (reader response approaches are) often limited to talk talk talk. It ought to lead to humanities in literacy education, including creative drama and dramatic play, story telling and interpretive oral reading, music and dance, the visual arts. In many places these extensions of response are as scarce as the snow leopard. In many curricula they are first to get bumped. I think that's a mistake (Sebesta, 1997, p. 548).

Sebesta's statement can be extended further, as this portfolio demonstrates. Using educational drama, all works in this portfolio propose that it is also appropriate for the drama to come first and the talk follow and/or be inextricably linked within the drama process itself. Chapters Four, Five, Eight and Nine explicitly address this issue. Although using drama as a teaching/learning activity is suggested in all Australian English teaching syllabi and supporting documents, often these experiences are consolidating activities after the book has been read. For example, children might be asked to replay their favourite section or suggest an alternative ending—usually through role-play. For a drama activity to enhance language and literacy development, the activities must engage the children in a thorough reading of the story. “Acting out”
sections as a retell or recall exercise may not aid children’s understanding, because the students are not required to re-read or respond to the story in depth (Montgomerie & Ferguson, 1999; Simons & Quirk, 1991). Rather, it could quite possibly relegate drama to the very same non-response effect from which so many current response theories shy. In contrast, when Drama occurs **before** and **during** the reading of the book, students transact with the text, because drama enables students to explore and question texts and, at the same time, actively engage in the themes and issues raised through enactment.

In this portfolio, all drama programs demonstrate how this can be achieved using educational drama methodology. The major aspects of this methodology are now discussed. However, it should be noted that this is a brief summary because as drama is the constant thread in this portfolio much of the detail is contained within the articles themselves.

**Educational drama**

*One can appreciate why some current theorists and practitioners wish to confine appraisal to acting skills, theatre crafts and textual study—they are so much more easily definable and recognisable. But that is to deny why we are doing drama in the first place* (Bolton, 1992, p. 138).

Bolton’s quote alludes to the never-ending debate between proponents of educational drama and alternative and predominantly theatre in education perspectives. Hornbrook’s (for example, 1989, 1991 & 1996) opposition to drama’s placement as a cross-curricula learning medium and the role of spontaneous non-scripted improvisation
has been influential. While the debate is important, this portfolio is concerned with educational drama methodology—the methodology sanctioned by major syllabi and curriculum documents in Australia. As the aim of my research is to contribute to the body of knowledge on how educational drama can be used as a learning medium for language and literacy development, it is aspects of this methodology that are addressed.

Seminal to educational drama methodology is the work of Heathcote (1984), who defines educational drama thus:

*A broad definition of educational drama is ‘role-taking’, either to understand a social situation more thoroughly or to experience imaginatively via identification in social situations. Dramatic activity is the direct result of the ability to role-play—to want to know how it feels to be in someone else’s shoes* (Heathcote, 1984, p. 49).

The notion of enactment is central to drama and it involves the taking on of a role. Enactment is perhaps one of the most powerful reasons for using drama to read texts critically because through the process of enactment one sees things from different perspectives, someone else’s reality. Hence it is especially meaningful for all of those students who need to be actively engaged in the learning process because it “increases the students’ involvement by allowing them to show outward signs of mental images” (Schneider & Brindley, 1997, p. 15). In so doing, participants’ communicate their messages in a language unique to drama. All chapters (and explicitly Chapters Eight and Nine) address how messages are conveyed using the language of drama.
The language of drama to enhance language and literacy development

Of crucial importance to the preceding discussion on the theoretical principles of reading, is the drama research specific to the field of language and literacy learning. This research indicates that drama is ideally positioned as a teaching/learning activity in reading programs because in the process of enactment students often use all four modes of language—speaking, listening, reading and writing. (Booth, 1987; Booth & Neelands, 1998; Flennroy, 1992; Hertzberg & Ewing, 1998; Koa & O’Neill, 1998; Wagner, 1998a & 1998b; Wolf, 1998).

Both Wagner (1995 & 1998a) and Pascoe (1999), have recently challenged drama educators to articulate the language of drama that occurs in the process of enactment because “within the context of the call for greater literacy … there is a need for drama educators to recognise and assert the important role that drama plays in literacies” (Pascoe, 1999, p. 135). Wagner’s thesis (1995, 1998a & 1998b), developed within a constructivist theoretical framework of learning, refers to Bruner’s (1996) terms enactive, iconic and symbolic representation⁸ to explain how drama literacy, like conventional reading and writing literacy practices, involves these three kinds of knowing. The communication in drama parallels the communication in reading and writing. For example, both drawing and still image are forms of communication through the use of images.

⁸ “According to Bruner (1996), the three major ways in which human beings represent and deal with reality are through enactive, iconic, and symbolic representation. In enactive knowing, we learn ‘by doing’—by experiencing with our body. Iconic knowing is knowing through an image—either in gesture, in drawing, or in the mind with no external representation. Symbolic knowing encompasses translation into language—the symbol system par excellence” (Wagner, 1998b, p. 64).
One important benefit of drama for children beyond the early childhood years is that it replicates and extends upon the types of literacy practices that children are engaged in during dramatic play (Warren, 1999). As drama is a social activity the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978) is explicitly actualised since "as they collaborate with their peers to create an improvisation, they are pressured to behave and use language in new and previously untried ways" (Wagner, 1998b, p. 67). In this way, the social aspects of literacy events that contribute to literacy growth in early childhood through dramatic play (Bruner, 1996; Dyson; 1990) continue to be replicated in later years using educational drama methodology. This is because of the drama strategies used to engage in enactment. Complementing Wagner's thesis, Pascoe (1999) explains how the elements of drama are realised using drama strategies and techniques to communicate meaning. At the same time participants better understand issues inherent within a theme—the universal (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995)—when drama strategies are used.

**Drama strategies and language and literacy development**

Wagner (1998b) further challenges drama researchers to explore "which instructional strategies can be pinpointed as instrumental in effecting improvement in students' language growth" (p. 240). Using the "Onion tears" program as an example, Table 1.1 below demonstrates how the drama language inherent in specific strategies and/or drama forms can be used to enhance the reading of the book *Onion tears*. However, these strategies are designed within a broader teaching/learning program (Chapters Two and Nine). Table 1.1 should ultimately be viewed within this overall context, as the drama strategies are inextricably linked with the other activities that surround them such as the reading of the book and/or other aspects of book/story talk. In particular, the showing and viewing of drama strategies and the reflection and debriefing that occurs at all
stages are critical elements of the overall process because it is at these stages that so much of the consolidation of interpretation occurs, as evidenced in Chapter Nine.

Table 1.1: Critically reading *Onion tears* using the language of drama

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drama strategy</th>
<th>Text interpretation (major focus)</th>
<th>English language and literacy focus (major focus)</th>
<th>Representation of expression (major focus)</th>
<th>Drama language (major focus)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual still image</td>
<td>Make connection with the book through building up the field based on own prior knowledge and experience</td>
<td>Listening to and interpreting presented scenario</td>
<td>Enactive</td>
<td>Facial expression</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Iconic</td>
<td>Gesture and posture</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sculpting and still image</td>
<td>Examine and analyse text through reconstructing meanings</td>
<td>Interactional and expressive language</td>
<td>Enactive</td>
<td>Facial expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skimming and scanning for information</td>
<td>Iconic</td>
<td>Gesture and posture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attention to font and punctuation</td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Position in space</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Point of view</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooled drama</td>
<td>Analyse and then break down points of tension/complication</td>
<td>Interactional and expressive language</td>
<td>Enactive</td>
<td>Facial expression</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complication/tenison/problem</td>
<td>Iconic</td>
<td>Gesture and posture</td>
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<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Position in space</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vocal expression</td>
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<td>Role walk and tapping in</td>
<td>Interpret character's feelings</td>
<td>Expressive language</td>
<td>Enactive</td>
<td>Facial expression</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Choice of words to identify feeling</td>
<td>Iconic</td>
<td>Gesture and posture</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voice collage</td>
<td>Link own experience to themes and issues in text</td>
<td>Expressive language</td>
<td>Enactive</td>
<td>Vocal expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Choice of words to describe feelings</td>
<td>Iconic</td>
<td>Facial expression</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Silence as expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel improvisation</td>
<td>Metaphor: enact situation that parallels theme of book</td>
<td>Interactional and expressive language</td>
<td>Enactive</td>
<td>Vocal expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use of appropriate register determined by the tenor, field and mode of fictional context</td>
<td>Iconic</td>
<td>Facial expression</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Gesture and posture</td>
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<td>Silence as expression</td>
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</table>
As for the "Onion tears" program, other drama programs in this portfolio also illustrate how children express their understanding of what they are reading through reconstructing the meaning using verbal, written and body language. To achieve this, students usually work in a fictional context rather than their immediate one, but use their prior knowledge and experience, so that a connection is made between the fictional context and the real context. This connection is often referred to as metaxis.

The power of metaxis

Bolton (1992) in referring to, and elaborating upon Boal's (1992) use of metaxis—seeing two worlds at the same time—has been influential in explaining the importance of this process. The concept of metaxis is important in drama because it "has a sense of applying knowledge, but lacks the consequences of real application" (Bolton, 1992, p. 33).

With respect to responding to literature, O'Neill and Rogers (1994) further explain the quality of metaxis in enabling interpretations through multiple worlds of representation:

In encountering literary texts through drama, the result is a complex interpenetration of alternate worlds. The first world remains circumscribed by the original text. The second world is a parallel drama which will share significant features with the world of the text, but may expand some and overlook others. ... The final 'world' which infiltrates the classroom as a result of using drama is the students' own world (O'Neill & Rogers, 1994, p. 50).
This portfolio aims at demonstrating this multiple view of the world using multiple literacies. Through the language of drama and the language used in drama, children can critically read texts. In this way students can contemplate ideas and issues explored in a book like bullying, friendship or betrayal distanced from their own lives, bringing the realities and understandings of their own experiences but standing apart from them. In so doing they engage with the author, they transact with the text, and they extend this response through weaving their own interpretation. Thus a metaphorical interpretative response with the author’s text is evoked, but within a fictional context.

**Fictional context**

The concept of a fictional context is crucial to the above discussion because the facilitating of fictional contexts is at the heart of my drama programs. For example, Chapter Eight exemplifies how drama differs from simulated role-play—an activity common in ESL teaching. A drama program was developed to demonstrate how language and literacy skills could be better achieved through drama as opposed to simulation. Bolton (1992) refers to forms of simulation as “swimming pool drama” (p. 112), and O’Toole (1992) as “proto drama” (p. 79).

To explain “proto drama” O’Toole (1992) gives an example of a lesson on the elderly where the teachers took on the role of old people and concludes that “the children were given a role-function, which was not explicitly fictional. ... They were not in any way enrolled as people other than themselves” (p. 82). He then details another drama experience that was enactment, because the framework for establishing a fictional
context was developed using a variety of dramatic strategies to realise the elements of drama: role, focus, tension, time, location, language, movement, mood and symbol.

It is the way these elements evolve that is at the crux of educational drama methodology, particularly when drama is used as a learning medium within other curriculum areas, as the purpose for the drama may well influence the facilitation of these elements.

**Drama as a cross-curricula learning medium**

O'Toole's (1992) concept of negotiating and renegotiating is useful in exploring issues related to the use of drama as a cross-curricula learning medium. More negotiation may take place within a drama lesson whose prime objective is to enhance dramatic skills than when used as a learning medium in another “subject” (O'Toole, 1992). In the latter case O'Toole (1992) terms this “functional role-play” (p. 23). In explaining “functional role-play” in cross-curricula programs he states:

> ...the drama is usually invoked merely in order to explore the subject matter. The **fictional context** is almost invariably chosen by the teacher, and although there may be some negotiation of particular elements among the group, all the processual organisation of the drama is managed by the teacher in pursuit of very specific objectives, normally set in advance. ... . However, it is not always so cut and dried; some differences of approach to functional role-play do allow for a degree of flexibility in the learning experience (O'Toole, 1992, p. 23).

Awareness of the degree of negotiation in cross-curricula planning is important for two reasons. First, the current emphasis in Australian curriculum planning is on matching
learning experiences to prescribed learning outcomes (Willis & Kissane, 1997). Teachers should be aware that the "here and now" (Bolton, 1992; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) effect of drama may not be achieved if this matching is rigidly adhered to for as Bolton (as cited in Davis & Lawrence, 1986) further cautions: "the teacher can only make available—he cannot guarantee that a particular symbolic object or action is going to resonate meaning for the participants" (p. 68). In addition, so many outcomes cannot be either predetermined or preempted (Cusworth and Simons, 1997). Second, when drama is used as a cross-curricula learning medium, the teacher might manage the theme and subsequent processual elements, but with a clear understanding that negotiation and renegotiation is at the crux of the process, and furthermore with an understanding of the drama strategies that engage participants in the enactment process.

The two reasons stated above have influenced how I have undertaken my research when using drama as a cross-curricula learning medium. Although the pre-planned framework for any given drama might remain constant when used in different settings, the process of negotiation and renegotiation within unique settings and the subsequent outcomes cannot be replicated. Therefore, within the interpretive paradigm I have chosen action research and case study methodology to collect my data on how drama enhances children’s language and literacy development.
Conclusion

*The relationship between theory and practice is crucial to any teacher’s ability to change. Unless we understand why we do what we do, and so reflect and improve upon the emerging practice, good teaching can only be a matter of good luck, and teaching practice just pulling out another ‘bag of tricks’* (Simons, 1995, p. 4).

This overarching statement articulates the theoretical concepts underpinning this portfolio by demonstrating how current theories in both reading and educational drama enhance children’s critical response to what they read. It is argued that replacing basal readers with literary texts without a change in pedagogy will not necessarily enhance children’s language and literacy development. For students to critically read texts they must be engaged in teaching/learning activities that directly attend to both the linguistic and story discourse. Educational drama methodology is one way to achieve this because it enables readers to interpret the text and through the process of enactment reconstruct the meanings within another context. They as the readers, see how they are positioned and in turn can position their viewers through enactment.

All articles in the chapters that follow demonstrate how drama strategies engage participants in the enactment process and at the same time attend to children’s language and literacy development. They do so by clearly articulating the specific theoretical basis that underpins the particular practice and/or drama program being explained. Most articles provide examples of children’s responses from settings in which I have
worked to exemplify the power of drama to engage children in critical language and literacy practices.

Collectively, these articles demonstrate how educational drama attends directly to the artistry of the drama itself. In addition, when the focus for the drama program is a literary work, it clearly differentiates these narratives from their basal counterparts. Thus a pedagogical approach is signified that endorses both literary texts and educational drama’s rightful place as rigorous and intellectually demanding media for enhancing language and literacy development.

Chapter Two now follows and the first article for this portfolio is presented. It is the first in terms of date of publication and it explains two of the drama plans so central to subsequent research described within this portfolio.

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CHAPTER TWO

DRAMA PROGRAMS FOR NOVELS AND PICTURE BOOKS

Article published as:

Preface

The Primary English Teaching Association (PETA), which has the largest membership of Australian primary teachers of any association, published the book Beyond the script: Drama in the classroom (Cusworth & Simons, 1997). The aims of PETA are:

- promote the importance of children's language and literacy learning in all areas of the school curriculum;
- promote the importance of the teacher's role in education;
- serve as a professional forum for the sharing of current research and practice relevant to the teaching and learning of spoken and written language;

The book Beyond the script: Drama in the classroom, was designed for generalist primary teachers who feel apprehensive about teaching drama, and was written in anticipation of the new Creative Arts K-6 syllabus (Board of Studies, NSW, in progress). The major focus of the book is to examine how educational drama
methodology can be used within English programs to enhance language and literacy learning. It examines the main drama forms and strategies, and gives practical ideas and explanatory examples. I was invited to write this chapter to illuminate the theoretical underpinnings articulated in preceding chapters and did so by providing examples of two comprehensive drama plans which teachers could use within their literature reading programs. A novel and a picture book were selected so that the possibilities for using drama with each narrative genre could be seen. Both books are examples of quality literature, which have won and/or been short-listed for prestigious awards. Each book addresses cultural diversity within Australian society.

As these drama plans are designed to engage the reader to interpret the meanings of the books and then reconstruct these taking into account their own knowledge and background, they demonstrate that drama is an appropriate teaching/learning pedagogy within literature reading programs.

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Board of Studies, NSW. Creative Arts K-6 syllabus. North Sydney, Australia: Board of Studies, NSW. [in progress].


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1 Onion tears (Kidd, 1989)
   - National Book Council’s Children’s Book of the Year Award (Short-listed)
   - NSW Premier’s Literary Award (Winner)

Our excursion (Walker & Cox, 1994)
   - 1995 National Book Council’s Children’s Book of the Year Award (Short-listed)
   - 1995 Australian Multicultural Children’s Literature Award (Short-listed)


Beyond the Script
Drama in the class

Robyn Cusworth
Jennifer Simons

Primary English Teaching Association
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Appendix: Drama programs for novels and picture books

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APPENDIX

DRAMA PROGRAMS FOR NOVELS AND PICTURE BOOKS

Margery Hertzberg

This appendix provides examples of how to use drama during the reading of two books — a novel, Onion Tears by Diana Kidd, and a picture book, Our Excursion by Kate Walker and David Cox. It demonstrates how children’s understanding of the drama form can be developed along with their skills in reading. The ideas presented can of course be applied to other books.

Framework defined

As these activities have been planned to enhance children’s reading development, they have been designed to follow the model for reading literature developed by Nicoll, Unsworth and Parker (1987). This model was chosen because it clearly delineates the different aspects of the reading process, viz:

- getting ready for the text
- getting into the text
- coming back to the text
- going beyond the text.

Each activity appears under the appropriate category so that its purpose in terms of reading skill development is clear. Examples of responses from children are also included, in separate frames.

Diana Kidd, Onion Tears (Collins)

Resources One copy of Onion Tears; extracts on overhead transparencies.

Suitability Years 4–7. Note that if your class includes students with a refugee background, you should consider their own experiences before using this book as a focus for close study. They might find some of the incidents traumatic.

Synopsis A Vietnamese refugee girl, Nam-Huong, arrives in Australia without her immediate family. She lives with an adopted ‘aunt’ and attends the local school, where her unwillingness to join in or talk to the other children is misunderstood. Cross-cultural differences are a major theme.
Sequence of activities. The activities relate to the first section of the book, where cross-cultural differences are explored through various incidents of teasing. The purpose of this sequence is for students to react and respond to the situations portrayed in the text. It’s better not to draw attention to the teasing theme initially, as it will surface naturally in the course of the activities.

Getting into the text

Reading

Read the text down to page 14.

Hot-seating

Although we don’t yet know much about the characters, it’s useful to hot-seat a student as Nam-Huong to explore her likely feelings at this stage of the story. It doesn’t matter whether the supposed Nam-Huong’s answers match the subsequent story-line. The aim is for students to predict some of the feelings and reactions which Nam-Huong might have felt, given the incidents that have occurred so far.

When one Year 5 student assumed the role of Nam-Huong, she was asked if she liked her teacher. She said she didn’t because the teacher let Danny tease her. In fact, in the story Nam-Huong’s teacher becomes her mentor and a very close relationship develops between them. However, a mistaken prediction can form the basis for a later discussion of what really happens as the story unfolds.

Getting into the text and coming back to the text

Sculpting, still image and ‘cooled’ drama

Put the following extract (from page 9) onto an overhead transparency and leave it displayed throughout the activities.

Everyone at school keeps asking me what my name means.
‘Does it mean princess?’ Mary says.
‘COCONUT!’ Tessa shouts.
‘Butterfly!’ ’Dragon!’ They all try and guess.
‘I know,’ says Danny. ’It means DIM SIM!’
But I just shake my head.
One day I’ll tell them what it means.
My Mum loved my name. She said it was very special.

Sculpting. Divide the students into pairs and ask one to sculpt the other to show how Nam-Huong might look as the other characters focus on her. All the sculptures can be shown as statues in the centre of the room and the class can then discuss differences and similarities.
**Drama program for novels**

Still image  Divide students into groups of four, in which they assume the roles of Nam-Huong, Danny, Tessa and Mary. The groups discuss the extract displayed and then make a still image of the scene using all four characters. Each group in turn shows their image to the rest of the class.

‘Cooled’ drama  In groups of five, students further discuss the scene and break it into three sections, each reflecting a different emotion. Each section is then frozen and held as an image, with selected dialogue added by a narrator. The narrator also signals with a hand clap when to change to the next image in the sequence. Groups practice their chosen sequence.

One Year 6 group did it this way:

1st image. Mary, Tessa and Danny were all leaning forward and looking at Nam-Huong.

*Narrator: ‘What does your name mean?’ (Clap)*

2nd image. This time Mary had her arm around Nam-Huong to comfort her. Tessa was distancing herself and Danny had his hands on his hips and a spiteful expression on his face.

*Narrator: ‘It means Dim Sim!’ (Clap)*

3rd image. Nam-Huong turned away and hung her head. Mary looked concerned. Tessa looked indifferent and Danny was sniggering.

*(Narrator paused in silence and then clapped to signify the end)*

**Coming back to the text and going beyond the text**

**Role walk and tapping in**

Reading and discussion  Read from page 15 to page 21, and put the following extract (from page 21) onto an overhead transparency.

```
Rice and pork
and funny black sauce.
Whose lunch is it?
Nam’s lunch
```

Discuss this to elicit Danny’s motive for writing it and to find out how students think Nam-Huong might be feeling.

**Role walk**  Ask students to close their eyes and imagine they are Nam-Huong. Then conduct a role walk with students in role as Nam-Huong. While they’re walking, ask them to think of a word to describe how they feel when they read this ‘poem’.
Tapping in  While the role walk is in progress, tap participants on the shoulder to signal that they are to say their word. Allow them to say 'Pass' if they don't want to share their thoughts at this stage.

Going beyond the text (to come back to it)

Verbal collage
Give each student a strip of paper. Without identifying themselves, they write on it a word or phrase to describe how people might feel when teased or humiliated. Papers are then collected in the middle of the room and students each take one (but not their own). This procedure ensures the anonymity of what follows.

Arrange the group as a choir and ask one person to say their word or phrase. Others follow one at a time when they feel it's appropriate. It doesn't matter if they happen to coincide with someone else, but they shouldn't treat it as a race. The end comes when there is no one left to speak — an effective and poignant close.

If students want to repeat the collage, there's no need to keep the sequence constant; it will change spontaneously each time.

Parallel improvisation
Divide students into groups of four to five and explain that they are to improvise an incident in which someone is humiliated, bullied and/or teased. For example, it might involve a student being teased in the playground. It may help students to focus their ideas if you write these questions on the board:

Who are we?
Where are we?
What are we doing?
Why are we doing it?

Tell groups that the improvisation is to end just as the incident is about to be resolved and that the ending is to be shown as a still image. This builds in an element of constraint (see p. 8) and also ensures that the improvisation will lead somewhere instead of just fizzling out.

Suggest that improvisations last about a minute. Make sure that you allow enough time for planning (about ten minutes), as this will enable students to really explore and discuss the issues. Then encourage them to get up and rehearse, as it's in the 'doing' that most refinement occurs.

One Year 4 group played children being selected for softball teams by the team captains. The improvisation ended just as the last child was very reluctantly called to one of the teams. The concluding image showed four children sniggering and the unwanted child cowering.
Drama program for novels

Viewing, reflection and debriefing
Groups take it in turns to perform their improvisations. After all have been seen, discuss the issues raised. Use questions to provoke discussion — e.g. ‘You’re no longer ——-, but how did you feel when you were?’, or ‘Did you like the character you were?’

From improvisation to playbuilding
It’s often possible to extend the improvisations to make a play. Students need to reconsider them and work out a suitable sequence for combining them (which could be interspersed with the voice collage worked on previously).

One Year 6 class performed six different improvisations that ranged from bullying incidents in the playground to teasing a poor reader and sibling rivalry. Two were similar and were folded into one. The class decided to have a narrator, who introduced the play with a short account of teasing and its consequences (written by the whole class). Then the rest of the class (who were seated in position) stood up and performed the first of three voice collages. They sat down again while the first two improvisations were played. The voice collage was repeated (in a different form) and then came the remaining three improvisations. To conclude, the voice collage was repeated once more, but this time each student left the stage after speaking.

Possible extension: playing to an external audience
If, for example, it’s your turn to provide the assembly item, the play can be quite quickly refined and rehearsed for an external audience.

Kate Walker & David Cox, Our Excursion (Omnibus)

Resources  At least eight copies of Our Excursion.

Suitability  Years 2–6. The language is simple, but the main theme (consequences when people act at cross purposes) appeals to a wide age range. This book is particularly suitable for upper primary students who are reluctant readers and for ESL students who need special assistance with English.

Synopsis  Our Excursion is a picture book story. The school excursion to the Art Gallery begins ordinarily enough, but a series of humorous mishaps results in the unfolding of extraordinary events.

Point of view and narrative style  One objective of this drama program is to enhance students' understanding of point of view and narrative style. The events are related in the style of a recount by one of the children, but there is an absence of descriptive language and detail. However, the illustrations extend the story, revealing much that’s not found in the written text.
—Beyond the Script—

Getting ready for the text

Prediction
By looking at the cover students can predict that this book is about a class of happy children who go on an excursion by public transport (the illustration is framed within a tram ticket).

Getting into the text

First reading
Read the book with your students. Multiple copies are vital because a complete reading is only possible when both written and visual texts are available.

Coming back to the text

Second reading
A second reading is important because many aspects can only be understood once the first reading is completed. For example, there must be some discussion of narrator and point of view, and it’s not clear till the end that the narrator is one of the girls. Discuss also how the illustrations provide details missing from the written text. For example, although Roberto is a major character, his exploits are only fully realised in the illustrations.

Hot-seating
A significant and commendable feature of Our Excursion is the portrayal of individual characters. However, it’s only possible to appreciate this after several readings. Children are quick to notice that one of the boys, Dennis, is to be seen picking his nose in each illustration, and you can turn this into a useful focus for looking at what distinguishes the other characters. However, if you want to avoid concentration on Dennis, you can write on the board the names of the major characters (Ms Mobbs, Roberto, ‘Me’, Carmel, Ann, Jane and the ice-cream man) and ask students to select one to examine in more depth.

Students have to refer back to relevant sections of the book to explore their chosen character, and then, as a whole class activity, they can hot-seat each other to develop a fuller profile of the various characters.

Sculpting
There are quite a number of dramatic moments in Our Excursion which are suitable for sculpting, but again they’re only apparent when text and illustrations are matched. One possibility would be to divide the class into pairs and have one partner sculpt the other as Carmel when her lunch box is dropped onto the road.
Reflection and discussion
As students examine the sculptures, focus discussion on the use of body language to interpret a situation.

Still image
The tension arising from a complication in a story can be 'felt' more acutely when students make a still image. For example, they might choose the moment when the ice-cream man demands payment but the children have no money. Have them form groups of six, refer back to the picture and decide on the role each will take. Then they arrange and position themselves to capture the moment.

Reflection and discussion
Again, discuss how meaning is conveyed by using expression, gesture and position.

Tapping in
Select one of the images and ask the group to form it again. Tap each participant on the shoulder in turn, so that they verbalise the thoughts of their character in this situation.

In the book Jane and Ann are always portrayed as 'good' children. In this particular illustration they are seen enjoying their ice-creams. In her role as Jane, one Year 3 student said, 'I know this is wrong but I'm going to eat it anyway!'

Summary
Up to this point, dramatic strategies have been used to achieve a detailed reading of the book. However, there's been no drama as such. The remainder of the unit uses Our Excursion as a stimulus for playbuilding, at the same time drawing attention to its linguistic and visual structures, which are typical of many modern picture books.

Going beyond the text

Extraction
Refer back to the book, reiterating that it is a recount written from one girl's point of view, and propose that the class develop a drama based on a fictional excursion in which unforeseen events occur. The overall framework is to be planned by the whole class; then groups of six will each plan one of the scenes and develop an unscripted improvisation lasting about two minutes.
Beyond the Script

A script in the style of a recount will be jointly constructed and interspersed between each improvisation. This text will perform the function of the narrator in Our Excursion, while the improvisations will reflect the illustrations.

Defining the drama
Write the following headings across the board:

WHO ARE WE? WHERE ARE WE?
WHAT ARE WE DOING? WHY ARE WE DOING IT?

Brainstorm and record ideas for scenarios under them (usually three are enough). Negotiate the most popular and then discuss and amplify it.

One Year 3 class made the following suggestions in their initial brainstorm:
- Year 6 going to England to see the Queen for fun
- Year 4 going on an excursion to the local area as part of a project on the local community
- Year 4 going to the beach to learn about life in rock pools for a science project.

The third proved the most popular. Further brainstorming established that the children lived in western Sydney and were going to Long Reef Beach because it had many rock pools.

Building belief
The whole class draws a map of the setting where the drama is to take place, adding details as they occur. Although this can be done on the board, a piece of butcher's paper long enough for everyone to sit round is better, since it's easier to keep for reference in subsequent sessions.

Being involved in constructing the setting promotes a sense of ownership in the students. As the map progresses, it will clarify and extend the decisions made earlier and help to develop ideas for events that might be included in the drama.

Our Year 3 class decided that their drama would take place at the beach and nearby park (the travel element would be excluded), and so their map detailed this setting only. It included the rock pools, sharks and swimmers in the surf, play equipment in the park, and so forth.

Improvisation
The class divides into groups of six, each of which selects a time and a place on the map where its improvisation will take place. At this stage groups may wish to add more details to their particular site on the map.
Planning  Each group chooses an unforeseen problem. To establish the problem, groups need to make decisions about the following questions (which should be written up on the board):

What is happening?
Who is involved?
What is going to happen? (i.e. problem/tension)
How is this event going to be resolved?

Developing tension  Include the constraint that the improvisation should end just as the problem occurs. It's also important to stress that as each improvisation is part of a sequence, the problem has to be one that allows the story to continue. For instance, no one may die!

One of the Year 3 groups decided their improvisation would take place on a rock platform. One of the characters was taking a photo of the group. To fit them all in, she stepped back, and back, and back . . . and the improvisation ended just as she was about to fall into another rock pool.

Defining the focus (language, movement, mood)  Ask each group to begin and end their improvisation with a still image.

Rehearsal  Groups practice their improvisations.

Viewing, reflection and debriefing  Discuss the improvisations, and refine them if necessary to perfect the sequence. Reflection and debriefing are really important at this stage. As mentioned earlier, a major theme of Our Excursion is the consequences that result from people acting at cross purposes. Ask questions to elicit discussion about this, and how students felt in their particular roles.

Coming back to the text to go beyond the text

Writing the recount  Reiterate that the book is a recount. Re-read it and discuss the features and purposes of both written and visual texts. Then jointly construct a recount to link the improvisations.

The narrator's script composed by our Year 3 class began like this:

Last week our class 3B went on an excursion to Long Reef Beach. We took our clipboards and lunch. Mr Brown said we could wear our ordinary clothes but to make sure they were old ones. Some of us even brought our cameras. When we got there we had recess and then he told us to go to the toilet.
Beyond the Script

(Improvisation 1. This showed a child locked in the toilet and Mr Brown climbing over the door to help her out.)

After that we went over to the rock pools. We had to sketch and label the animals and plants we could see. If we had a camera we were allowed to take photos.

(Improvisation 2. This showed a child trying to catch a crab and getting bitten on the finger.)

Perform the sequence

In this sequence it's the process rather than the product that's of prime significance. However, with very few rehearsals the drama could be refined and performed for an external audience.
CHAPTER THREE

I HAVE A MONKEY AND HE IS STILL ALIVE!
USING DRAMA TO ENHANCE LANGUAGE AND
LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Article published as:

Preface

*The Primary Update* is a national professional journal for primary teachers. It aims to provide information and articles related to significant issues in primary education. It is not subject specific but addresses topics that are important across the Key Learning Areas. This article was selected to address the issue of integration across the primary curriculum—in this case using drama as a learning medium in English programs that have a whole language focus.

"Yes...but how do you explicitly address phonological concepts with ESL children within a whole language program?" and "What else can you do besides round robin reading?" are two frequently asked and discussed questions by trainee students in my tutorials at University. This article reports on research that demonstrates how this can be done using Readers’ Theatre.

The book *Something from nothing* is an example of a picture book whose meaning cannot be understood unless the illustrations are read in combination with the written text. The drama plan in this article demonstrates how a child’s understanding of the
multiple themes and stories within many picture books can be enhanced using sculpting, still image and improvisation. At the same time children’s own skills in both oral and written storying are developed as they reconstruct the meanings of the book by bringing to it their own critical interpretations.

It should be noted that this drama plan specifically concentrates on Joseph’s story and the mice story. As such, the focus is on growing up not just physically, but emotionally. There are many other stories within this book that could be explored, such as the way of life in a shtetl in the late 1800’s (not “in the late 1900’s”—a misprint in the article on page two). If the story of life in a shtetl was being explicitly addressed, then it would be appropriate to delve into the cultural diversity themes that this book details from an historical perspective. However, as the language and literacy focus for this drama plan is to attend to aspects of phonological awareness—the use of rhythm and rhyme and alliteration in language—Joseph’s story is closely examined. Then, using the mice story (the one of immediate appeal to this age group), the children interpret the illustrations and tell their own story using both written language (narration) and visual language (improvisation) to tell their story.

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I Have A Monkey
And He Is Still Alive!

Using Drama To Enhance Language And Literacy Development.

Introduction

This article details a drama program still in the trialing process which was written to enhance children's reading of the picture book Something From Nothing written and illustrated by Phoebe Gilman.

You may be wondering about the title of this paper. "Out of the mouths of babes" come some of the most profound reasons for including drama across curricular areas—in this case English. In June 1997 I began teaching the following drama program with a composite Year three/four class (nine and ten years of age). The book Something From Nothing has multiple themes and issues, but central to all is the story of a young child (Joseph) and his attachment to his security blanket. As an introduction to the program, the children were asked if they had a story to tell about a favourite item or toy they had as very young children. I hesitated to add that they might still own it because some children in middle childhood do not want to acknowledge what they consider 'babyish' in front of their peers. Not an issue with these children! Hands shot up and the storytelling began. Two children enthusiastically shared their stories but at the same time conformed to normal classroom etiquette of hands up and turn waiting. However, one little boy simply could not contain himself. "Tim' jumped to his feet, stood firmly and in earnest declared, "When I was a baby my Mum knitted me a monkey and he is still alive!" So began this class's journey with Joseph, as they, like him, affirmed the need to keep those things precious to us alive if only metaphorically. To explain how this happened the drama program is explained on the following pages.
Drama program for

Something From Nothing

Something from Nothing is an example of a picture book narrative that uses both written and visual text to tell the story. In fact there are three stories. The setting is a shtetl in the late 1900's. The written text tells Joseph's story with illustrations to match it. The mice story and the story of Joseph's extended family and village life are told in illustrated form only. Hence, it is advisable that you read the book before trying to follow this program. It is available in most school libraries and after winning the Ontario Arts Council and Canadian Booksellers Association 'Ruth Schwartz' Award, it is currently in stock in many book shops.

Anticipated outcomes

English
- Integrates a variety of strategies for interpreting printed and visual texts
- Identifies simple symbolic meanings and stereotypes in texts and discusses their purpose and meaning
- Identifies and uses the linguistic structures and features characteristic of a range of text types to construct meaning
- Recognises that certain text types and features are associated with particular purposes and audiences
  (Curriculum Corporation, 1994a, p. 55)

Drama
- Uses experience and imagination to make drama
- Makes choices about drama elements and organises them in expressive ways.
- Plans and presents drama for a familiar audience
- Responds to drama, giving reasons for preferences
- Discusses the ways drama is made and used for a range of purposes
  (Curriculum Corporation, 1994b, p. 54)

Synopsis
Many young children possess a security item, be it a favourite teddy or well worn piece of cloth. But what a dilemma for not only the child but the parents when it is lost, or becomes too old and tattered, or the child's carers perceive the child too old for a security item to remain their constant companion. This is the main story in Something From Nothing. Joseph loves his blanket, but as he gets older so too does his blanket — and smaller as it begins to fray. Fortunately for Joseph his Grandfather finds ways to keep it.

Resources
Seven (1:4) copies of the book are necessary, because a thorough reading is only possible when both the written and visual texts are read. Children will need to see the illustrations clearly and work with copies in their groups. Something From Nothing is available in big book form and a kit can be purchased which includes a big book, 4 small books and a cassette.

Activity 1

Story telling
- Whole class discussion about a favourite toy or item students had as young children or indeed may still have.
- Two children tell their story to the whole class, and then to ensure that all children have ample time to share their experiences with someone else, children select a partner and tell this friend their story.
- Pairs regroup into fours and partners tell the other pair their friend's story.

Activity 2

Individual Depiction
- Participants stand in a large circle with their backs to the centre of the circle. That is, they face outwards as opposed to inwards. This is done so that children's depictions can remain private if they so wish. In this introductory exercise students are only in "shadow" role. It is necessary to protect and respect their right to anonymous thoughts and feelings.
- Participants are asked to make a depiction that captures the moment when they are holding or looking at this favourite item. Allow about one minute for thinking and preparation time. Children freeze this depiction.
- Now ask children to imagine that this item is lost. Children change their depiction to show how they might react to this.

Note: This activity is designed to focus children on the forthcoming story and activities. It is not necessary to show these to the rest of the class.
Activity 3

Shared reading of story
Something From Nothing

It is preferable that only one book is used for this activity so that children and teacher are reading together. Ideally the big book or an opaque projector should be used so that children can clearly see the illustrations.

Activity 4

Second reading of the book

Provide groups of four to five children with a copy of the book. If children are independent readers allow them to read the book together in their groups. If children need help reading the story again with them but make sure you stop when children discover new bits of information – only possible on second and subsequent readings. (I have now read this book scores of times and still discover new details on most occasions. This is one of the features of quality literature as opposed to basal readers which it should be noted are a comparable price!)

Activity 5

Readers’ Theatre

This Readers’ Theatre activity is designed for classroom use only. The purpose of this activity is for children to practice oral reading skills and develop an understanding of the role of the narrator in narrative texts. Development of oral reading skills is important, but all too often ‘round robin reading’ is the only experience offered to children. At best this practice is boring and at worst humiliating. In contrast, Readers’ Theatre allows students to practice their oral reading skills in a fun and motivating way. Furthermore, it allows children to rehearse their part before reading it to the rest of the class. Not only does this negate the embarrassment of miscuing in front of peers, it also allows children to repeat the reading several times. Repetition is important in developing early reading skills. To complete this activity children will need to read the script two or three times. Because they enjoy the activity, children do not find this tedious and are usually oblivious to the fact that they are being asked to read something several times.

Space precludes a full explanation about Readers’ Theatre. For teachers new to this drama form consult (Cusworth, 1991). Her article provides a comprehensive introduction to Readers’ Theatre.

An exemplar of the overhead transparency I use with children to explain the process of Readers’ Theatre is included in the Appendix.

For copyright reasons the full script that I used with the children is not published in this article. An excerpt from the beginning of this script appears in the Appendix to aid in explanation. It is suggested that the teacher write the script. Although important that children also have this opportunity, it is recommended that teachers only plan for this after children are very familiar with the total process and have been provided with sufficient models.

If children are unfamiliar with this drama form, make an overhead transparency of both the completed Readers’ Theatre script and exemplar and explain the process to the class. You might consider a whole class reading if children are new to this drama form. For example all but 6 children in the class might read Narrator 4 in unison and the remaining 6 children take the other six speaking parts. Further, consider the following. As Joseph and Grandpa have very easy parts in terms of word recognition, why not ask your weaker readers to take on these parts. What a buzz for them — they have the star parts!

If the class is familiar with Readers’ Theatre refresh their understanding using the attached exemplar or similar. Divide the children into groups of seven and give them their scripts to work on. If one group has less than seven people give one person one or more narrator parts.

Consider providing a range of percussion instruments because the inclusion of sound effects is very effective in certain sections of this script. For example, each time Narrator 4 reads “and his scissors went snip, snip, snip and his needle flew in and out and in and out”, cutting sounds can be made by scraping two pieces of metal together.

Activity 6

View and reflect

Groups perform their interpretation and the class discuss these, noting the different interpretations. Link this to the way drama elements such as voice, gesture, space and movement contribute to conveying meaning. For example, a likely focus might be on the rising volume and/or tonal changes Joseph uses as he repeats “Grandpa can fix it!” Similarly the linguistic features of rhythm, rhyme and alliteration are made prominent in this activity and should be discussed.

Activity 7

Interpreting the visual text

There are three visual stories in this book. The one addressed in this part of the program is the mice story. This story juxtaposes Joseph’s story but unlike Joseph’s story is only told in illustrated form. It is about a family of mice who live underneath the floor boards in Grandfather’s tailor shop. As Grandfather cuts the blanket to make another smaller but equally precious item for Joseph, the material scraps fall through the floor boards and are then used by the mice to furnish their house.

Return to book Something From Nothing. Focus children’s attention to the last page of the book where Grandfather is reading a story to his grandchildren.

Discuss what his likely story might be and/or relate back to previous discussions the class has had in the shared and group reading sessions. It is most likely that a lot of discussion has already occurred because children are fascinated with this aspect of the book.

In groups of three or four, children select one of the mice scenes and depict this scene as a frozen moment.
Children show these depictions to the rest of the class. Rather than asking viewers to guess what this depiction is about, ask one of the group members to explain which depiction they are enacting before showing it. This avoids the guessing game ritual which deflects from the purpose of this learning experience which is for participants to analyse and interpret the visual text. If made into a guessing game children will avoid adding any complex nuances to aid in their interpretation.

After each group shows its depiction, the class returns to this page in the book to discuss how this particular mice scene corresponds to and/or juxtaposes Joseph’s story.

After all depictions have been viewed discuss children’s reasons for selecting particular scenes. It is likely they chose segments with plenty of action and story. This discussion is intended to focus children’s attention to dramatic moments, and the role of elements such as tension and mood used in both drama and literature to convey meaning.

Activity 8
View and Reflect

If children have not already noticed, focus their attention to the layout of the mice story. Most pictures are framed giving them a cartoon or film like appearance.

Children return to the scene they have already depicted and write a piece of dialogue for some or all of the characters on small ‘post it notes’. These can be stuck above the picture, as in the example on this page.

Students return to their original depiction which they hold frozen for two seconds. They then improvise it by adding their dialogue and actions. At the end of the dialogue they return to a frozen moment which should be slightly different to the opening one.

As children work on these the teacher notes the scenes chosen and records these onto an overhead transparency for reference in the following activity.

Activity 9
Creating the narrated drama

This activity is a variation on several written drama forms. Perhaps its closest link is to Chamber Theatre and Story Theatre in that both narrative and dialogue are used and each group prepares a particular part of the story (Morgan and Saxton, 1987, 126-125).

Children and teacher return to the last page.

Using the joint construction model for writing a story they write their version of the mice story.

The scenes already made into depictions will be interspersed with in the narrated storytelling.

For example the Year 3/4 class decided they wanted to focus on how Grandfather mouse got his story telling cushion. At the time of writing, this activity has not been completed by the children. The following example shows how this narrated drama might look in its finished form. It has been written by students in my preschool drama elective who participated in a workshop on this program.

When Joseph was a baby, "Look, mother, a wonderful blanket..."
The Button That Joseph Lost

Grandchild: Grandfather, please tell us how you got your storytelling cushion.

Grandfather: Well gather around and I will tell you. When your Granny and I were first married we lived under the floor of a tailor's workshop. It was a very barren place, but in time we furnished it beautifully with the most magnificent blue cloth that fell through the floor boards.

Now, this material came from the baby blanket the tailor made for his grandson when he was born. The boy's name was Joseph and as he grew older his mother insisted that he throw the blanket out. She said it was too dirty. It wasn't really. It was just that she thought he was too old for it.

Rather than throw it away he asked his father to make it into something else, so his grandfather made it into a jacket. Each time the tailor cut the material little bits would fall to the ground. Some of these remnants were small enough to fit through the cracks in the floorboards.

Show depiction 1: This depicts the scene on page 1 where the mother and father mouse find some blue material that falls between the floor boards.

Dialogue:
Father: Oh look! Some beautiful material.
Mother: There is just enough material here to make some beautiful blankets for my babies.

Grandfather: Your granny made it into beautiful clothes. She made me a vest, your mummies the most beautiful dresses, your daddies smart overalls and a lovely scarf for herself. I remember how we all went out in these clothes into the wood collecting leaves and gum nuts to furnish our house. On market days we'd hide underneath the table in the vegetable stall and collect bits and pieces as they fell down.

Show depiction 2 which depicts the scene at the market place.

Dialogue:
Children: These peas look good!
Father: So does this bean!
Children: This seed would make a great ball!

Grandfather: During the week your daddies would go to school. In those days only boys were allowed an education. Your mummies used to spy on your daddies when they were in the classroom.

Show depiction 3. This depicts the male mice in school and the female mice spying at them.

Dialogue:
Teacher: Now who can read this?
Student: I can!
Girls: It's not fair. Why can't we go to school too?

[Story continues to show other depictions and concludes with...]

Grandfather: Time passed and finally the tailor only had enough material to make a button. One day when Joseph was at the well helping his mum get their daily water supplies his button snapped off. It fell through the cobble stones. Your mummies and daddies found it and brought it home.

They were so proud of themselves. They thought it was very precious and wanted it used for something very special. So... what do you think we did with it?

Grandchildren: You made it into this story telling stool!
Conclusion
My journey with these children using drama experiences to enhance language and literacy development is only beginning. The above program demonstrates how drama activities can actively engage the children in a thorough reading of a literary text. Of course, drama is but one strategy that can be used to achieve this. Strategies such as story mapping, character profiles and constructing timelines would all be purposeful activities for this particular book. However, it is the unique power of drama that maintains my interest in devising drama programs for literature based reading units. Central and unique to drama is enactment; the ability to take on a role, to step into another person's shoes. Enacting another person's point of view allows children to enter a fictional world where the literal is interpreted - the essence of literary study.

Appendix 1
Exemplar of overhead transparency to explain Readers' Theatre activity to children.

Preparing Your Readers' Theatre
1. Practice reading the script together
2. In the following practices think about the following aspects and as a group decide on:
   - **Verbal expression:** How will you speak your part?
     - **tone** (bouncy/sad)
     - **volume** (loud/soft)
     - **pace** (quickly/slowly)
   - **Body language**
     - **facial expressions**
     - **hand and other body gestures**
   - **Position:** In Readers' Theatre you do not move very much and you face the audience
     - where will you stand or sit?
     - will you alter your position at times?
   - **Sound effects:**
     - do you want to use some instruments for sound effects?
     - do you want to use body percussion?

References


Acknowledgement
I wish to acknowledge and thank Mireille Farrell and her Year 3/4 class at Harbord Primary School for making this project possible.

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Appendix 2
Example of a possible Readers' Theatre Script. This is an adapted extract taken from pages one to six of the book *Something From Nothing*. Scripts shall not be used for public performance without prior written permission from Scholastic Canada.

**Something From Nothing**

**BY PHOEBE GILMAN**

**Narrator 1:** When Joseph was a baby, his grandfather made him a wonderful blanket...

**Narrator 3:** to keep him warm and cozy and to chase away bad dreams.

**Narrator 2:** But as Joseph grew older, the wonderful blanket grew older too.

**Narrator 1:** One day his mother said to him:

**Mother:** Joseph, look at your blanket. It's frayed, it's worn, it's unsightly, it's torn. It is time to throw it out.

**Joseph:** Grandpa can fix it!

**Narrator 2:** Joseph's grandfather took the blanket and turned it round and round...

**Grandpa:** Hmm...

**Narrator 4:** and his scissors went snip, snip, snip and his needle flew in and out and in and out.

**Grandpa:** There's just enough material here to make... a wonderful jacket!

**Narrator 3:** Joseph put on the wonderful jacket and went outside to play.

**Narrator 2:** But as Joseph grew older, the wonderful jacket grew older too.

**Narrator 1:** One day his mother said to him...

**Mother:** Joseph, look at your jacket. It's shrunken and small, doesn't fit you at all. It is time to throw it out!

**Joseph:** Grandpa can fix it.

**Narrator 2:** Joseph's grandfather took the jacket and turned it round and round...

**Grandpa:** Hmm...

**Narrator 4:** and his scissors went snip, snip, snip and his needle flew in and out and in and out.

**Grandpa:** There's just enough material here to make... a wonderful vest!

**Narrator 3:** Joseph wore the wonderful vest to school the very next day.

**Narrator 2:** But as Joseph grew older, the wonderful vest grew older too.

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For more details of similar drama activities see this new PETA publication...

**BEYOND THE SCRIPT**

**Drama in the Classroom**

Many teachers feel apprehensive about teaching drama. Yet drama enables students to extend their understandings of the world, develop their imaginations and see things from a range of different viewpoints.

This book takes a distinctively fresh look at the main drama forms and strategies, including still image, teacher in role, mantle of the expert, storytelling, puppetry and readers' theatre, and shows how to use them to enhance learning in the classroom. Issues like programming and evaluation are discussed too, and the authors have included plenty of practical examples of teachers and students using drama to negotiate meanings and develop new knowledge and skills.

**About the authors.**

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**About PETA** PETA, the Primary English Teaching Association, was founded in Sydney in 1972 as an independent association of professional educators and parents.

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**Reference**

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORY INTO PRACTICE: USING DRAMA TO ENHANCE LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Article published as:


Preface

This article was published in *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, which is the refereed journal of the Australian Literacy Educators' Association. It is one of the major literacy journals in its field and the only refereed journal in Australia that has a specific Primary focus. The aims of this journal follow:

*The editors of AJLL aim to:*

- provide balanced and in-depth investigation of literacy practices and theories in everyday settings, including classrooms;
- enhance understanding of literacy issues in relation to their wider educational and social contexts;
- help readers keep abreast of current literacy research;
- examine current research with a view as to how it might be implemented for classroom teachers;
- encourage the identity of classroom teachers as researchers;
- provide a forum in which literacy professionals from all settings can exchange and discuss ideas and practices relevant to their work (Australian Literacy Educators' Association, [http://www.alea.edu.au](http://www.alea.edu.au)).
The links between theory and practice are articulated in this article through the report of research findings from an action research project at a school that has an established partnership with the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, where I teach. The report documents the processes of reflection "on action" and "in action" (Schon, 1983). It demonstrates how drama can enhance children's understanding of the multiple role of illustrations in picture narratives. In this case, the explicit focus is on the role of illustrations to elaborate upon the written text and/or tell stories not contained within the written text. The narrative style of the book is a recount. The drama plan was designed to enable children to write their own narration in the form of a recount for their fictitious excursion and thus consolidate their understandings of this genre. One example of reflection on action documented in this article articulates my concern that further prediction activities are required in preparing children for a reading of this book—especially bilingual learners of English. In this article I express my concern that certain nuances were being missed, especially the humour. Perhaps because it is a funny book, some children without preparation are not quite sure how to "take it". Therefore, since writing this article I have revised the drama program (Hertzberg, in progress) to include a prediction activity using the strategy of teacher in role to "build up the field".

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AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY
Volume 21 Number 2 1998

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Theory into practice: Using drama to enhance literacy development

Margery Hertzberg

This article explains the relationship between theory and practice through an examination of drama activities written for a literature-based reading program. The unit of work demonstrates how drama can enhance children’s understanding of dramatic art and at the same time develop skills in the reading and writing of narrative texts.

Introduction
At a time when some politicians and senior educational policy makers are suggesting that the Arts are a ‘soft’ option it is more important than ever for teachers to articulate the educational reason for the Arts remaining in teaching programs.

The purpose of this article is to examine the relationship between the theory and practice of educational drama in order to clarify its status as a rigorous learning medium in cross-curricular programs — in this case English, and in particular literary and literacy development (Parsons et al., 1994; Taylor, 1994; Wagner, 1995). An action research project is reported that analyses a drama program in practice. The aim of the drama program is to enhance children’s understanding of literary texts and in so doing to give them practice in literacy skills such as skimming and scanning for information (reading) and the writing of narrative texts while at the same time developing skills in the art form of drama. The unit was trialled with early childhood/primary children and their class teachers and with trainee teachers at a university. The action research had three purposes:

• to trial the unit with children in order to verify its suitability as a teaching/learning experience for enhancing both drama and English skills;
• to help teachers develop their professional skills by observing and participating in actual classroom applications of drama strategies;
• to use the data for discussion with trainee teachers as part of their theoretical studies.
The first-year trainee teachers at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur were enrolled in a 13-week second semester subject entitled English and the Creative Arts. In this subject students examine some of the theoretical underpinnings of both English and Creative Arts pedagogy separately, and then explore the practical implications within an integrated learning framework. As trainee teachers (quite rightly) frequently question whether activities designed for university workshops 'really work' with children, the data collected from the schools were then analysed.

The data came from trials with several early childhood and primary classes in contrasting socio-economic areas of Sydney. The year groups included two Year 2 classes (seven- and eight-year-olds), one Year 3 class (eight- and nine-year-olds) and one Year 5/6 class (eleven- and twelve-year-olds).

This article reports on the project at one of these schools. It was a large, outer western Sydney school in a low socio-economic area and had approximately four classes per grade. The year groups taught were one Year 2 class, one Year 3 class and one Year 5/6 IM (mildly intellectually impaired) class. All teachers were released from classes and observed me as I taught the program with children in one of these classes. The teachers and I then met for four one-hour meetings after school. In these meetings the nexus between the theory that supports the practice of this drama program was analysed through the process of 'reflection on action' (Orton, 1994: p. 93).

When trialling the program with children, the method of data collection included children's work samples, anecdotal notes and informal discussion of critical moments recorded at the time and later written up in the researcher's reflective journal. When trialling the program with class teachers, informal talk that occurred during the meetings was also recorded in the researcher's reflective journal and all teachers completed a questionnaire which asked them to rate both the method of professional development and the value of the drama program as a cross-curricular learning medium.

Cross-curricular practice

In early childhood/primary education the class teacher (often referred to as the mainstream teacher) is responsible for teaching in all curriculum areas and cross-curricular programming is common practice.

Many suggested activities for language and literacy learning are derived from other curriculum areas or disciplines. As English is a prerequisite in all curricula this is not surprising; indeed, it is a necessity. The days when English was taught as a discrete program
have long gone. Cross-curricular practice is an approach supported in many Australian curriculum documents. For instance, both the National Curriculum and the Statement on English for Australian Schools (1994) and the National Curriculum and the Statement on the Arts for Australian Schools (1994) encourage cross-curricular practice. However, we need to be circumspect when planning cross-curricular programs. Pedagogically sound cross-curricular practice relies on cross-curricular activities that do not ‘blur the boundaries of learning to the point where specific skills and understanding are lost in the interest of integrating content’ (Board of Studies, 1995: p. 3). Conversely, however, Warhurst (1994: p. 11) argues that concepts can and should be integrated but notes that teachers need to support students in making connections across subjects areas. In relation to particular teaching/learning activities in specific teaching programs (including those that are based on current and sound theoretical principles), however, there is an issue that in my opinion is not addressed by the Board of Studies’ (1995) working paper and only implied in Warhurst’s (1994) article. This issue is the dilemma for teachers (and in particular primary teachers) of being sufficiently expert, and therefore confident, in all the areas they are expected teach (Groundwater-Smith, Cusworth & Dobbins, 1997).

In the NSW K-6 English Syllabus (Board of Studies, 1994a), for instance, fourteen drama strategies are listed as suitable teaching activities in the teaching of Children’s Literature section. Support units written for this same syllabus (Board of Studies, 1994b) detail drama programs that reflect educational drama pedagogy. However, as the absence of a Primary Drama Syllabus in NSW means that there is no requirement to teach drama (Ferguson, 1995: p. 6), many teachers in NSW have not received training in this pedagogy (Jenkins, 1993; Warren, 1992). Research in progress (Hertzberg, 1997) indicates that many mainstream teachers in NSW do not use these English curriculum suggestions related to drama because they remain unfamiliar with both the practice and theoretical reasons for their inclusion within literature-based reading programs. All the same, it is difficult to describe suggested teaching practice and programs through written explanation alone.

The other significant aspect of the research reported in this article is the use of collaborative school-based professional development, for as Warhurst in her final set of recommendations argues, teachers will need ‘detailed examples of what works and why from colleagues who have already engaged in innovatory cross-curricular practices’ (Warhurst, 1994: p. 30). This is confirmed by the teachers in this project. Some typical comments from the questionnaires they completed include:
Teacher 1: ...(this project) has inspired me to try things I wouldn’t have tried after only reading it.
Teacher 2: ...not so scary when you have seen it done.
Teacher 3: ...I feel much more confident about tackling drama and putting it to practical use in the classroom.

**Literature programs and drama**

When drama is used in literature-based reading programs, it often remains as simulated role play to recall and/or provide an alternative ending for all or part of a story. In order for a drama activity to enhance both literary and literacy development, the activities must engage the children in a thorough reading of the story. ‘Acting out’ sections as a retell or recall exercise is not likely to aid children’s understanding because the students are not required to re-read or analyse the story in depth (Simons & Quirk, 1991). Furthermore, such simulations do not adhere to and acknowledge the art form of drama; activities of this sort are referred to as ‘swimming pool drama’ (Bolton, 1992: p. 112) or ‘proto drama’ (O’Toole, 1992: p. 79). Simulations are not drama because the dramatic elements that generate enactment, including situation and roles, focus, tension, time, setting, language, movement, mood and symbol, are either omitted or neglected. Explicit attention to, and inclusion of, these elements is necessary in drama, as opposed to simulation.

The following drama program based on educational drama pedagogy fulfils the requirements of dramatic art and at the same time develops literary and literacy skills. To demonstrate how this is achieved, the theory and practice of both English and educational drama is analysed using the picture book *Our Excursion* (Walker & Cox, 1995) as the stimulus.

**Synopsis of Our Excursion**

*Our Excursion* was short-listed for both the 1995 Australian Multicultural Children’s Literature Award and the 1995 National Book Council’s Children’s Book of the Year Award in the Picture Book Category. It tells the story of an excursion for Year 2 children to the Art Gallery. The excursion begins ordinarily enough, but a series of humorous mishaps results in the unfolding of some extraordinary events. The language is simple, but the theme — consequences when people act at cross-purposes — will appeal to all ages, making this book suitable for upper primary grades, and especially reluctant readers and ESL children.

**Framework for sequencing activities**

The model developed by Nicoll, Unsworth and Parker for sequencing activities related to literature was used because 'each category reflects
a different stage of the reading process as the reader establishes and refines his or her relationship with the text’ (Nicoll, Unsworth & Parker, 1987: p. 7). The categories are:
- getting ready for the text
- getting into the text
- coming back to the text
- going beyond the text.

**Overview of teaching/learning experiences**

A brief overview of the drama program and time-frame is provided. Sessions about forty minutes in length are recommended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading category</th>
<th>Teaching/learning experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Getting ready</td>
<td>Prediction based on cover of book. (10 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for the text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Getting into the</td>
<td>First reading of book. (20 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Coming back to the</td>
<td>Second reading, ‘hot seating’, sculpting, depiction, thought tracking. (1 hour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Going beyond the</td>
<td>From parallel improvisation to playbuilding incorporating the strategies of: depiction,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>text</td>
<td>hot seating, collective drawing and narration. (2 hours)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above model lends itself well to the insertion of drama and dramatic activities to support and enhance literacy development, particularly the last two categories. In what follows I will briefly refer to what occurred during the first two categories before focusing attention on the two that lend themselves most to drama and dramatic activities.

**Reading activities before implementing the drama program**

1. **Getting ready for the text: Prediction**

By looking at the cover of the book, children could predict that it was about a class of happy children who go on an excursion by public transport. (The illustration of an exuberant class is framed within a tram ticket.)

---

1 A significant outcome of action research is the change that results from an in depth analysis of practice (Orton, 1995). I was concerned that for some bilingual students certain nuances had been missed, especially the humour aspect. I have since inserted a drama prediction activity, mantle of the expert, in order to make explicit the organisation and management procedures of excursions (Hertzberg, 1998).

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*The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*
2. Getting into the text: First reading using the Shared Reading Approach

The Shared Reading Approach was conducive to the following drama activities because it established a framework that encouraged spontaneity and discussion beyond the text itself.

To ensure children could see both the text and illustrations, multiple copies of the book (1:4) were needed. A thorough reading was only possible when both the written and visual texts could be seen.

What follows is a description of the dramatic strategies developed to facilitate students’ understanding of the layered meanings in this text during the next two reading activities: ‘Coming back to the text’ and ‘Going beyond the text’. In addition, the nexus between theory and practice related to both drama and English disciplines is discussed using examples of children’s responses.

Section 1: Using dramatic strategies to enhance meaning

3. Coming back to the text: Second reading

This provided a crucial framework for the remaining drama activities, as it helped students gain a deeper meaning of the storyline of the text.

A proper interpretation of many picture books is only realised through a close reading and matching of both the written and visual texts. If we were to accomplish the ‘playbuilding’ later in the teaching/learning experiences it was imperative that this aspect be explicitly drawn to the children’s attention.

Two major aspects emerged and needed to be explored with the students. First, the role of the narrator and hence the point of view became important. The point of view is revealed only in the final two sentences of this story. There is a picture of a child reading from her notebook, which is matched with the written text: ‘It was our best excursion ever. We hope Ms Mobbs takes us on another one soon.’ Second, Our Excursion combines both recount and narrative genres. Although the written text only recounts the sequence of events, the illustrations fulfil the narrative quality by elaborating on these events to add tension to the story. For example, the written text on page 10 reads, ‘We arrived at the building site...’ and it is the illustration that reveals to the reader that Ms Mobbs is restraining a child called Roberto in his attempt to jump into the site.

Hot seating

As a whole class activity, children volunteered to hot seat various characters. Although hot seating is the term used in the NSW K-6 English Syllabus and Support Document (1994b), I prefer the phrase questioning...
in role (Fleming, 1994) because it more accurately describes and focusses the aim. Although questioning in role does assist in confirming the meaning of the story, this is not its prime purpose. It should not be confused with, or used as, a recall and retell comprehension exercise.

Questioning in role enables children to develop an understanding of role development and belief in the role. The questions sanction both the persons in role and the questioners, to make further predictions about the character’s personality and likely exploits based on known attributes. The term encourages ‘reflective awareness of human behaviour’ (Neelands, 1992: p. 28). Linking this concept with Arnold’s (1994) research on psychodynamic pedagogy in drama teaching establishes the learning potential of this activity. Arnold argues that, ‘Affect and content are reciprocally and dynamically engaged. Unconscious influences therefore need to be acknowledged, even if they are not fully understood’ (Arnold, 1994: p. 29). This occurs ‘through the process of modification of prior experiences and a process of differentiation’ (Hughes, 1996), a point well illustrated during the following critical moment in one of the questioning in role sessions.

Because the class was unfamiliar with questioning in role, I modelled it by assuming the role of Roberto (the naughty boy). The following is a transcript written from my notes made immediately after the lesson.

Child 1: Why did you try to jump over the safety fence at the construction site?
Roberto: Because I wanted to see what was in there.
Child 2: Do you always do naughty things?”
Roberto: Yeah.
Child 1: Why?
Roberto: Because I get sent outside and don’t have to do the work I can’t do anyway.
Child 3: But do you really like being naughty or is it that you don’t know how to change?
Roberto: Change? I’m not sure what you mean.
Child 3: Like, you know, you might be the naughty kid so everyone expects you to be naughty, but really you might want to change but you don’t know how to.
Roberto: Yeah! I guess you’re right. You see, when I am naughty my friends all laugh and we have a good time. Do you think they’d still like me if I changed?
Child 3: I don’t know, ‘specially if you are dumb and can’t do the work.
Roberto: But Sam (another character in the book) can’t read very well and he isn’t naughty so maybe I could change?
Child 3: Yeah, but nobody likes him.

As a visiting teacher engaged for a fifty-minute demonstration lesson, I unfortunately stopped at this point to allow other children to have a turn. My subsequent conversation with the class teacher confirmed what I suspected. Child 3 demonstrated both behavioural and learning difficulties. Ideally, in this instance questioning in role and other pre-planned activities should have been suspended to allow for out of role discussion.

This example, however, demonstrates the power of drama as an affective learning medium. It became obvious to me that the interchange in this activity was of great significance for this child and quite possibly for some other children as well. Had I made this deviation, then depending on the outcome of the discussion, it may have been appropriate in later sessions to implement a drama program (Hertzberg, 1997) for the children’s book Onion Tears (Kidd, 1989).

Literacy skills that were quite explicitly practised during this activity included skimming and scanning in order to re-read various sections, key skills for proficient reading (Mason, 1992). Each re-reading was done for a specific purpose, thus allowing students to gain deeper meaning from the text without them getting bored with the storyline.

Sculpting

The children were asked to sculpt dramatic moments in the book and reflect on them.

Sculptures and depictions are similar: both involve students creating a still image with their bodies to ‘feel’ the dramatic moment. The meaning is conveyed using body language, in particular, expression, gesture and position.

An essential component in any drama experience is the reflective discussion that follows. As students observe the sculptures, the teacher should initiate discussion that focusses the class on ‘reading’ the body language, noting aspects that help interpret the situation (Cusworth & Simons, 1997). For instance, comments on the sculpture of Ms Mobbs returning to her ‘lost’ class included: ‘She looks really tired but a bit happy to be back’ and ‘Look at her body, it’s all kind of floppy and tired like’.

In addition, this activity encourages children to analyse personality characteristics. One pair in the IM class sculpted Ms Mobbs when the tram left without her. Their sculpture showed the teacher sitting down and reading a book. In response to questions from other
children about this interpretation the pair said they thought she was rather stupid and did not really care about the kids because ‘...she just left them so she could do what she wanted to do’.

In order to justify the characteristics that they created in their sculpture, students were asked to re-read and find the words, or illustrations, that supported their interpretations.

**Depiction and thought tracking**

In this activity children in groups of six were asked to depict the moment in the book when the ice-cream man demanded payment for the ice-creams requested. (The characters in the story had no money.) Holding this depiction, the teacher consecutively tapped each participant on the shoulder and in role they verbalised the thoughts of their character.

The children needed to read the illustration and text in order to adopt roles and arrange and position themselves to capture this moment. Using depiction as an analogy for the illustration in the book helps children understand how dramatic moments can be crystallised and at the same time ‘represent more than they would be able to communicate through words alone’ (Neelands, 1992: p. 19). Including the dramatic strategy of thought tracking enables the students to express their feelings while in role. It also consolidates the understanding that the function of illustrations in many modern picture books is to convey meaning not explicit in the written text. For example, in the book, the characters Jane and Ann are always portrayed as ‘good children’. In this particular illustration they are seen enjoying their ice-creams and talking together. In her role as Jane, one Year 2 child said, ‘Yum, but shouldn’t we pay?’

**Summary of Section 1**

It should be noted that during this set of teaching/learning experiences there was no attempt to develop a drama as such. These dramatic strategies were used to enhance understanding of the story and the features inherent in many modern picture book narratives. At the same time, in an enjoyable but nevertheless rigorous program, opportunities for developing reading skills (particularly word recognition, vocabulary development and skimming and scanning) were provided. Not only did these activities aid reading development, but in terms of drama they were a good starting point for children with little experience in drama. As one teacher noted: ‘It was hard to get the children to stop reading and even “Maria” (a very shy child) was keen to participate in the hot seating’.

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Section 2: From parallel improvisation to playbuilding

4. Going beyond the text: Introduction

In this category, both drama and English skills were developed without the distinct nature of each being blurred in the process.

The class referred to the book *Our Excursion*, noting that the written text was a recount from one girl’s perspective. It was then suggested that the class develop a drama based on a fictional excursion they would undertake where unforeseen events take place. It was explained that the framework for a number of sequenced unscripted parallel improvisations would be planned by the whole group and then each smaller group (six people) would plan and perfect one of these improvisations so that a play about ‘Our Excursion’ ensued. A script in the style of a recount would then be written using the joint construction technique. The final outcome was for the script to be narrated between the showing of each improvisation. The script would therefore perform the function of a narrator in books and the improvisations would parallel book illustrations.

The drama forms of parallel improvisation and narration provided opportunities for students to acquire a range of drama skills and experience that extended to the playbuilding form. While acknowledging the difference between narrative books and drama (Byron, 1986), this drama also aided in directing the children’s attention to the linguistic and visual structures of many modern picture books such as *Our Excursion*. It differed from the role plays often suggested in literature programs which usually remain at the retell stage. Inherent in this drama was the concept of ‘metaxis’—seeing two worlds at the same time (Bolton, 1992). As O’Neill and Rogers put it:

The first world remains circumscribed by the original text. The second world is a parallel drama which will share significant features with the world of the text, but may expand some and overlook others...The drama world will illuminate the original text and, above all, give students access to it.

(O’Neill & Rogers, 1994: p. 50.)

Establishing a fictional context is fundamental in the enactment process (O’Toole, 1992; Bolton, 1992). O’Toole emphasises the importance of negotiating and renegotiating the framework, cautioning teachers about the difficulty of doing this when using drama for cross-curricular purposes. The amount of negotiation needed is less than in drama-specific subjects because:

...all the processual organisation of the drama is managed by the teacher in pursuit of very specific objectives, normally set in advance. The consciousness of the art form among the group is usually low. However it is not always so cut
and dried; some differences of approach...do allow for a degree of flexibility in the learning expectations.

(O'Toole, 1992: p. 23.)

Two issues that are pertinent to this drama program arise from O'Toole's comments. First, in Australian curricula planning, the current emphasis is on matching learning experiences to already defined learning outcomes. Teachers need to be aware that the 'here and now' (Heathcote, cited in O'Neill & Rogers, 1989) effect of drama may not be achieved if the pre-planned framework is rigidly adhered to. Furthermore, many outcomes cannot be either predetermined or pre-empted (Cusworth & Simons, 1997). The second issue arises when drama is used as a cross-curricular learning medium (in this case English), where the teacher is responsible for managing the processual elements to achieve a purpose. However, the selected planning framework allowed for negotiating and renegotiating, as demonstrated in the following explanation of the sequence of activities.

Defining the drama

To negotiate the framework for 'Our Excursion' the following questions were written along the chalkboard.

• Who are we?
• Where are we?
• What are we doing?
• Why are we doing it?

It is essential in any improvisation that participants clearly define the broad framework as this not only helps produce a workable plan, it also aids in developing a drama as opposed to a simulation. The enactment of real or imagined events is central to drama. However, what is often called drama is in reality simulation, as it lacks the elements of drama, which include situation and roles, focus, tension, time, setting, language, movement, mood and symbol. The above questions helped the students to establish the planning for these elements.

Using these questions, the Year 2 class made the following three alternative suggestions in the initial brainstorm: 1) Year 10 students going on a science excursion to study insects; 2) Year 6 going to the beach for their end-of-year picnic; 3) Year 12 going to the beach to observe the animal and plant life in rock pools.

The request to be older children was interesting, and it was an oversight not to ask the reason for the choice. However, as these children were unfamiliar with drama in the classroom context there

1 It should be recognised that children of this age engage in dramatic play out of formal school contexts. The most popular dramatic play that this class indicated they like to play was 'schools'.

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was less negotiating than would be the case with more experienced groups. I felt this could be justified because as Bolton states:

It is still the teacher’s responsibility to help them make their idea happen. It is the teacher’s superior knowledge of education and theatre that will give the class the experience they want.

(Bolton, 1992: p.106.)

I agreed that going to the beach to observe rock pools had many possibilities, but suggested that it might be easier to assume the role of Year 4 or Year 5 children. The students decided to be Year 4. In addition, I knew they were studying sea life and thought their prior knowledge in this area might help in terms of content for their improvisations. At this point more detail was provided by the children and added to the initial framework.

Who are we? Year 4E going on an excursion to Bergen Beach.

What are we doing? Looking at the plant and animal life in rock pools and drawing pictures of them.

Why are we doing it? We are studying sea life in Science.

Collective mapping/drawing of venue

Children drew and/or wrote details onto butcher’s paper to establish the setting for the drama and possible events. A continuous piece of butcher’s paper the width of the room was used so that all participants could move around it and add information in the appropriate place.

The purpose of this activity was to aid students’ belief in the situation or setting. Being involved in constructing the setting and place promotes a sense of ownership of the drama. As the activity developed, it further clarified and extended upon the decisions made earlier. The incidental discussion throughout the mapping helped to develop possible events that might take place in the subsequent drama.

For example, the map for this group included the beach itself, the surf, rock pools and the picnic area in a park immediately behind the sand. Specific details such as plant and animal life in rock pools, sharks and swimmers in the surf, and play equipment in the park were also drawn. It should also be noted that I only provided blue textas, stressing that the ‘map’ need not conform to conventional models: the intention was neither an art nor a maths activity.

Parallel improvisation

I initiated a discussion of the map and the children further explained particular drawings and possibilities. Then each group of six selected a particular place (setting) and time within the framework created on the map where their improvisation would take place. At this stage groups were
encouraged to add more details to the map if necessary; one group added the excursion bus.

Planning and practising the improvisation

Each group was directed to decide on an unforeseen problem that might occur at this time. To help establish the problem, the following questions were written on the board for each group to consider.

- What is happening? (Focus and setting)
- Who is involved? (Situation and roles)
- What is going to happen? (Problem/tension)
- How is this event going to be resolved? (Resolution)

Developing tension

To develop the concept of tension and problem in drama, the constraint was included that the improvisation should end just as the problem occurred. No time limit was suggested for the improvisations but they were about one minute in duration. Since each improvisation was to be part of a sequence, another condition was stipulated. The problem had to be one that allowed the story to continue. For example, no one could die!

Defining the focus

In addition, the groups were asked to both begin and end their improvisation as a depiction.

Questioning in role

As each group decided the framework for their improvisation students were asked to question each other in their adopted role.

In the above, improvisation is used as a generic term to include the forms of drama that students develop without a script. In some respects this improvisation form could be likened to anthology drama (Morgan & Saxton, 1989) as the outcome is a series of short scenes based around the theme of excursions. Nevertheless, the purpose of this improvisation aligns it with the parallel form because it adapts the theme into another context (Simons and Quirk, 1991). However, it is not an ‘impro’ or ‘skit’, and the teacher's role is fundamental in achieving this because the framework initially set up by the teacher explicitly allows for the elements of drama to be realised. For instance, using the drama strategy of depiction to open and conclude the improvisation aids participants, especially those less familiar with drama, in defining a focus for their scene, signifies tension, and enhances the use of body language. All elements inherent in enactment (Wagner, 1995). Questioning in role aids in the students’ belief of their character and further clarifies their role in the improvisation.
The following improvisations were created:
1. The bus arrived at the venue and the children put their lunches
   on a picnic table while they went to explore the rock pools. When
   they left the seagulls feasted on their lunches.
2. One child was bitten by a crab as the group examined a rock pool.
3. One child was trying to get a closer look at the sea anemones and
   fell into the water.
4. A group of children were ‘paddling’ in the surf. One child went
   too far and was nearly taken by a shark.

Viewing and reflection
Children viewed and discussed the improvisations.

Reflection is important at this stage. As Morgan and Saxton state:
‘It is the frame through which the students are taken out of the
action of the plot and enter the action of the theme’ (Morgan &
in the children’s parallel improvisations was what ensues when
people act at cross-purposes. With older children, journal writing
was common in the reflection stage and guiding questions such as:
What I/we did; Why I/we did it; and How I/we felt about it, were
appropriate. However, most of these Year 2 children still struggled
with the written process, and given the time frame, those questions
were posed in a whole class discussion. When asked how they felt in
a particular role, one child said she was really mad when her friends
would not listen to her (about the impending danger).

The following activity (scripted narration) also encouraged
reflective thinking and at the same time developed the children’s
understanding about the distinctive roles of and links between the
written and visual texts in narrative picture books.

Scripted narration

Using the ‘joint construction of texts’ strategy the teacher and children
wrote a narrative recount to be read and interspersed between the
improvisations.

The curriculum genre cycle (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988) strategy
was used because it demonstrated to children the generic structure
of texts. The three writing stages are: modelling of text, joint
construction of text, and independent construction of text. The
reading of the book Our Excursion was at the modelling stage, and
the next stage, joint construction of text, was achieved in the writing
of the narration for ‘Our Excursion’.

Recounts (both personal and narrative) are particularly taught in
early childhood classes because they develop the skills of presenting
a series of events in a time sequence using appropriate connectives
in the past tense. In terms of drama, a narrative link unifies the parallel improvisations by providing details absent in the improvisations. The nexus created between improvisation and narration enhances the action, plot and tension created by the sequence, thus consolidating the playbuilding process. The following is a condensed version of the Year 2 class's narrative.

**Our Excursion**

Last Thursday our class (4E) went on an excursion to Bergen Beach to study the animal and plant life in rock pools. We wore our ordinary clothes, but did not take our swimming costumes because we were not allowed to go swimming. Mrs Edwards said we were only allowed to take our shoes and socks off for a paddle.

*Show improvisation 1*

Then we went to look at the rock pools. While we were there Jim put his toe in the water to see if the water was warm. It was cold!

*Show improvisation 2*

Emma found a very deep rock pool with a lot of sea anemones in it. Georgia couldn't see them very well so she bent right over to get a closer look.

*Show improvisation 3*

After that we went back to the picnic area to have lunch and discovered that we did not have much lunch left. The seagulls had been eating it! So Mrs Edwards went to the shop and bought enough hot chips for us all. She couldn't buy us fish because it was too expensive. At play time we went for a paddle in the surf but we were told not to go past our knees.

*Show improvisation 4*

Mrs Edwards was a bit cross by then and anyway it was time to go home. It was our best excursion ever and we promise we will be good next time.

**Conclusion**

Drama activities have long been included in early childhood and primary literature programs as a learning medium for language and literacy development and research supports this practice. However, it seems likely that many mainstream teachers remain unfamiliar with educational drama, the pedagogy sanctioned in numerous Australian English and Drama documents. This action research project demonstrated how educational drama can be planned to enhance drama skills and at the same time develop literary and literacy skills in the reading of narrative picture books. For those
unfamiliar with these drama strategies, written descriptions alone are difficult to follow and practical school-based professional development is recommended. For as one teacher wrote in her reflective notes: ‘...that old Chinese proverb “I do and I understand”... well I did and I felt it!'

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CHAPTER FIVE

DEVELOPING OUR IMAGINATION: ENACTMENT AND CRITICAL LITERACY

Article published as:

Preface

This PEN monograph was published by the Primary English Teaching Association. The general details of this organisation are provided in Chapter Two. Specifically, the aim of the PEN publication is to:

Provide teachers, parents, and others involved in primary education with accurate, up to date information about aspects of teaching and learning in English. Typically they describe one particular aspect, sketching the necessary theoretical background and suggesting how the idea(s) can be applied in the classroom. Practical ideas do not exist in a vacuum, however, and so the first page (and perhaps some of the second) should introduce the topic and establish a ‘theory into practice’ context for what follows (Primary Teaching English Association, 1997, p.1).

When the Primary English Teaching Association asked me to write this monograph, I invited Dr Ewing to include her findings on the use of teacher in role and mantle of the expert with Kindergarten children. The article begins by briefly discussing the concept of critical literacy, and then demonstrates the central role played by drama in the
development of that skill, using a variety of examples, many of which are drawn from my research projects.

It should be noted that some of these findings come from my most recent research project (1998). These include all examples referring to drama programs for the books: *Onion tears* (Kidd, 1989), *Our excursion* (Walker & Cox, 1994) and *Six perfectly different pigs* (Geoghegan & Moseng, 1993).

**References**


Imagination, of all our ... capacities is the one which permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken-for-granted, to set aside the familiar... (Greene 1996: 3)

Every teacher and parent would acknowledge the importance of the imagination in children's lives. Every teacher aims to help students develop their imaginations further in the classroom. At the same time, and seemingly in stark contrast, the need for teachers to be accountable and to be able to demonstrate the improvement of student literacy standards is a constant media headline. On one hand, teachers are constantly told that they must find ways to encourage learners to ask their own questions, be creative and find alternative solutions to problems, take risks and make mistakes in order to understand the learning process itself. On the other hand, tasks such as multiple choice questioning, with either traditional comprehension questions or analytical ones, is seen to deem a child literate. This PEN provides a range of teaching and learning experiences which can enable students to explore and question literary texts imaginatively and, at the same time, enhance the development of their skills in talking and listening, reading and writing. Engaging in and learning through the creative process in the classroom, is both enjoyable and rigorous as the following drama examples used within literature programs will demonstrate.

Critical literacy and the reading of literature

So much has been written recently about the importance of developing our students' critical thinking and critical literacy skills. The ability to go beyond the surface meaning of a text, to unpack the stereotypes in visual, spoken or written texts is important. Every text is a product of the particular context in which it is created. At the same time, every text assumes much about the reader, listener or viewer; likewise, the genre of the text suggests the way it is to be read. As Knobel and Healy (1998: 2) state “critical literacy is something of a chameleon, changing from context to context and from one educational purpose to another.” Clearly, there are many components that make the whole in terms of what critical literacy is. Just as the modes of listening, speaking, reading and writing should not be artificially segmented in presentation to students, the same applies to all aspects of critical literacy.

For the purposes of this PEN we want to highlight the way that literary texts are can be enjoyed, analysed and evaluated through drama. To this end, we use Ira Shor’s definition of critical literacy (in Knobel & Healy: 3):

... analytic habits of thinking, reading writing speaking or discussing which go beneath surface impressions, traditional myths, mere opinions, and routine clichés; understanding the social contexts and consequences of any subject matter; discovering the deep meaning of any event, text, technique, process, object, statement, image, or situation; applying that meaning to your own context. (our emphasis).

Drama strategies enable students to explore and question texts; at the same time, they actively engage with the themes and issues which emerge through enactment.

Perhaps one of the most powerful reasons for the use of drama in the classroom is that it is essentially about enactment or walking in someone else’s shoes. It is the process of enactment that enables us to see things from different perspectives, to ‘experience’ someone else’s reality. Hence it is especially meaningful for all of those students who need to be actively engaged in the learning process. To take on the role of a particular character challenges students to develop empathy for the motivations and/or reasons for their actions in an important way that is quite unique to drama.
To do this, students usually work in a fictional context rather than their immediate one. Bolton (1992), uses the term *metasis*: ‘seeing two worlds at the same time’ to describe the process. They can explore ideas and issues such as bullying, friendship or betrayal in books, distanced from their own lives—bringing the realities and understandings of their own experiences, but standing apart from them. In many ways, our biases and prejudices are so ingrained we are not even aware of them—they have become part of our ‘saturated consciousness’ (Michael Apple, 1992), as some of the following examples will illustrate. We have to find ways to help students move out of their comfort zones and develop an awareness of the need to make changes in their—and our own—lives and opinions. Students can learn strategies to resist and challenge the stereotypes that we all—including teachers and parents—at times accept often without question.

All of the activities outlined here have been used with primary students. There is only a brief description of the activity itself. More detail about the strategies can be found in Cusworth and Simon’s Beyond the script: Drama in the classroom (PETA: 1997). Each activity is followed with an example based on what has actually happened in one classroom. In some cases these drama strategies were taught as part of an action research project so it has been possible to include snapshots from the data collected. The kind of empathy and understanding developed through drama is not always easy to record on paper or through a test. These snapshots include children’s writing and drawing and comments recorded as part of interviews which demonstrate their interpretations of texts and their reactions to the use of these strategies.

**Sculpting and Still Image**

In drama, students are actively engaged in ‘the doing’. They can unpack implicit meanings in an image or word or phrase, or explore the spaces, and even gaps in a text or image, through the use of body language.

**Sculpting and Still Image** enable students to use their bodies to imagine how it felt to be in a particular position at a particular time. In **Sculpting** students can be asked to imagine they are ‘thinking clay’ and allow a peer to mould them into a still image of a character. They must move into positions and take on expressions as directed by their sculptor without any discussion.

The sculptor might later be called upon to justify his/her sculpture and may refer back to the text or illustrations to this end. Still images produced in groups have similar objectives, but all the participants will both discuss the process and form part of the ‘picture’.

**Hating Alison Ashley**

Using the text *Hating Alison Ashley* by Robin Klein (1984), students in Year Six were involved in a shared reading. *Hating Alison Ashley* explores many issues relating to socio-cultural difference and the perceived status (and therefore, perceived behaviour) of those in higher income or social groups. Klein does this using satirical humour, irony and through the use of simile and metaphor.

Drama activities are ideal to examine this language because through enactment these images come to life—in a sense they ‘move’. Through facial and body gesture and choice of position, students not only analyse the author’s meanings, they bring to it their own voices and experiences. This is clear when students discuss and plan their work in small group activities, and also in the reflective session that follows. Initially, this Year Six group sculpted various characters and made still images of events at the beginning of the book.

Having become familiar with these strategies, it was not uncommon during shared readings of the story for students quite spontaneously to stop the teacher asking to “do this bit as a still image”. For example, later in *Hating Alison Ashley* Erica becomes livid that she must sit next to Alison, largely due to her envious but misguided perception of Alison’s higher socio-economic status. She assumes that Alison wouldn’t eat ‘cheap food’ especially cheap junk food. The extract reads:

> There’s never anything to eat or drink in this house except junk food! I yelled furiously. Sometimes after concussion you don’t feel the reaction until hours later. And that was what was happening to me. I was suffering delayed culture shock from sitting next to Alison Ashley all day.)

> I stood at the open fridge, like a primitive life form being engulfed in its ice-age breath. I looked with hatred at the packets of frozen ready-made donuts and frozen spaghetti bolognese (Klein: 34).

When asked why this particular excerpt would make a good still image the child said “we could show how she felt and how she was doing it.” The teacher then asked what she meant by “how she was doing it.” “Well she was acting like a dinosaur which is pretty immature given that she doesn’t really know what Alison eats anyway. She probably eats junk food too.” This child had already gleaned the meaning and the author’s use of imagery to convey this meaning. It is doubtful that this same child would have been as eager to demonstrate this by answering a series of questions.

Furthermore, for other students and in particular, ESL students, unpacking the language in this excerpt is important if they too are to glean the humour.
Out of Tears

Similar understandings that delve beneath the surface for a 'deeper meaning' were recorded when a group of Year Five students explored the isolation and despair experienced by the protagonist Nam-Huong in Onion Thars by Diana Kidd (1989). After reading the novel's first twelve pages, students were asked to depict the episode where Nam-Huong is teased and rebuked on the basis of her 'different name' with a Still Image. The short extract was displayed on an overhead transparency. In groups of four, students assumed the roles of either Nam-Huong, Danny, Tessa and Mary. On the surface it was clear to the students that this scene is a portrayal of emotional abuse, but through assuming the roles and then planning the Still Image, students explored the physical and emotional nuances that contribute to the development of both the characters and the themes.

Following is one group’s discussion whilst in the process of planning their still image:

Child 1: Yeah, but Mary was asking her to come bike riding remember, so she is nice.
Child 2: What about Tessa?
Child 1: I don’t know.
Child 3: Hey but look, coconut is in capitals so she’s shouting at her, I don’t think that’s nice.
(The group then moved closer to the overhead transparency)
Child 1: Yeah, and princess is nicer than saying coconut or dragon.

The group then began positioning themselves for the still image. They decided Nam-Huong should be sitting down and towards the front, with Mary near her because she was trying to be kind. Tessa should be a bit further back and Danny right to the side pointing and looking aggressive.

After completing the still images, students were asked to consolidate and reflect on their learning with the following activity:
• Draw your group’s still image and write the names of the characters underneath each figure.
• Write who you were by writing ‘me’ underneath that character.
• Write what each of the characters said in a speech bubble.
• Write what you think the characters were thinking in a thought bubble.

The example on the previous page is representative of the children’s responses to this activity.

Furthermore, in the debriefing discussion students related this bullying scene to their own context. They were simply asked by the teacher to say what role they had taken in the still image and how they felt about it. In this discussion, almost all students wanted to give reasons as to why students bully—some relating to their own experiences. Later in a tape recorded interview one child said “...they might be being bullied in the story (Onion Tears) and the same thing’s happening to you, so there’s a link between reality and fiction.”

“Me” (the child who tells the story)
‘Me’ has the most insight on the excursion. ‘Me’ is quiet and hasn’t really given her view of herself on the excursion but more the personality of her friends

Roberto (a naughty child)
silly, annoying sometimes lucky, doesn’t watch where he is going, doesn’t have many friends, likes looking at nude statues, always swaps, likes excursions, always getting into trouble by Ms Mobbs, likes turtles and sardine sandwiches, kicks people a lot, always in a group, always near teacher, he’s clumsy, he LOVES ice cream, he’s observant

Carmel (another child and a major character)
always reads, wears brown clothes, found turtle, lost lunch-box, hates sardines, likes turtles, trades turtle, very irritable, never in a group

Ms Mobbs (the teacher)
very kind teacher, too kind, not realistic but fun, gets lost, always pointing, can’t control her class, wears daggy clothes

Having assessed the characters in this way, the students were then asked to think of questions to ask each character.

Following are some of the questions they asked of a child who chose to take the role of Ms Mobbs. Interestingly, all the questions are inferential, i.e. that the answers are only implied in, or by, the text. The students were finding the gaps—between word and action, narrative and illustration—and thinking of imagined but reasoned possibilities.

In this example, students were using Questioning in Role for two related reasons. Firstly, it was used to find out more about the characters in the book. This would then inform the way the students might portray personalities in parallel improvisations (see page 6) at a later stage (Hertzberg 1997a).

In preparation for Questioning in Role, the book had been read to students and then students re-read it again in groups of three or four. In these groups they were asked to choose four characters in particular to examine closely. They were asked to write down what they were finding out about the characters from the text. In order to find this information, it was necessary to ‘read the illustrations’ as well as the written text because much of the information about personality traits and actions can only be found when both text and illustrations are seen together. Below are some examples of the characteristics they noted.
Questions asked of Ms Mobbs

- Do you like being a teacher?
- Why did you show the students the rude statue?
- Why didn’t you let the dog come with you?
- How did you get back to school?
- Do you like your class?
- What’s your obsession with pointing?
- Why did you give Carmel your sardine sandwich?
- How come you jumped off the tram to get Nigel’s hat?
- Does your class usually treat you like this?

Although Questioning in Role assists in confirming the meaning of the story, both the questions and answers push students to move beyond the written and visual texts. This means that both questions and responses vary from group to group and occasion to occasion, as students bring their own insights and experiences to the interpretation of character.

When discussing the Questioning in Role activity afterwards with some of the students, the teacher suggested we had learned about the characters through reading the pictures, talking and making notes. She suggested that the discussion could have stopped there without including the Questioning in Role activity. Here is what some of the students said in response to this:

Child 1: ...but not as much. If you question in role it’s better because the people...get an understanding of the book as well as the person being asked the questions. I was the person being asked the questions, I was Ms Mobbs ... so I knew heaps about her.

Child 2: When I was questioned it was fun and you got to find out more of the character by being it ... and it taught me a lot of things I didn’t know.

Child 3: ’cause I was asking the questions could most probably find out more and whoever is getting asked the questions could put themselves into that person’s position and find out more about them.

Teacher: Fair enough. But I could have just given you some comprehension questions on a piece of paper. We needn’t have done Questioning in Role.

Child 3: But then you wouldn’t get the full (idea), ... you couldn’t explain every thing they could say.

We are not suggesting that written explanations should not be done. However, these students are validating that it is important to talk about the task. The talk is through engagement with the character and text rather than about them.

Readers’ Theatre

Within drama (as for other activities), there are many ways that students can record their understandings in written form. For instance reflective journal writing, writing scripts for improvisations and, as in the following example, writing stage directions for an already prepared Readers’ Theatre script. Of particular significance in terms of critical literacy is the opportunity this activity provides for groups of students to give their own interpretation of a story. For instance if there are four groups performing the same script you will always have four different tellings. The way groups choose to position themselves, use verbal expression (tone, volume and pace), other sound effects and body language all contribute to their unique telling. Furthermore, all this is achieved through re-reading the text—as one child stated "... (Our group) had to read that book over because we started over again and we thought of something else." Other responses from Year Five students on the usefulness of Readers’ Theatre include:

"It’s fun being someone else for a change.”

"When you read the script, you act it out and it feels like you are in the book.”

Readers’ Theatre is another effective strategy which can be used to explore the meaning of a text. We used the fable Six Perfectly Different Pigs by Geoghegan & Moseng (1993) which deals with cultural diversity issues using anthropomorphic animals. Each pig is dissatisfied with its physical features and the pig with the straight tail is particularly unhappy as the others tease him. The anthropomorphic aspect of the book is useful for this activity as it eliminates the possibility of stereotypical and tokenistic representations of a particular cultural or ethnic group. The script was written by the teacher, as the Year Five students were unfamiliar with the construction of this drama form. However, once students have worked with plenty of models they too can write the scripts (Cusworth, 1991). Below is an excerpt of the teacher-written script.

Six Perfectly Different Pigs

by Adrienne Geoghegan and Elisabeth Moseng.
Readers’ Theatre script adapted by teacher for classroom use only

Narrator 1: There were six happy piglets called Porridge, Pavlova, Pepperoni, Peach, Pistachio and Paprika.

Narrator 2: Everyday they rolled about and played in the warm summer sunshine.

Narrator 3: And every night they huddled together asleep in the hay.
The Teacher then explained how to ‘do’ Readers’ Theatre (Hertzberg 1997b). She pointed out features of the script in particular the role of the Narrator, and the difference between direct and indirect speech. However, the issues conveyed in the text were not discussed explicitly by the teacher, as this activity is structured to break traditional classroom patterns in which the teacher initiates and probes issues and relationships in a text. This is not to say that it is therefore left to students to discover by chance. Rather, the activity is constructed to allow students to interrogate the text through enactment.

Peach: (Put hands on hips and freeze for a second, because it makes it more serious)
Let’s pretend he’s not our brother.

Narrator 3: (Say it in a sad voice and look sad with your mouth by sort of frowning). So Paprika was left alone. He sat on his tail all day long.

Narrator 1: (Start slow but then say quickly so that you (the audience) knows that he can’t wait to hide his tail.) Sometimes he would forget and stand up. Then the others would laugh, so he quickly sat back down again.

Narrator 2: (Frown as I say it and say “sadder and sadder” slowly and sadly because he is very upset) He grew sadder and sadder.

Each group using the scripts, prepared the stage and reading directions—movement, voice, gesture, and positioning. We have only included a few boxes with the children’s directions to illustrate their interpretations of how the text should be read.

Following this Readers’ Theatre activity one child approached the teacher and asked to follow through an earlier suggestion to show this to their Year One buddy class. When asked why she thought it suitable she said, “well it’s a good book for that age with the pictures and that it is funny, but really it has ideas in it about teasing that I don’t think they’d get all that well. But they would if we showed them because we’ve worked out how to show them.”

This student’s comment highlights several significant issues. Firstly, it is a reality that many picture books on the surface only appeal to the very young (or the old(?))—carers reading them with the very young), but often complex and ageless themes are contained within just a few pages. They are ripe for exploration in what they might leave unsaid, unwritten and unillustrated.

In addition, students can make connections between the texts and the experiences of their own lives but within fictional contexts, so that actual experiences or feelings remain protected. Few students want to acknowledge their victim status in front of the perpetrators—as teachers we must protect this right. The concept of metaxis—‘seeing two worlds at the same time’—inherent in parallel improvisation is one way to achieve this.

Parallel Improvisation

The aim of parallel improvisations is to imagine situations which parallel themes—in this case themes in a book—but in an alternative context. Children might prepare a parallel improvisation using the Still Image strategy. For instance, using the same excerpt from Six Perfectly Different Pigs, and in groups of four, students constructed a Still Image. They were asked to think of a situation that in reality parallels the event in the book, thus acting out a metaphor. For example, one group of Year Three students depicted a scene where a child is ridiculed because of her lunch which was perceived as strange. Another multi-age group portrayed a scene in which the group was teasing a boy who was wearing glasses.

Teacher in Role & Mantle of the Expert

Allowing yourself to take on a role in the drama (Teacher in Role) while, often at the same time, giving your students an opportunity to be experts about an issue (Mantle of the Expert) can help change the classroom interaction patterns. Taking on a role in the drama enables the teacher to scaffold the direction of the talk from within the drama rather than impose it from outside. Just as for Questioning in Role, students are encouraged to ask their own questions and explore the issues raised without always channelling the talk through the teacher.

This example of Teacher in Role and Mantle of the Expert is embedded in a whole range of drama
strategies used in a unit of work centred around animals. The kindergarten class were studying Farmer Duck by Martin Waddell (1991), over a number of weeks. This text examines issues of cooperation and shared power, again using animals as the main characters. Initially students were involved in Sculpting and Still Image to represent the main incidents in the story. They were asked to represent their thoughts using thought bubbles and at the same time depict what the animals actually said out loud.

This led to a discussion about the differences between what we think and what we say—in the drama activity and in our own lives. Later, the students participated in a Readers' Theatre excerpt which involved them thinking very carefully about how to use their voices to demonstrate the increasing anger of the animals who only ever verbalise this as "moo", "baa" and "cluck."

Students were then asked to take on the roles of animal welfare officers imagining they had come to the farm to see whether the animals were being fairly treated. They needed to interview the lazy farmer (the teacher in role) to understand why he was expecting the duck to do all the work. The questions: "Why are you lying in bed all day?" and "Why do you think the duck should do all the work?" demonstrate their ability even at five or six years old to try to understand the farmer's perspective at the same time being sympathetic to the duck's increasing fatigue and depression. They could hold the two perspectives at the same time. The classroom teacher commented that she had not been sure they would be able to do this at such a young age.

Later, students were asked to draw which drama activities they had enjoyed (and which they hadn't) and, if possible, provide a reason for their enjoyment or dissatisfaction (see below). This was a way of asking them to reflect on the unit and their perspective on
what they had learnt. This could then inform future teaching.

A Year Three class used a similar framework, when studying the picture book Piggybook by Anthony Browne (1986). Some time later a parent remarked to the teacher how much more aware her daughter had become of the family sharing the workload at home. She attributed the change directly to the unit the students had completed on Piggybook and, in particular, the drama strategies which had been used to explore roles and relationships within the home.

Conclusion

The wonderful thing about books is that they allow us to enter imaginatively into someone else’s life. And when we do that, we learn ... (about) other people. But the real surprise is that we also learn truths about ourselves, about our own lives, that somehow we hadn’t been able to see before.

(Katherine Paterson 1991: 36).

These drama strategies demonstrate how important it is for students to understand characters’ feelings, express what characters could think, say and do and what they actually do. Enacting leads to questions and discussion, which in turn may lead to drawing or writing activities. Students experience the language first hand and, at the same time, they return numerous times to the text itself to see how meaning is being constructed. They, as the readers, see how they are positioned and in turn can position their viewers through enactment. Drama provides endless opportunities to be a powerful analytical and evaluative tool in the development of critical literacy skills in the English classroom.

Acknowledgement

The authors wish to acknowledge all the teachers and students—past and present—with whom they have had the privilege to work.

Margery Hertzberg

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CHAPTER SIX
PICTURE BOOKS AND DRAMA

Article published as:


Preface

I was invited to write a chapter for the book Image matters: Visual texts in the classroom (Callow, 1999). Critical reading of visual texts is vital for students in the 21st century. This book examines visual literacy by exploring a diverse range of contexts, situations and forms of visual literacy. The synopsis for this book is:

*Image really does matter. More and more images are used in our contemporary culture, from picture story books to the movie screen, print advertisements to Internet shopping, children’s drawings to contemporary art. Understanding not only how to use and enjoy them but also knowing how images are constructed should become an integral part of classroom literacy practice. Drawing parallels with ways that language works, this book considers a variety of image contexts—such as CD-ROMS—and then presents some exciting and practical ways to explore them in the classroom* (Callow, 1999, endnotes).

The chapter ‘Picture books and drama’, demonstrates how drama can be used to read the illustrations in picture books. The picture book *Something from nothing* was the
selected resource because a range of examples of the role and function of illustrations in contemporary picture books are contained within the one book.

Since the publication of this book, the Primary English Teaching Association’s Professional Development Unit asked me to facilitate a workshop directly related to this chapter for practicing mainstream Primary teachers (Hertzberg, 1999b). Some of the comments made by participants at the conclusion of this workshop follow:

- *I am beginning to understand how drama incorporates all four language modes—speaking, listening, reading and writing* (Participant A).

- *I think the children in my class would like it because it’s fun, and I’d like to try it because I can see its learning potential. If the children think it’s fun and I think it’s learning, then that’s an ideal combination* (Participant B).

- *The Education Department stresses the need for explicit teaching. In the reflection sections, the children really analyse what they are doing and therefore learning. It’s a good example of metacognition taking place* (Participant C).

(field notes 31/8/99)
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Chapter 6. Picture books and drama

CHAPTER 2

Picture books and drama
MARGERY HERTZBERG

INTRODUCTION

"A picture tells a thousand words" might be a common saying but it is not uncommon for this maxim to be neglected in our teaching. Even less common is the use of drama to elicit the meaning of illustrations in picture books. Furthermore, it is how these pictures tell a story that is the crucial element.

Notwithstanding the importance of other visual factors such as font size, shape and placement of text, this chapter will focus on the illustrations in a picture book text only. The following drama program demonstrates how children's understanding of the multiple themes and stories within picture books can be enhanced and at the same time develop children's own skills in both oral and written storytelling. In essence, illustrations in modern day picture books replicate the function of extended prose in novels by providing the metaphorical framework inherent in the telling of narrative. This use of illustrations is important to acknowledge if their purpose is to be understood. In many modern picture books the use of written language is minimal but often the themes do not match this simplicity and so the story can be read on many different levels.

This is what makes contemporary picture books such an inviting aesthetic endeavour. It is also what makes these texts so important in terms of social critical literacy. The multilayering of visual and written texts—and multiple themes therein—means that these superimposed meanings both allow and invite children to examine and construct different meanings, based on both the prior experience and socio-cultural background they bring to reading a story.

MULTILAYERING: THE PLACE FOR DRAMA

Once children have learnt the conventional reading of print, the tendency in classrooms is to focus on the written word at the expense of the illustrations. This means that picture books may become little more than resources for "barking at print" (Saxby 1991: 4), because the meaning created in the multilayering of the whole text is not realised. The engagement early childhood children have with a text (multiple readings and readings of illustrations) needs to be replicated in some form with older children if they too are to read the multiple meanings of picture books. As Johnston states:
Literature has more than one meaning. It has many layers of meaning which are accessed differently at different times. And, even more significant, literature is more than meaning. Literature is also sound and rhythm and interior and exterior pictures—both the pictures-in-words that constitute imagery and the actual pictures of a picture book text (1997: 8).

The concept of multilayering is a useful framework for beginning to analyse a work of literature with older children.

Drama is well placed to examine both the visual and written text in picture books and analyse the relationship between the two in order to understand the overall meaning. Just as many picture books rely on both the written text and illustrations to convey meaning so too does drama. Notwithstanding that drama scripts are sometimes read on radio, it is more usual for drama to be a visual experience (and not necessarily with prepared scripts). Drama relies on visual and spoken discourse to create meaning but in drama the illustrations 'move'. It is through this movement, which usually mirrors or juxtaposes the spoken dialogue, that meaning is conveyed. Of course other drama elements contribute to perfect and to embellish meaning, but it is the elements of voice and body movement in the telling of the stories that is of interest here. The telling of stories is the essence of narrative—drama or prose. The picture book Something from Nothing has been selected for this drama program primarily because it is a great story or rather combination of stories. However, the reader can transfer the ideas here to other books. For example, drama can be used to tell the multiple visual stories in Our Excursion by Kate Walker and David Cox (Hertzberg 1997). The movement and body language conveyed through Rogers' illustrations in the book Way Home by Libby Hethorn can be further analysed using a particular combination of still image and cued drama. Similarly, the illustrations in Grandfather's Journey by Allan Say could be used to begin a drama that explores issues of cultural diversity and identity. For example, questioning-in-role activities can lead onto exploring this issue through parallel improvisation. In the following drama program, Something from Nothing has been selected as many of the ways illustrations are used in contemporary picture books are represented within this one book.

**Something from Nothing: An anecdotal synopsis**

I first read *Something from Nothing* when my children (4 and 6 years at the time) borrowed it from the local library. Other carers might be familiar with the following routine.

"If you have your bath quickly and brush your teeth carefully we'll have time for a story." Done.

We read the story, really enjoyed it, although I must confess very hastily as the goodnight kisses and then peace was an immediately more enjoyable prospect.

Half an hour later I returned to my daughter's room to turn off the light and found her reading this book.
“Mum!” she said, “You read that story—Joseph’s story, both written and illustrated—but look I’m reading this story—the mice story (illustrations only).”

In my haste for peace, I’d neglected to notice that not only the written text tells a story, so too do the illustrations. In this case, not just one, but all three stories are inextricably intertwined yet simultaneously retain their own identities. As such, the book has multiple themes and issues.

Something from Nothing is set in a shtetl in the late 1800’s and tells the story of one household within. The stories are arranged on three levels (figure 2.1). I refer to these as the ‘upstairs’, ‘downstairs’ and ‘under the floor boards’ stories. The dominant story (downstairs) is told through written text with matching illustrations (composite text). However, the two other stories—the mice

“Grandpa can fix it,” Joseph said.
Joseph’s grandfather took the vest and turned it round and round.

FIGURE 2.1
story and the story of Joseph's extended family and village life are told in illustrated form only. In the dominant story, Joseph, like many other young children, possesses a security item—in this case a blanket. Joseph loves his blanket, but as he gets older so too does his blanket—and smaller as it begins to fray. Fortunately for Joseph, his Grandfather who is a tailor finds ways to revive it—first as a jacket and finally as a button.

The 'upstairs story' elaborates on his family's daily life and can only be read through the illustrations. In literary terms this story is classified as the 'running story' in that these are 'minor characters who appear throughout the sequence of pictures and who have a life of their own which flourishes independently alongside that of the main characters' (Dooman 1993: 88). The 'under the floor boards' story is again only told through illustrations. It is about a family of mice. As Joseph's grandfather cuts the blanket to make another smaller but equally precious item for Joseph, the material scraps fall through the floor boards and are then used by the mice to furnish their house and clothe themselves. The combination of the mice story and Joseph's is a form of split narrative—two episodes but with different characters are portrayed at the same time.

Our family has read and re-read this book often wondering what happened to the security blanket belonging to Joseph's sister (you will need to read the 'upstairs' story—the illustrations—to ponder this). Then we wonder if the chicken soup that Joseph's Grandma serves on Friday nights (downstairs story) tastes as good as our Grandad's, but the meaning and interpretation you make of this event will depend on your own cultural background and experience in relation to the cultural context of the story (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996; Berliner 1988). Furthermore, it is now household lore that if clothes are left on the floor they will be used by the mice—a joke only understood if you combine the 'downstairs' and 'under the floor boards' story.

**PROGRAM ORGANISATION**

It is most important that the reason for using drama as a teaching/learning strategy is clear. This program is not intended for performance to an external audience. Although Activity 8 could be further refined and rehearsed for a performance, this must only be considered after the program has been completed. Drama should and can be incorporated in all KLA programs as a teaching/learning activity to develop understanding within a particular area. But this should not be confused with performance, because perfecting work for performance adds a different and divergent dimension to the learning experience and may well detract from the purpose. The purpose here is to use drama as a learning medium within literature programs to analyse the meaning of stories and the importance of illustrations in this process.

**TEXT:** *Something from Nothing* is part of the *Scholastic Core Library Kit* and is also currently available from many book shops. This program will make much more sense if you read the book before going any further.

**RESOURCES:** Seven copies (1 copy between 4 students) of the book are necessary, because a thorough reading is only possible when both the written and
visual texts are read. Children will need to see the illustrations clearly and work with a copy of the book in their groups. *Something from Nothing* is available in big book form and a kit can be purchased which includes a big book, 4 small books and a cassette.

**GRADE SUITABILITY:** Grades 3 to 5 for the purposes of this drama program. Note however that it has been used in high school history classes to compare and contrast nineteenth century European communities.

**LENGTH:** About 6 sessions

**FOCUS:** Growing up is not just a physical phenomena.

**TEACHING/LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

What follows is a sequential program. The purpose or rationale for children doing each activity is stated first and then the teaching procedure is detailed in point form. Ideally, all activities should be completed in this order, as they form the basis for, and culminate, in Activity 8. Some children's work samples have been provided to aid in the explanation.

### Activity 1 Storytelling

**PURPOSE:** a form of prediction activity that positions the reader for the reading of the story.

Without reference to the book at this stage:

- Initiate a whole class discussion about a favourite toy or item students had as young children or indeed may still have.
- Have two children tell their story to the whole class.
- To ensure that all children have ample time to share their experiences with someone else, children select a partner and tell this friend their story.
- Regroup pairs into fours and partners tell the other pair their friend's story.

### Activity 2 Individual still image

**PURPOSE:** to position the children for the anticipated attitudes and feelings within the dominant story.

Also without reference to the book:

- Participants stand in a large circle with their backs to the centre of the circle, ie they face outwards as opposed to inwards. This is done so that children's still images can remain private if they so wish.
- Participants are asked to make a still image that captures the moment when they are holding or looking at this favourite item. Allow about 30 seconds for thinking and preparation time. Students freeze this still image.
• Now ask students to imagine that this item is lost. Students change their still image to show how they might react to this.

In this introductory exercise students are only in "shadow" role. It is necessary to protect and respect their right to anonymous thoughts and feelings. This activity is designed to focus students on the forthcoming story and activities. It is not necessary to show these to the rest of the class.

**ACTIVITY 3 Shared reading of story *Something From Nothing***

**PURPOSE:** to introduce the story to the children and the written features inherent in its telling.

*In this case a major role of the teacher is to model the reading of this story so that children hear the main aural features of this text.*

• Use the big book or an opaque projector so that children can see the illustrations clearly
• Teacher reads the book.
• Teacher models the use of vocal elements such as tone, pitch and volume to highlight the use of alliteration, rhythm and rhyme in this text.

This is a good example to support the use of shared reading with experienced readers. Be prepared for children to join in with the refrain and repetitive sections but ensure it is spontaneous. It’s far more fun and significant when the children want and choose to play with the language.

**ACTIVITY 4 Second reading of the book**

**PURPOSE:** to allow children to explore the book and begin to unravel the visual and written construction.

• Provide groups of four to five children with a copy of the book. If children are independent readers have them read the book together in their groups.
• If some children need help read the story again with them, but make sure you stop and allow for informal conversations by the children as they discover new bits of information—only possible on second and subsequent readings.

**ACTIVITY 5 Interpreting the visual text**

**PURPOSE:** to read and interpret the illustrations.

*There are at least two visual stories without any corresponding written text (with stories within these stories which include the local community). In this example, the visual story addressed is the mice story but of course you could make adaptations to include the other and/or develop further activities based on the ideas presented within this program.*
• Return to *Something From Nothing*. Focus children’s attention to the last page of the book where a mouse is reading a story to his family.
• Discuss what his likely story might be and/or relate back to previous discussions the class has had in the shared and group reading sessions. It is most likely that much discussion has already occurred because children are enchanted with this aspect of the book.
• In groups of three or four, children select one of the mice scenes and depict this scene as a still image.

**Activity 6 View and reflect**

**PURPOSES:** to analyse and interpret the visual text and identify how it relates to the written story. At the same time, it focuses children’s attention on dramatic moments, and the role of elements such as tension and mood used in both drama and literature to convey meaning.

• Children show the still images to the rest of the class.
• Rather than asking viewers to guess what the still image is about, ask one of the group members to explain which scene they are enacting *before* showing it. This avoids the guessing game ritual which deflects from the purpose of this learning experience—for participants to analyse and interpret the visual text. If made into a guessing game children will avoid adding any complex nuances to aid in their interpretation.
• After each group shows its still image, the class returns to the particular page in the book to discuss how this selected mice scene corresponds to and/or juxtaposes Joseph’s story.
• After all groups have presented, discuss children’s reasons for selecting particular scenes. It is likely they chose segments with plenty of action and story. This discussion is intended to relate to the purpose of focusing children’s attention to dramatic moments, and the role of elements such as tension and mood used in both drama and literature to convey meaning.
• Return to the title of the book and elicit comments about what the children think the title *Something from Nothing* means.

**Activity 7 Improvisation**

**PURPOSE:** children attend to the style of illustration and its function

• If children have not already noticed, focus their attention to the format of the mice story. Most pictures are framed giving them a cartoon or film-like appearance.
• Children return to the scene they have already depicted and write a piece of dialogue for some or all of the characters on small ‘post it notes’. These can be stuck above the picture (see figure 2.2).
• Students return to their original still image which they hold frozen for two seconds. They then improvise it by adding their dialogue and actions. At
When Joseph was a baby, his grandfather made him a wooden bucket....

FIGURE 2.2

the end of the dialogue they return to a still image which should be slightly different to the opening one and hold for two seconds.

- As children work on these, the teacher notes the scenes chosen and records these onto an overhead transparency for reference in the following activity.

**ACTIVITY 8 Creating the narrated drama**

*PURPOSE: For children to interpret the illustrations and at the same time explore the use of rhythm, rhyme and point of view in written and spoken narrative.*

- This activity is a variation on several written drama forms. Perhaps its closest link is to Chamber Theatre and Story Theatre in that both narrative
and dialogue are used and each group prepares a particular part of the story (Morgan and Saxton 1987: 126–125).

- Children and teacher return to the final page of the text.
- Discuss the features of Joseph’s story—the use of rhythm and rhyme and the role of the narrator as third person in order to replicate this style in their story.
- Using the joint construction model for writing a story, the class writes their version of the mice story.
- The scenes already made into still images (see Activity 5), will be interspersed with the narrated storytelling. These still images will be in the first person. If some still images are of the same scene, one of these groups might select a scene not already chosen, or they could be the storytellers.

Below is the beginning of an example written by nine and ten year old children. There were eight improvisations interspersed with a narration. As these children were unfamiliar with this drama form, I had already written the introduction (up to Improvisation 1).

**Something from Nothing: An adaptation**

**Storyteller 1:** There’s just enough material here to make a wonderful . . .

**Storyteller 2:** play

**Storyteller 3:** Once upon a time there were some mice who lived under the floor boards in Joseph’s house.

**Storyteller 4:** Joseph’s grandfather was a tailor and he made a blanket for Joseph when he was born. This became his favourite possession and he didn’t go anywhere without it.

**Storyteller 1:** But as he grew older his blanket grew shabbier, so he asked his Grandfather to help him.

**Storyteller 2:** First his grandfather made it into a jacket,

**Storyteller 3:** but when this became too small he made into a vest.

**Storyteller 4:** Then it became a tie and so on.

**Storyteller 1:** Each time his grandfather cut the material, scraps would fall through the floor boards.

**Storyteller 2:** But as the saying goes, one person’s loss is another person’s gain, and the mice were able to furnish their house and eat well thanks to Joseph.

**Storyteller 3:** At first there was only mum and dad mouse, but they were expecting a family.

**IMPROVISATION 1**

**Father Mouse:** Look! Some beautiful material

**Mother Mouse:** “Hmm”,

**Storyteller 4:** she said as her scissors went snip, snip, snip and her needle flew in and out and in and out,
Mother Mouse: There's just enough material here to make... a blanket for the babies.

Storyteller 1: The babies arrived.
Storyteller 2: Four of them!
Storyteller 3: And there was even enough material to make their clothes.
Storyteller 4: Now as Joseph grew older he'd go to the markets with his Mum.
Storyteller 1: So would the mice—under the cobble stones of course!

IMPROVISATION 2

Mouse 1: Hey look! All these peas are falling through the cobble stones.
Mouse 2: Quick get them! We can really pig-out tonight.
Mice 3 & 4: We found this humungous nutmeg!

And so forth, concluding with an improvisation of the mice using Joseph's button, which had fallen through the cobblestones, as a cushion:

IMPROVISATION 8

Mouse 1: Now we have a cushion for our chair.
Mouse 2: Let's make it into a storytelling cushion so we can tell lots of...
Mice 3, 4 & 5: wonderful stories!

CONCLUSION

To read the multi-layered meanings in modern picture books requires an explicit analysis of illustrations. This drama program enhances an understanding of the role of illustrations in constructing narratives because children are required to focus directly and concurrently on both the visual and written text in order to unravel the multiple stories and themes within. In this case we focused on the split narrative, as well as its relation to the title. However, similar drama experiences could also be designed for the running story.

But why use drama to do all this? Couldn't we just look at the pictures and then have whole class or group discussion? The simple answer is "Yes" because children would be involved in re-reading and cross referencing in order to read the 'stories'. But many picture books are not simplistic. Experiences that actively engage children in experimenting with not only the visual elements—written and pictures—but also the sound and rhythm are necessary for any in-depth analysis.

Furthermore, in discussion students are still on the 'outside looking in'. In drama, students are on the 'inside and looking out'. While within, students must re-read and cross reference to prepare improvisations that bring the story to life, but another dimension is also offered. While 'within' they have
the opportunity to feel the characters, reflect on these feelings, and in so doing portray these character’s stories through the use of both spoken and gestural language—they too can conceive ‘something from nothing’.

Endnote
It should be noted that space precludes a detailed explanation of the drama strategies referred to in the above program. However, these are explained in the recent FETA publication *Beyond the Script: Using Drama in the Classroom* (Cusworth & Simons 1997).

REFERENCES
CHAPTER SEVEN

THERE'S LOTS OF RHYME AND REASON FOR USING DRAMA IN READING PROGRAMS

Article published as:


Preface

This article was published in *The Primary Educator*. This journal's details are explained in the preface for Chapter Three. The particular issue was directed at the concerns expressed by many teachers about "the crowded curriculum". It focused on the need to integrate the Arts, in a relevant, motivating, and meaningful way.

The article demonstrates how drama can be used to enhance the development of phonological awareness—an important component in language and literacy development. Unlike all other drama plans in this portfolio, the stimulus for the drama is a picture. This unit was first developed when working with a Kindergarten class. Their social studies unit at the time was "Why are parks important?" In addition, the literacy part of this teacher's program was concentrating on onset and rime (rhyme) using poems about parks as the teaching resource.

Initially, I began to prepare a drama plan with its focus on phonological awareness using the picture book *There's a dinosaur in the park* (Martin & Siow, 1980). By using allegory, a prosaic theme (rubbish) has been made into an amusing and engaging story.
No I decided. Not withstanding the appealing story, I did not want to be aligned with the "playground dinosaurs" (replete with loud hailers for sending rubbish messages to children one metre away), we'll do something else. In addition, 22 of the 26 children were ESL children to whom the book would present semantic difficulties. I decided it was important for the children to make their own story within a fictional context negotiated by all, but with pre-planned structures in place that would explicitly allow children plenty of opportunities to experiment with rhythm, rhyme and alliteration using all four modes of language. In constructing the spell, the drama would be attending to the specific outcomes of this teacher's program and the mandatory syllabus from which it emanates. The *English K-6 syllabus* (1998) states:

*Students need sound awareness to be able to use the alphabetic principle effectively in reading and spelling. While many aspects may be taught aurally ... it is important that once students know some letter-sound relationships, the teaching of sound awareness links with reading, writing and spelling activities* (Board of Studies NSW, 1998, p. 76).

**References**

Board of Studies NSW. (1998). *English K-6 syllabus*. North Sydney, Australia: Board of Studies NSW.


The Centre for Primary Education. *The Primary Educator*, Victoria, Australia: The Centre for Primary Education.

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1 In the overarching statement, the old English spelling "rime" as opposed to "rhyme" is used. This is done to be consistent with the specialist writing in this area. For this article it was requested that the more familiar spelling be used.
Chapter 7. There's lots of rhyme and reason for using drama in reading programs

THE ARTS
In this issue:
- Drama on the Net
- Integration vs Art
- There's Lots of Rhyme and Reason for Using Drama in Reading Programs
- Portrait of a District: A Photographic Essay
- Combined Primary Schools Music
- Le Tour de Dance
- A Classroom Teacher's Adventures with Integration

Subscription information: Initial subscription $60/1 set. Additional copies $20/1 set
There's lots of rhyme and reason for using drama in reading programs

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Faculty of Education and Language
University of Western Sydney,
Macarthur

The benefits of using educational drama as a teaching/learning strategy within literacy programs is well established (Booth, 1987; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Hertzberg & Ewing, 1998; Koa & O’Neill 1998). One of the challenges in cross curricula planning however, is retaining the unique features of the art form of drama, while maintaining the teaching/learning focus within the other key learning area—in this case literacy (O’Toole, 1992). The drama technique of Teacher in Role (TinR) is well suited for this purpose because it supports the teacher in her/his assumed role to seek and negotiate ideas with other participants. Within this dramatic context, s/he can both organise and scaffold, often through questioning. (Morgan & Saxon, 1994) students’ ideas to ensure that elements central to drama, particularly role and tension, occur.

To demonstrate, a drama/literacy program suitable for children in the early stages of reading development (usually four to six years old) is detailed below. The literacy focus is on developing children’s understanding of rhythm, rhyme and alliteration through attention to the-intra-syllabic aspects of phonological awareness—an aspect so necessary in the early stages of reading development (Bowey, 1991; Mason, 1991). The drama focus is maintained using TinR (as well as other drama strategies) to engage children in the process of enactment. Within this fictional context all participants are actively engaged in investigating intra syllabic concepts through the use of language that exploits this linguistic feature in the creation of their drama.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE STATUE WHO LOST HER VOICE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Frame: 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama forms: storytelling and improvisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama techniques: teacher-in-role, whole class enactment as experts, still image and mime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major English focus: intra-syllabic aspects of phonological awareness;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major drama focus: Use of body language and voice to convey meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Specific examples in this program come from a workshop with one class of 5 and 6 years old students. Although the broad framework for other groups remain, variation will be necessary as the negotiation process within the drama unfolds.

STORYTELLING:
Whole class
- Display a large picture (similar to the one shown here) on a portable easel.
- Discuss/question about the setting, the statue and its likely name, together with possible events that might occur within this context. Accept and acknowledge all ideas, committing some to memory for both immediate use and in later sections.
- Now explain that in fact you know a story about this particular statue and setting. In this storytelling, select and include aspects already provided by children, including the statue’s name. Elaborate further, explaining the

<table>
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<tr>
<th>STATUE'S MAGICAL POWERS</th>
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<tr>
<td>statue’s magical powers—it can see, talk and although unable to move from the pedestal, can gesture with its upper torso and face. However, last week the mean gardener (just before leaving her/his job at this park/garden) cast a spell on the statue to remove its magical powers (point of</td>
</tr>
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</table>
tension). Fortunately the spell only half worked. It can still see and gesture, but can’t talk.

- **Note:** The statue’s name might be used later for writing a new spell, so select one that is unusual, but at the same time easy to match in terms of rhyme, rhythm and alliteration.

- Explain that we are going to use the story for drama and that everyone will be involved. In addition tell them that when they see you wearing a hat they will know you are taking part in the drama and that at times another adult will be taking part.

**SCULPTING, STILL IMAGE and MOVEMENT**

**Pair work**

- Sculpting: One child sculpts the other to show how the statue looks after loosing its power to speak.

**Whole class:**

- Return focus to picture. Explain that the classroom will now become the setting for their drama. Seek suggestions on where the statue (on the easel) should be placed in this setting and what it might see or hear (for instance: birds, lizards and frogs). Also consider possible events/incidents that take place.

**Individual:**

- Children choose an animal and make a still image of it.

**Individual:**

- Using mime the animals move around the park/garden, and at the same time consider possible things they might be doing and seeing. The absence of sound effects at this stage allows children to concentrate on the animal’s movement and purpose. On a count tambourine bang or similar, ask children to return to still image mode.

**Individual:**

- Now suggest animals add sound effects (if appropriate) as they further explore the setting and possible happenings.

**TEACHER IN ROLE: New Gardener**

**Whole class**

- Whilst animals explore their environment, the teacher (unnoticed) puts on a gardening hat. In role move into the setting, ask animals to freeze and introduce yourself as the new gardener. Gathering the animals around you ask about them and the statue to elicit, among other things, facts about the mean gardener and the spell cast on the statue. The dialogue might then continue thus:

  “Ah I see … well fortune enough the same thing happened to the statue in another garden/park where I was working and we found out that writing a new spell, reversed the bad spell. Do you think we could try that with this statue?”

- Using children’s prior knowledge of spells—for instance, ‘Abracadabra zim zolla bim’, children and gardener discuss the linguistic features of spells, emphasizing rhythm, rhyme and alliteration.

- Children’s ideas for a new spell are scribed by the gardener who explicitly highlights both the spoken and written features of ‘onset’ and ‘rhyme’ words. For instance one group wrote: “tick, tock, tuck, tuck come along ‘Zacka’ (name of statue) you can talk backa.”

If a spell is suggested, accept this as a good example, but encourage originality by saying: “I suspect it will only work if it’s our very own spell”.

- Practice the spell stressing expression, diction etc.

**IMPROVISATION**

**Whole class**

- Out of role, remove picture explaining that Ms X (another teacher/adult) is joining our drama in role as the statue. Ms X (already briefed) positions herself in the space where the picture was.

(I have used the school secretary, teacher aide, a parent or ESL teacher)

- Returning in role, the gardener suggests trying the new spell and seeks ideas on how and when this might be done. For example, it might be midnight and characters (animals and gardener) are positioned as still images around the

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Children sit up and out of role talk about their experience.

OTHER POSSIBILITIES/VARIATIONS

- Children might want to perform this drama again and:
  - add music
  - make up a dance to do in conjunction with the spell
  - write a script to go with the play and perform it as a story drama

CONCLUSION

A word

A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say,
I say it just
Begins to live
That day.

Emily Dickinson

Imaginatively playing with and listening to language, is a precursor for future reading development. Most children learn to read, but after years of experimentation and practice of oral language, often during informal dramatic play at home.

This drama/literacy program demonstrates how playing with language in a more structured dramatic context supports the development of language practice (and hence phonological progress) within the schooling context. The drama technique Teacher in Role enables the teacher to explicitly address the intra-syllabic aspects of phonological awareness. At the same time s/he can manage the elements of drama to create a fictional context in which words come alive for an authentic purpose.

REFERENCES


About the author

Margery Hertzberg worked for eleven years as a Primary ESL and mainstream teacher. Currently she is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Languages at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur. Her research on drama for language and literacy development involves regular contact with many Early Childhood and Primary children.

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DEBRIEFING AND REFLECTION

- If you don’t want this drama to continue all day, this stage is really important! While animals are resting talk them out of role.

For example: “Well animals we’ve had an exciting day (elaborate) and I hope you’re all having a well deserved rest. My… Grizzly boars having a good rest. He’s lying so still, etc…. But animals, we’ve many other things to do today. In a minute, but not just now, I’m going to ask you to sit up, BUT when you sit up you will no longer be Polly the frog, Polly the parrot or Calypso the kangaroo, you will be yourself because the drama has ended for today.”
CHAPTER EIGHT

USING DRAMA TO ENHANCE THE READING OF LITERATURE WITH BILINGUAL CHILDREN

Article published as:


Preface

This paper (Hertzberg, 1999a) appears in the refereed conference proceedings of the ACTA-ATESOL (NSW) National Conference and 11th Summer School. These proceedings were published on disk. The theme of the conference was “TESOL Matters for the Millennium”. A description of the role of the conference follows:

The ACTA Annual National Conference and ATESOL (NSW) Biennial Summer School is the conference for TESOL, TEFL and related fields in Australia and around the world. It caters for teachers at all levels of the educational system ... (Early Childhood, Primary to Adult). Within these sectors, it aims to cater for colleagues working in the fields of indigenous education, bilingualism, linguistics, Asian and community and foreign language teaching both in Australia and overseas. The conference addresses teaching theory and practice, as well as important matters related to migration, welfare and racism (ACTA-ATESOL, 1998, p. 1).

In keeping with the theme for that year the Call for papers (1998), information specified that the focus for this conference was to explore the role of TESOL in creating a
multicultural and equitable society for the millennium. Papers were to address this by exploring diverse ways in which teachers and students meet these challenges. Literacy was one of the key content areas. The abstract (Hertzberg, 1999b) for this three-hour paper was as follows:

Abstract

When language learning pedagogy is informed from a sociolinguistic theoretical framework, the place for educational drama methodology is clear. The foundation for any drama is predicated on establishing a fictional context and within these fictional contexts, using genuine language appropriate to the situation (Halliday, 1985). Educational drama (Bolton, 1979) is a drama methodology that uses the children's prior knowledge and experiences to then create a unique role for themselves within an imagined and fictional context that is negotiated by all concerned. The dramatic context is often one that parallels real situations outside the schooling context. Furthermore, the students are exploring the socio-cultural conventions of the language not only through spoken language but also through gesture and movement—paralinguistics (Maley & Duff, 1991). This workshop will examine a drama unit that demonstrates how drama forms such as Readers' Theatre and parallel improvisation can be used in literature-based reading programs to further student's understanding of critical literacy and at the same time explicitly plan for authentic language use. To take into account the diverse social and cultural
contexts within Australia, children’s books with cross-cultural themes

will be used (Hertzberg, 1999b, p. 17).

References


CONFERENCE PAPER
ACTA-ACTESOL (NSW) INC. NATIONAL CONFERENCE – JANUARY 1999

INTRODUCTION

On this disk you will find three directories, one for each day of the conference.

Under each directory are the papers that were presented on that particular day - there is a content page listing the presenter and the title of the presentation.

The documents have been saved under the names of the presenters and are in rich text format.

If you have any problems with the disk or opening the documents, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

These papers have been refereed by the Conference Committee of ATESOL (NSW) Inc 1999.

ATESOL (NSW) Inc
PO Box 223
LEICHHARDT NSW 2040

Telephone: 02 9564 3322
Facsimile: 02 9564 2342
A Note from the President of ATESL

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all participants in the 11th ATESL Summer School and ACTA Conference.

ATESOL NSW was proud to host this Biennial event which is designed to facilitate the needs of professionals from TESOL, TEFL and related fields from both Australian and international centres.

Through the various speakers and workshops the conference provided an exciting balance of theory and practical experience relating to language teaching and learning, information technologies, sociocultural policies and practices and linguistic research.

The title of the conference brought into focus the concerns we as a profession have for the future of TESOL in the Millenium. Multicultural Education and Living in Harmony with our fellow Australians are the issues that will matter in order for Australia to move forward and become a culturally and economically rich society in the new millennium.

Perhaps the most important facet of the conference was the networking, as it enhances the ESL teaching profession as much as the knowledge gained from the sessions and will open up new horizons for you and your teaching.

I hope you find the conference papers a helpful aid in your teaching environment.

Jenny Eggleton
President - ATESL NSW

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THE OBJECTIVES OF ATESOL (NSW) INC ARE:

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- To assist in maintaining and improving the standards of instruction and other
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- To promote the publication of and to publish and assist in publishing magazines,
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- To promote fellowship among teachers of non-English speaking students.

- To pursue activities which promote intercultural harmony within the Australian
  community by supporting educators, teachers and students.

- To examine and evaluate teaching/learning materials for cultural bias and promote
  the development of materials which are appropriate to Multicultural Australian
  Society.

- To coordinate, foster and promote liaison, mutual cooperation and understanding
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Features of the web page include links to all important ESL resources on the Internet,
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reports from the President and much more. The site is constantly under construction,
and hence very up to date. Please visit our web site regularly and grow with us.
ACTA-ACOTESOL (NSW) INC. NATIONAL CONFERENCE – JANUARY 1999

CONFERENCE PAPERS

PRESENTED ON WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 1999

DRINA ANDREWS
Who says my way is the only way?: The multicultural policy for Victorian Schools.

IAN BROWN
Internet treasure hunts: A treasure of an activity for students learning English.

PHILIPPA GRANWAL
Integrating the systematic study of sounds and spellings into mainstream materials.

MARGERY HERTZBERG
Using drama in second language learning contexts.

LESLEY LJUNGDALH
Children's literature and children's futures.

STELLA EMBERSON
Developing literacy by introducing nominalisation to senior secondary students.

JUDY GAULD
Turning on to democracy: Strategies for teaching about civics and citizenship.
USING DRAMA TO ENHANCE THE READING OF LITERATURE WITH BILINGUAL CHILDREN

Margery Hertzberg

Abstract

This paper analyses the difference between drama activities based on educational drama methodology and simulated role-play activities. It is explained how educational drama methodology can be used in English as a second language learning contexts with early childhood and primary aged children. The paper explores the relationship between educational drama methodology and the principles informing authentic communicative language. Details of a drama unit are then provided to demonstrate how certain drama strategies can be used in literature programs to further student’s critical understanding of themes in children’s books and at the same time explicitly plan for authentic language use.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is twofold. Firstly, the paper demonstrates the difference between drama and simulation and suggests how a particular drama methodology called educational drama can be used within ESL programs. Secondly, the relationship between this drama methodology and communicative language teaching will be explored. It is argued that using this drama methodology within ESL programs based on communicative language teaching principles supports the tenet of interactive language learning within authentic contexts. To explain this the paper firstly analyses the theoretical framework that informs the practice. In the second section a sequential and detailed account of a practical drama program is provided. Following each activity is an explanation of the drama strategy being used and the purpose for this activity in terms of language learning.

In interactive classrooms (Cummins, 1988) students are not seen as vessels at varying degrees of capacity which the teacher then tops up with content of some kind. Rather, students are viewed as people with both prior knowledge and experience. Being aware of, and using these attributes, teachers then act as enabling adults to scaffold the students learning (Vygotsky, 1976). Explicit in Vygotsky’s concept of scaffolding is the
student's involvement in higher-level thinking skills, which require forms of problem solving that impact on cognitive, linguistic and affective learning. The role of the enabling adult, in this case the teacher, is important because as the one with greater expertise in the particular field of learning, they must make the initial decisions about the learning that is required and thus the curriculum framework. However, for students to become actively involved and by implication feel some commitment to their learning, negotiating the specific content (Boomer, 1992) becomes an important element.

In addition, the paper addresses the concept of second language learning and integration through cross-curricula programming. If language learning and the activities planned for this learning are to be authentic, then the language being used is determined by the situation and purpose, which in turn defines the appropriate register (Halliday, 1985). Within a schooling context both the language form and language use is dependent upon the curricula area. This paper explains how certain drama strategies can be used in literature programs to further student's critical understanding of cultural diversity themes in children's books and at the same time explicitly plan for language learning. The book *Six perfectly different pigs* (Geoghegan, & Moseng, 1993) has been selected as an example of children's literature that addresses cultural diversity issues.

**The educational context**

The educational context that provides the focus for this paper is English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching in Australian Primary Schools (5 years old to 12 years old). Capital cities in particular have a large number of bilingual children and in the Bondi and Port Jackson Regions of Sydney where I conduct much of my research, 39% of the children attending government schools require English as a second language tuition (NSW Department of School Education, 1996). The English proficiency of these children ranges from beginners to advanced. In the main, children are enrolled in mainstream classes and the ESL teacher either team teaches with the mainstream teacher and/or the children are withdrawn for L2 instruction for a specified period of the day—usually about one hour.
Although this paper concerns L2 teaching specifically, there are broader issues that impact on learning. Cross-cultural awareness and understanding is one such issue. This paper addresses the language learning needs of bilingual\(^1\) children in mainstream classes while aiming to enhance understanding of cultural diversity for all children in the class. Developing a multicultural perspective is mandatory in all Australian school curriculum. It is even more critical that this perspective has an explicit focus in classrooms with bilingual students to ensure that the affective factors effecting L2 development such as a secure and supportive learning environment (Krashen, 1982) are met.

The drama program that follows is written to cater for this context but the teaching/learning principles transcend this specific context and age group. This drama unit can be transferred and/or refined to meet the needs of other teaching situations including Secondary and Adult. Furthermore, the selected book (*Six perfectly different pigs*) is a fable—a literary genre common to many linguistic cultures. This, combined with its anthropomorphic features renders it less culturally specific than some other literature, further enabling the program to be used in other countries where English is being learnt as a second or foreign language.

It is not possible within the scope of this paper to discuss the many aspects of both language and drama teaching that this drama program raises by implication. For instance, the rationale for using literature as a language learning tool (Brumfit, 1986; Widdowson, 1975) is not discussed. It will also become evident that this drama program is principally concerned with meaning rather than form in terms of L2 development. Again this important aspect of L2 development is not discussed. Although the major elements of drama are briefly mentioned in order to position the reader and clarify the difference between drama and simulation, space precludes a detailed analysis of these. Readers are referred to texts such as Cusworth and Simons (1997), which provide a comprehensive explanation for non-specialist drama teachers. Rather, the

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\(^1\) It should be noted that this writer prefers to use the term bilingual as opposed to ESL or NESB. Although bilingual in the broader context usually means fluency in two languages, in Australian educational contexts (and in particular Early childhood and Primary settings), this term is now accepted when describing children who are operating in two languages. Bilingual avoids the deficit notion in words such as 'non' and focuses attention on these children's potential ability to operate in more than one language (Gibbons, 1991).
major emphasis in this paper is on how drama as opposed to simulation fulfils the requirement of providing students with authentic contexts in which to use genuine or natural language—a major goal in communicative language teaching.

In Australia a document titled the *ESL Scales* (Curriculum Corporation, 1994) provides the framework for ESL curriculum development in Australian schools. Based on the model by Bachman and Palmer (1993) it identifies three major dimensions of communicative language competence required by students. These are pragmatic (language and cultural understanding), organisation (language structures and features) and strategic (strategies) competence.

**Communicative language teaching: The place for drama**

As language teachers our aim is to plan communicative teaching/learning activities which provide bilingual children with opportunities to practice the target language in realistic situations. Communicative language teaching is based on the premise that the discourse in classrooms should replicate natural discourse. Nunan (1987), defines genuine communication thus:

> Genuine communication is characterised by the uneven distribution of information, the negotiation of meaning (through for example clarification requests and confirmation checks), topic nomination and negotiation by more than one speaker, and the right of interlocutors to decide whether to contribute to an interaction or not. In other words, in genuine communication, decision about who says what to whom and when are up for grabs (Nunan, 1987, p. 137).

To meet this important criterion, it is not possible for students to be passive receptive learners—they must also use language (Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988). To this end tasks such as information gap tasks are common, but as Nunan (1988), cautions “they do not always stimulate enthusiastic learner participation, nor is their relevance to the real world always apparent” (p. 87). Hence he suggests “collaborative communication activities such as group work, problem solving tasks, role play and simulations” (p. 87).
As will be argued later in this paper, role-plays and simulations are both problematic in terms of attaining genuine communication without attention to drama methodology and the elements inherent within. But in principle drama activities do provide opportunities for children to interact with other peers and teachers as they participate in the particular drama activity. Fundamental to drama is the notion of negotiation between participants in order to solve a problem (Heathcote, 1988; O'Toole, 1992). Furthermore, when language learning pedagogy is informed from a sociolinguistic theoretical framework, the place for drama is even clearer. The foundation for any drama is predicated on establishing a fictional context (O'Toole, 1992) and within these fictional contexts, using genuine language appropriate to the situation (Halliday, 1985). In addition, the students are exploring the sociocultural conventions of the language not only through spoken language but also through gesture and movement (paralinguistics). As a result, drama is a learning medium that develops and addresses the cognitive, linguistic and affective learning domains. Children solve problems (the quintessential basis of drama) through the use of linguistic and paralinguistic resources in order to express both their own personal opinions and those of the role they assume in enactment. Drama teaching/learning activities, and in particular the drama form of role-play, are therefore common in language teaching textbooks. To effect a learning environment using drama that is truly communicative depends on the drama methodology used and by implication the content for the drama. Educational drama as opposed to simulated role-plays enables a truly communicative learning environment. This methodology is explained later but firstly I will explain why many so called drama activities are little more than simulation exercises and as such do not fulfil the principles of communicative language learning as defined above.

**Simulation or drama? Planning realistic or authentic communication activities**

Drama activities that are either pre-scripted and then rehearsed, or structured non-scripted improvisations are sometimes viewed as less communicative than open ended role play (Strutridge, 1983). This is also the view of one of the major Australian curriculum documents—the *Australian Language Levels Guidelines* that states:

A lot of predetermined role-play may look like communication but it is not, if what is said is entirely predictable to the participants. A distinction needs
to be made between ‘acting out’ where the script is determined in advance, and ‘communicating’ where the script is created by the participants as they proceed (Scarino, Vale, McKay & Clark, 1988a, p. 20).

In terms of role play activities traditionally used in language teaching, this distinction is important, but I would further argue that even scripts created by the participants will not necessarily satisfy the requirements of realistic communicative language learning principles even when based on realistic situations. In other words it is not the drama form itself, in this case role-play, that makes one activity more or less desirable in terms of communicative language learning. Rather it is the drama methodology (for example in constructing an open-ended role-play), that is critical in achieving genuine communication competence. Much role-play including open-ended role-play is in fact simulation. This distinction between simulation and drama is important to clarify because drama as opposed to simulation allows students to practice the target language in authentic contexts. With regard to L2 learning Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989, p. 328) define an authentic activity as being one in which students directly experience the thoughts and actions of a particular field of practice. For instance, they suggest that in order to solve a problem in math, learners should behave as mathematicians to tackle this task. Again however, I would argue that the way students assume the behaviours of experts in any given field (that is, how students take on a role and the role of the teacher in facilitating this) makes the activity more or less authentic.

In defining drama the phrase “stepping into another person’s shoes” is commonly used. Simulate however means to pretend. So when defining simulation we could say “pretending or feigning to be in someone else’s shoes”. It is the verbs “step” and “pretend” that help differentiate between drama and simulation. Semantics perhaps? I think not. The difference between drama and simulation is analogous with the continuum of communication activities in second language teaching—practising the target language in contrived situations through to realistic and then authentic contexts (Scarino, Vale, McKay & Clark, 1988a). As language teachers we understand the subtle difference between providing students with language learning experiences that are authentic as opposed to realistic. For example, within a unit of work on the local community we might ask the school secretary to allow students to use the telephone to arrange an excursion to the local Town Hall—an authentic activity. However, it really is
stretching the friendship if we do this on a very frequent basis. Hence, the “play” telephone in the classroom and a role-play substitution is sometimes necessary. It is not authentic but it is realistic and the children are using language that directly relates to the current learning experience. Within this context the predetermined role-play is further enhanced if the teacher, or proficient English speaking peer, assumes a role and enters a dialogue with the second language learner to allow for both modeling and scaffolding to occur. Gone are the days however, when we gave students textbooks with highly predictable prepared scripts, allotted parts and asked students to pretend for example that they were phonetically pronounceable Jan, Bob and Tom booking an airline ticket to Paris—an exercise that bore/s (sic) little relation to prior or immediate experience and needs.

Drama also follows a continuum and some drama forms better cater for authentic contextual learning than others for a variety of reasons. However, the major difference between simulation and drama is that the emphasis is on planning activities that help participants to assume a role rather than pretend (within a fictional context that is made believable—a point I return to later). This applies to all forms of drama ranging from pre-scripted dialogues, structured improvisation and very open-ended role-plays. To assume the role of another person as opposed to pretending to be another person is a difficult task. In order for this task to be achieved dramatic strategies that enhance belief in a role need to be structured within the teaching/learning situation. In the following drama program an explicit planning framework for role play, and structures for developing sculpting and still image strategies are used to help children assume rather than pretend.

Just as there are different methodologies in for instance the teaching of reading, the same applies to drama. Educational drama is the term used for the methodology explained in this paper—the same methodology referred to in many Australian and international\(^2\) school documents.

\(^2\) Educational drama is a methodology now widely used in Early childhood, Primary, Secondary and Adult classes in for example: America, Belgium, Canada, Holland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and The United Kingdom.
Educational drama

Educational drama is a drama methodology (Bolton, 1979) that uses the children's prior knowledge and experiences to create a unique role for themselves within an imagined and fictional context that is negotiated by all concerned. Of significance when using drama as a learning medium across the curriculum, in this case for both language and literary study, is that the focus is not on the final product and/or a performance for an external audience. Although performance for an audience is possible if this additional outcome is desired, for the purpose of cross-curricula learning the immediate intent is on using drama processes to enhance participants' cognitive, linguistic and affective experiences in meaningful contexts.

Establishing a fictional context means that no matter how fantastic the situation may appear from outside, while within the drama the situation is real and the purpose for using language is authentic. Furthermore, the dramatic context is usually one that parallels real situations outside the schooling context. Therefore, the language used is the language of the real world—a primary aim of language teaching, but one which writers such as Seedhouse (1996) cogently argue is nigh impossible to replicate either realistically or believably within an institutional setting. Often this dramatic context parallels reality with situations familiar to students. Bolton terms this parallel phenomenon as “metaxis” and states:

All learning is a matter of ‘ownership’. We have many ways of moving towards it: through listening, talking through it, reading about it, directly experiencing it, reflecting upon it, and reapplying it. Being ‘in role’ combines a number of these without being identical to any of them: it is more than listening and talking because ‘in context’ carries the extra dimension of responsibility; it is a different kind of ‘reading’, the symbolic medium being a social interaction rather than print; it is less than direct experience, lacking the power of actuality, yet it can be more than direct experience because of ‘metaxis’ (seeing from two worlds at the same time) giving a reflective edge to the role play which direct experience often lacks; it has a sense of applying knowledge, but lacks the consequences of real application (Bolton, 1992, p. 33).

For instance, when dealing with upsetting issues we want to make the context authentic so that students can feel what it is like to be in someone else’s shoes, but at the same
time through "protection in role" withhold the consequences of real application. For example, in a drama program (Hertzberg, 1997) based on the book *Onion tears* (Kidd, 1989) children explore the issue of emotional abuse, in this case, teasing on the basis of cultural difference. Students assume the role of either a bully or a victim. Children participate in a number of activities that use drama strategies to aid in preparation for the planning of this "open ended extended role drama". These activities are designed so that the elements that makes an experience a drama as opposed to simulation is established.

**The elements of drama**

*If you are interested in the chemistry you need to know the elements*

(O'Toole, 1992, p. 23).

The three major elements of drama are role, focus and tension. To explain these elements, connections are made between the elements of drama and the structure of narrative. While acknowledging the difference between narrative books and drama (Byron, 1986) this link is deemed useful for readers less familiar with drama.

**Role**

Simply put role means adopting another person's point of view. Participants find this more or less difficult depending on the role they assume. Moreover, just as some people are for instance better mathematicians or painters, so too are some people at adopting a role. It therefore becomes crucial when using drama as a learning medium for all students, to provide structures to develop all participants ability in adopting roles. Some of the possible structures (both strategies and planning frameworks) to help achieve this are demonstrated in the following program.

**Focus**

In drama the focus is the theme. Events and related issues contribute to give substance to the theme. The concept of focus makes a drama experience significantly different from simulated role-play because simulation usually remains as a retelling of an event. Drama on the other hand explores the themes that direct and/or result from events. For example, the following drama program selects certain events in the story, but this is
done to identify the theme (emotional abuse on the basis of physical difference) which then becomes the focus for the subsequent drama.

To effect a drama, participants must be aware of and work towards a common focus to avoid the drama disintegrating into play acting (Cusworth & Simons, 1997). This does not mean that the drama itself will be prescriptive—indeed negotiation is a critical aspect.

**Tension**

A Drama unlike a simulation exercise involves tension in the form of a problem or constraint. For example, a role-play that simulates making a booking (event) to the Zoo is hardly dramatic. Similarly a retell through role-play of a recent excursion to the local zoo (series of events) will (one hopes) not be dramatic. But a drama based on a fictitious excursion to a known or imaginary zoo could well be dramatic—with the focus for instance on animal protection. At the same time children use language that the excursion and unit planned to develop.

In the following program literature is used to develop children’s understanding of tension in drama. Conversely, the drama activities aid in identifying the tension (complication) and by implication the theme within the literature—in this cases cultural identity.

**Using educational drama strategies to explore cultural diversity issues in *Six Perfectly Different Pigs***

**Overview**

Using drama as a teaching/learning activity is suggested in all the language teaching syllabus and supporting documents in Australia and is particularly prevalent in sections related to the reading of literature. However, the majority of drama experiences are consolidating activities after the book has been read. For example, children might be asked to replay their favourite section or suggest an alternative ending—usually through role-play. For a drama activity to enhance both literacy and literary development, the activities must engage the children in a thorough reading of the story. “Acting out”
sections as a retell or recall exercise may not aid children’s understanding, because the students are not required to re-read or analyse the story in depth (Simons & Quirk, 1991). In contrast the Drama experiences in this program occur before and during the reading of the book. The theme explored is the conflict that arises in terms of identity when physical difference is cause for emotional abuse—teasing and bullying. The anthropomorphic feature of this book is desirable as it eliminates the possibility of stereotypic and tokenistic representation of a particular cultural or ethnic group.

The program has been designed to enhance children’s understanding of both the story (theme) itself and the language used in the telling of the story. The purpose of this sequence is for students to analyse critically (Freebody & Luke, 1990), and react and respond to the situation portrayed in the text. Through reflective discussion students propose possible resolutions before reading the author’s interpretation and at the same time explore the concept of metaphor in literary works.

**Dramatic Focus**

Cultural Identity

**Age group suitability**

Nine to thirteen years old.

**Synopsis**

*Six perfectly different pigs* conforms to the fable genre of literature and, as is common in this genre, the animals have anthropomorphic characteristics. Most fables explore a universal truth usually in the third person. This picture book is about six pigs each of whom has different physical features. Each is dissatisfied because of that. But the pig with the straight tail is particularly unhappy, and is subject to emotional abuse.

**Organisation of drama program**

The following program uses the drama techniques of sculpting, still image and a form of role-play called parallel improvisation. These drama techniques (and the structuring of them) may be unfamiliar to some readers. Therefore, a brief outline of the drama program with a suggested time frame and general classroom organisation procedures is firstly
provided. A more detailed description of each activity, an explanation of the drama strategy and suggestions for setting it up follow this.

Teaching/learning outline and time frame (in total 60 minutes)

1. Individual still image—2 minutes
2. Shared reading of the beginning of the book—5 minutes
3. Sculpting of Paprika—3 minutes
4. De-roling and reflection—5 minutes
5. Still image of scene of tension in book—3 minutes
6. De-roling and reflection of still image—5 minutes
7. Parallel improvisation (using still image strategy)—5 minutes
8. Showing and viewing of parallel improvisation—10 minutes
9. De-roling and reflection—10 minutes
10. Book talk—5 minutes
11. Shared reading continued—5 minutes

Classroom organisation

For the following reasons it is preferable for this type of teaching/learning experience to be done in the usual teaching space rather than a school hall or similar because:

- Drama should and can be an activity that is done often and at times quite spontaneously. It is usually not possible to book the school hall frequently and/or spontaneously.

- Children often find it easier to work in familiar environments. Large spaces such as school halls can be quite inhibiting and depending on the quality of the architecture, poor acoustically. To this end the classroom may always be arranged with a large space in the middle, or alternatively it is possible to move the furniture quietly and efficiently (approximately 2 minutes), after several practices—but do not expect perfection the first times.

In terms of perfection it is also important to consider the following:

- If children are unfamiliar with this methodology their first attempts may reflect this.

- If the teacher is unfamiliar with this methodology, the same might apply. (But many of us don’t/can’t stop teaching equivalent fractions just because the first attempt was less than perfect so why stop teaching drama?)
• Drama is supposed to be noisy. After all it does involve talking! However, there are ways to lesson this noise. I find a tambourine useful. One purposeful bang means freeze because someone wants to say something to the whole group, or the activity has finished. A rattle of it means keep on working, but the noise level is increasing and needs to decrease.

DETAILS OF TEACHING/LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Drama activity BEFORE reading the book

Activity 1: Individual still image
• Participants stand in a large circle with their backs to the centre of the circle. That is, they face outwards as opposed to inwards.

• Participants are asked to make a still image that captures the moment when they feel upset by another person’s unkind comment to them. Allow about 30 seconds for thinking and preparation time. On the count of three children freeze this still image.

• Now ask children to capture the moment when someone says something complimentary about them. Children change their still image to show how they might react to this. Allow about 15 seconds for thinking and preparation time. On the count of three children freeze this still image.

Explanation
Still image is explained in depth after Activity 3. Refer to this. The intention of this activity is to focus children on the forthcoming story and activities, by establishing links with the children’s prior knowledge and experience (Bachman, 1993). Students are arranged in a large circle and facing outwards so that their images can remain private if they so wish. In this introductory exercise students are only in “shadow” role. It is necessary to protect and respect their right to anonymous thoughts and feelings. Showing these images to the rest of the class is not recommended at this stage.
Drama activities DURING the reading of the book

Activity 2: Shared reading

- Read from the beginning and end at the moment where conflict results in tension:

There were six happy piglets called Porridge, Pavlova, Pepperoni, Peach, Pistachio and Paprika... He grew sadder and sadder.  
(Geoghegan & Moseng, 1993, pp. 1-7)

Activity 3: Sculpting

- Put the following extract onto an overhead transparency and leave it displayed throughout the activities:

  So Paprika was left alone. He sat on his tail all day long.  
  Sometimes he would forget and stand up.  
  Then the others would laugh, so he quickly sat back down again.  
  He grew sadder and sadder. (Geoghegan & Moseng, 1993, p. 7)

- Divide the students into pairs and ask one to sculpt the other to show how Paprika might look as the other characters laugh at him.

Explanation

Sculpting (this activity) and still image (Activity 5) are similar. Both involve students creating a still (frozen) image with their bodies to “feel” the dramatic moment. Sculpting and still image help children assume a role for two reasons. Firstly, the emphasis is on analysing the character before even considering “what to do” with the character in terms of acting. Secondly, in order to analyse the character the students need to address both the focus and tension within the text and transfer this into the dramatic field.

Sculpting is when one person sculpts the other to take on a role to portray a characteristic, and still image is when either individually (as in Activity 1) or as a group (as in Activity 5), each person takes on a role within the image portrayed. The analogy
of a still photograph is useful when explaining both strategies to children. Photographs record a moment in time, depict an idea and/or capture a dramatic moment. The meaning is conveyed using body language; in particular, facial expression, body gesture and position. When explaining this to a group of children for the first time I use two photographs taken at a child’s birthday party. Both have been enlarged in colour on a photocopy machine. One depicts the birthday child surrounded by friends and family blowing out the candles on the birthday cake—moment in time/idea. The other shows a dramatic moment at the same party during one of the birthday games—a child just “receiving” a water bomb.

Both sculpting and still image are beneficial in terms of second language learning and in particular for students with basic linguistic proficiency attending a mainstream class. Firstly, the situation (albeit a fictional context), is authentic and so the purpose for language use meaningful. Secondly, students are actively engaged in problem solving situations in order to use language. In order to complete the task, they will be producing and/or receiving language related to the language functions of: planning and predicting; agreeing and disagreeing; expressing position and giving instructions and suggesting. Because the final production of sculpting and still image rely on nonverbal communication they allow bilingual students to demonstrate their understanding of the text using paralinguistic features, and in this case in particular, facial expression and body gesture (Maley and Duff, 1982). Hence the level of cognitive demand remains appropriately challenging even if students’ oral English is insufficiently developed and/or they lack the confidence to add dialogue to their scene.

**Setting it up**

Divide the students into pairs. One person is Paprika and the other the sculptor (director). It is the person who does the sculpting (sculptor), that takes the most initiative in designing the interpretation, but negotiation between the sculptor and Paprika should be encouraged. For example the sculptor might ask Paprika to sit down with head bowed and looking sad. Paprika might further suggest that he cup his hands around his chin. Once the interpretation has been designed the sculptor moves away and leaves Paprika portraying this event as a frozen moment.
Activity 4: De-roling and reflection

- All the sculptures can be shown as statues in the centre of the room and the class can then discuss how feelings are portrayed through facial and body gesture.

Explanation

Reflection is the discussion that follows where students present their thoughts about what they have learnt and compare their experiences. In essence the drama and discussion allows children to explore the four modes that Freebody and Luke (1990), describe efficient readers as using. These are text analyst, code-breaker, text participant, and text user.

De-roling (Cusworth & Simons, 1997, p. 8) means to disengage from the role that you have taken on. This is important when a drama activity involves taking on a role that evokes strong emotions or thoughts for that person. Although the above activity does not involve taking on the role of Paprika for a significant length of time it does involve enacting an unpleasant experience—one common for children of this age group. Therefore, discussion on how they feel in this role is important. Often de-roling occurs as part of the reflective discussion. The distinction between the two may not be important for children in these brief activities because children only assume “shadow role”. However, teachers must be aware of the distinction and focus the discussion so that both aspects are covered.

Why do these?

Both reflection and de-roling are important at this stage. As Morgan and Saxton state: “It is the frame through which the students are taken out of the action of the plot and enter the action of the theme” (Morgan & Saxton, 1987, p. 134). The major theme is ridicule on the basis of physical difference. The oral discussion at this stage aims to encourage children to directly focus on both the meaning and the language of the story (Nation, 1996). Furthermore, the teacher scaffolds the discussion using open-ended questions to
encourage student's ideas (Vygotsky, 1976) and then recasts and/or expands upon these to promote further discussion (Swain, 1985).

Setting it up

It is preferable that the children and teacher are seated in a large circle so that eye contact can be made with all speakers. It is also important that all children have an opportunity to speak their thoughts. For this reason I have found whole class discussion a good way to firstly address key issues. I then ask children to divide into groups of three to discuss issues raised in more detail.

Activity 5 : Still image

- Return to the previous page of the book and put the following extract onto an overhead transparency.

  It was Porridge who noticed it first.
  "Hey, look," he cried, "Paprika's tail has no curl."
  "Oh yeah," said Pepperoni.
  "Whoever heard of a straight-tailed pig?" squealed Pavlova.
  "Let's pretend he's not our brother," said Peach.

  (Geoghegan & Moseng, 1993, p. 6)

- Divide students into groups of six. Each person in this group selects one of the characters. They then prepare a still image to portray the events in this scene. For example, one group of 10 year olds recently conveyed the scene this way. Paprika was cowering in the corner and his five brothers towered over him, all with their arms firmly folded and looks of sneering disgust.

- Ask groups to volunteer to show their still image to the rest of the class and then have other class members discuss how the still image evokes this scene.

Explanation

Refer to sculpting (Activity 3) for discussion on still image. In this case students are in interactive groups (Long and Porter, 1985) and need to negotiate (Pica, 1994) the image together. Although the image itself is frozen, and hence without spoken dialogue, in the planning stages students will need to talk together about the meaning of this excerpt in
order to portray the image. In addition, note that the reason the text remains displayed is to enable children to re-read the text to consolidate and refine meaning. In a sense it is disguised skilling and drilling (Heath, 1993).

**Setting it up**

Groups should not be required to show their work to the rest of the class. After all the learning is in the planning stages. However, in the Primary years I have yet to find a group of children who do not want to show and it is important to allow time for this.

I suggest that each group show their depiction in the space where they have been rehearsing. This way they do not need to rearrange themselves and nor are they distracted from the purpose by meeting the demands of the “unfamiliar space”.

As a group prepares to show their still image, ask the remaining children to close their eyes. One member of the performing group counts 3, 2, 1. On the count of 1 the audience open their eyes onto the prepared still image. This is a useful tool because the audience is not watching the preparation for the still image, but rather they focus on the still image itself—analogous to a curtain call.

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**Activity 6: De-roling and reflection**

- Encourage children to reflect and discuss circumstances that mirror this scene in terms of cultural diversity. Questions such as, “Do you think Paprika’s situation is ever experienced by humans?” can help focus the discussion.

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**Activity 7: Parallel improvisation**

- Divide students into groups of six. Groups prepare a still image that acts as a parallel to this scene in the book. For example one group recently depicted a scene where the group was ridiculing a member because of the perceived strange food she had for lunch.
Explanation

Parallel improvisations (a form of role-play) are improvisations that parallel a scene and/or theme in a book thus acting as a metaphor. Inherent in parallel improvisation is the concept of “metaxis” which means seeing two worlds at the same time (Bolton, 1992). As O’Neill and Rogers put it:

The first world remains circumscribed by the original text. The second world is a parallel drama which will share significant features with the world of the text, but may expand some and overlook others. ... The drama world will illuminate the original text and, above all, give students access to it (O’Neill & Rogers, 1994, p. 50).

The concept of metaxis is not only important in terms of enhancing cross-cultural understanding, but also it helps to provide an authentic framework in which to use and practice language appropriate for the purpose. In this case students are using paralinguistic and oral language to convey the thoughts of people who are being ridiculed or teased.

Setting it up

Write the following questions on the board as the basis for children planning their still image. This assists students to focus their ideas and by implication “build belief” in both the situation and the role to be adopted.

- Who are we? (characters/roles)
- Where are we? (setting/context)
- What are we doing? (problem/tension)
- Why are we doing it? (focus)
- How will we show this? (body language/movements/mood)

These questions assist students in establishing the fictional context. They also help students plan for a drama that includes the elements of focus and tension which further makes the situation believable. Discussing the above then enables students to assume a role that for them is convincing because the situation is clearly established. In order to do this children will be discussing issues central to the theme—cultural diversity.
Activity 8: Showing and viewing

- Participants show these still images to the rest of the class.

Explanation

Rather than asking viewers to guess what this still image is about, ask one of the group members to explain their still image to the class before showing it. This avoids the guessing game ritual, which deflects from the purpose of the learning experience—to analyse and then reflect upon the consequences of emotional abuse. If made into a guessing game, children will avoid adding any complex nuances to aid in their interpretation.

Activity 9: De-roling and reflection

Part A

- Reflect on the situations that children depicted and discuss to elicit students' personal views and opinions on this.

Part B

- To ensure all children have an opportunity to discuss their reactions, ask them to return to their original groups. Introduce the phrase emotional abuse (which is after all what bullying and teasing is). Hand every group one sheet of A4 paper per group which is divided into two vertical columns. At the top of one column write the word abuser and in the other abused. Suggest that one child be the scribe and ask the group to write down single words or phrases to describe how they felt in their respective roles.

Explanation: Part A

First focus the discussion on the roles children assumed and how they felt about this. Questions such as “Rachel you were teasing Nadia about her lunch. How did you feel in this role?” are appropriate. This is crucial for two main reasons. Firstly it is important to provide participants with the opportunity to debrief on the role they assumed. Secondly, and usually as a result of the first point, children can discuss the issues that the still images evoked. In creating these scenes it is most unlikely participants will like the role they have assumed. It is imperative to allow time to discuss this through de-roling. For
instance, it is not uncommon for children in de-roling sessions to make comments such as “Well I was the one teasing Rodrigo and I felt really mean and horrible because I’ve been teased and I know [child’s emphasis] how horrible it is” (Hertzberg, 1996). Questions from the teacher at this point can aid in elaborating on this. For example, “That was an interesting point just made. Did anyone else feel like that?”

**Explanation: Part B**

In terms of language learning the emphasis of this activity is on language-focused learning (Nation, 1996) in that explicit attention to vocabulary and structures related to the meaning of the words is being addressed. Although it is not necessary to do so (as the outcome has already been achieved) most young children will want to share their ideas with the rest of the class and again it is important to allow time for this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 10 : Book talk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Return to the book and discuss the story read so far and how the problem might be resolved. At this point it is important to focus on the particular narrative genre—a fable. Discuss the features of this genre so that children understand that there will be a resolution in the form of a moral. This is important because it provides a focus and framework for children. Unlike for instance a fantasy and hence fantastic possibilities, the resolution is likely to be realistic. Furthermore, fables are common to many cultures and so children from non-English backgrounds are also likely to be familiar with this genre in either its written or spoken form.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity 11 : Shared Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Continue reading the book.</td>
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</table>

**Further drama teaching/learning possibilities**

The above explains a drama program that uses drama strategies before and during the reading of this book to enhance children’s understanding of the themes and issues, but there are other possibilities just some of which are now provided:
• As this book has a lot of dialogue it would be suitable for a Readers' Theatre script (Hertzberg & Ewing, 1998)—a drama form most suitable for second language learning.

• Ideas students initiated in the parallel improvisations could form the basis for a more extended role drama such as the drama programs (Hertzberg, 1997a & b) written for the books Onion tears (Kidd, 1989) and Something from nothing (Gilman, 1992).

• Other books with similar themes abound and a unit of work exploring emotional abuse issues in children's literature might result.

Conclusion

Many drama activities including open-ended role-play remain at the “contrived practice communication activity” level because the context is simulated and not necessarily linked to an authentic and/or believable context. In contrast, educational drama and the strategies inherent within it enable drama to be used as an authentic communicative language learning experience, because for the duration of the drama the language used is within an authentic (all be it fictional) context. The focus is very much on the “here and now” within this fictional context established and negotiated by all the participants and the role the teacher takes in providing both the necessary dramatic and language support is crucial in achieving this. Within this context students take an active role in their learning by making connections with their own past experiences and/or knowledge to critically analyse the themes of the story.

However, all the above is my opinion, based on my past experience and knowledge. What do children think? The following extract comes from a semi structured interview with Rodrigo a 10 year old intermediate learner at the conclusion of a drama lesson (Hertzberg, 1996). Striving to assume the role of impartial devil's advocate I suggested we might just as well have had a discussion:

Rodrigo: Yeah, but, like you had a better, like you could see better how your body would look, um, how like what you would say.

Teacher: And you think you can do that in drama and you can't do that in discussion?

Rodrigo: No because in a discussion usually you just talk and like you won't have a better idea because just other people say it, and you put more in acting and then you like are acting the person and like you actually [his emphasis] are the person, when she is teased you feel down you feel whatever she is feeling in the book. You just have a better idea of the feeling.
References


**Biodata**

Margery Hertzberg is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Languages at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, Australia. Her background as an ESL and
mainstream teacher with an interest in drama led to research on drama for second language development. Much of her research work involves programming cross-curricula drama units with teachers for their particular context and then teaching these programs with the children.
CHAPTER NINE

"YOU CAN LEARN THROUGH DRAMA"

Preface

The following two articles directly report on my 1998 research project. The preface serves as an introduction to both. This chapter's title uses a quote from Kate—one of the children participating in the project. In a semi-structured video interview we had the following exchange:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Margery:} & \quad \text{Why do you think I got you to do some drama activities?} \\
\text{Kate:} & \quad \text{For you to teach us that we can learn through drama.} \\
\text{Margery:} & \quad \text{And why do you think that? I noticed you wrote that in your journal (Appendix C, p. 259).} \\
\text{Kate:} & \quad \text{Just that we can do the things we do in class the same through drama like we can learn through drama and do those activities through drama... . You can learn through drama ... you can use as much body and facial expression as you want to so people watching us can see who our characters are ... . This way (drama) is better because you can by the expression on your face and the way you're sitting and moving around people can tell how you feel (video interview C).}
\end{align*}
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Both articles demonstrate how learning was achieved using educational drama methodology. Although each article includes the research description, elaboration of this aspect to include issues such as the development of the program, ethical considerations and the importance of the reflection process in my research now follows.
Research description

_Drama by its very nature is a negotiated group art form, in a non-reproducible experience. ... The case study is useful when, as is usual in drama, the researcher is interested in, and deeply involved in, the structures, processes and outcomes of a project_ (Carroll, 1996, p. 77).

This case study was part of an intensive and consecutive fourteen-day drama program which had its beginnings in a pilot study conducted in December 1996 (Hertzberg, under review). As such, it is an example of the action research process. Acting, observing and reflecting on the plan for my pilot study contributed to this amended plan. To begin the process, the act of reconnaissance (designing the specific focus) took place (Grundy, 1995). The research project’s overall aim was to examine how drama strategies enhance children’s understanding of narrative texts.

The objectives were to analyse and describe how:

- drama processes (particularly Readers’ Theatre) can facilitate children’s oral reading skills;
- drama processes (particularly still image, voice collage and sculpting) can facilitate an understanding of the literary themes within a book;
- drama processes (particularly parallel improvisation and play-building) can facilitate an understanding of the universal themes within narrative texts and then transfer this understanding by exploring these themes in other contexts and situations;
- the drama process of reflection contributes to children’s cognitive, linguistic and affective development through a process of clarification about issues or instances that occurred within the drama sessions.

Accordingly, a case study site suitable for implementing this project was organised.
Research procedure: The case study context

Participants and setting

Molly, a teacher I met through our respective postgraduate (M.Ed.) studies agreed that I could use her class as a case study for research. I explained that I wished to facilitate the lessons in her classroom and involve her as my co-researcher. She is familiar with the principles of educational drama and in past years has used this methodology. Although she has co-written several drama units recently (NSW Department of Education and Training, 1999), she had not used drama extensively with this particular class. Her major strengths are in language and literacy and she has a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the English K-6 syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 1998). Her particular research interest is in the field of boys’ education and literacy development.

Within this fourteen-day period her class was engaged in drama related activities for three and a half hours on each day. The class was a mixed ability co-educational Year 5 class (ten and eleven year-olds) in a large Sydney government school. Parent, student and school approval was sought and received before the project began. The drama program was planned in consultation with Molly to incorporate the drama forms of Readers’ Theatre, parallel improvisation, and play-building during the reading of narrative texts, while the co-researcher’s role as critical friend involved taking anecdotal running records during teaching sessions and keeping a journal (Appendix D, p. 261). It was agreed that Molly would directly participate whenever she wished to or was needed. Apart from the legal obligation for her to be in the room, it was also deemed important
that she take an active role in some of the facilitating as she knew the children well and could work with them at critical moments. There were times when protection of children’s feelings was important—an aspect highlighted in Hertzberg (under review). Elden and Chisholm (1993) confirm the importance of the co-researcher’s role and state that “participation comes from the outside researcher’s need for insiders’ deep understanding of context and culture in a system where research is to be meaningful to system members (Elden & Chisholm, 1993, p. 131).

Planning the drama program

After consultation with Molly, a drama program was prepared. Consideration in planning for the program took into account the following factors:

- *The requirements of the English K-6 syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 1998)*

Molly’s English curriculum directly related to the outcomes for Stage Three as stated in the *English K-6 syllabus* (Appendix E, p. 263). Molly requested that the selected literature feature female protagonists as she felt that male protagonists were over represented to date in her program. *Onion tears* (Kidd, 1989), *Our excursion* (Walker & Cox, 1994) and *Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf* (Dahl, 1984), were selected as appropriate texts.

- *The needs and abilities of the range of children in the class*

In this co-educational class of thirty children there were 19 boys and 11 girls. Six of the children were bilingual. Four of these six children still required English as a second language assistance. Three were third phase and one second phase. Several of the children had some emotional difficulties (but not severe) resulting from home
situations. None of the children was described as having special needs in terms of learning difficulties. The range of reading abilities varied, but there were no children in the class with extreme reading difficulties.

- **The physical classroom environment**

As this program aimed to examine how to use drama in other curriculum areas, in this case literature programs, we believed it important that the sessions take place in the classroom itself. In most schools, the luxury of a suitable hall for such activities is either not available or requires booking well in advance—hardly conducive to promoting a teaching/learning activity as something that should occur frequently and even at times spontaneously. Therefore, we used her classroom—a standard sized room. For the duration, the desks were arranged in a horseshoe shape to allow for a large central space in the middle; an artificial arrangement in part done to make videoing of the sessions easier. With the co-operation of all teaching staff, other weekly programs for this class were cancelled or kept to a minimum. Furthermore, as primary teachers get very little release from face to face teaching, our recorded interviews and “chat” times occurred in the classroom during recess and lunch while other teachers covered for us with playground duties.

**Ethics**

Following a successful application to the “Human Ethics Review Committee” of the University of Western Sydney, Nepean (Appendix F, p. 269), the subsequent procedures were put in place:
• **Research integrity and autonomy**

Letters were sent to the Principal, class teacher, students and parents/guardians to explain the project and request permission (Appendix G, p. 271). The Principal was asked if any parents and/or children would require written and/or oral translation into another language, but this was not necessary.

• **Well-informed participation**

It was clearly stated that children who did not wish to participate (or whose parents did not want them to) would not be disadvantaged in any way. Care was taken to assure children of their rights at all times and they were aware that they could withdraw from the project at any time without penalty.

• **Negotiation of video data**

As this research was videoed with the aim that an edited version be made as a professional development resource it was important that the children, parents/guardians, class teacher and principal had an opportunity to view the contents. All parties were formally invited to view the video and other data collection material whilst the project was in operation. Whilst all parties were informed that they could view the entire footage, this was not deemed an essential aspect in terms of arranging a formal viewing. Although three colleagues (Appendix H, p. 280), and myself used this material for analysis, the raw footage will never be made public and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the retaining period (five years).
Chapter 9. "You can learn through drama"

As the edited version of the video (Hertzberg, in progress) would be made public it was deemed essential that all parties view the first draft of this to allow for any requested alterations to be made before making the final draft. A meeting was arranged for viewing of this material (Appendix I, p. 286) and all parties were encouraged to provide opinions as to its suitability. In addition, I was aware that some parents and children might not wish to discuss their thoughts in public and therefore they were given the opportunity to either speak and/or write to me in private. Furthermore, as they did not know me well (and might therefore feel uncomfortable talking to me), they were invited to make representations through the principal, or class teacher should they prefer. This meeting was held on 20th July 1999. Four children and their parents attended. Although not representative of the group (thirty children) three weeks notice had been given and it was held in the evening to allow working parents to attend. Therefore, I believe I had made the viewing accessible to those who wished to attend. In my notes written immediately after the meeting I wrote:

All were very happy with what was on the tape. Applauded at end and J’s father thanked me on behalf of the group saying he felt the children were privileged to have had the opportunity to be part of this project. He thought the tape should also be shown to other children re the effects of bullying which was an interesting point (journal notes 20/7/99).

- Anonymity: Names/identification

Only first names were linked to responses in the initial data collection. It was deemed too confusing to adopt pseudonyms because the children’s real names were used in the video teaching sessions. However, in the written papers pseudonyms have been used. To protect anonymity further, beeps will be inserted into the edited
video where the name of the school or a child’s full name is mentioned. In addition, uniforms that displayed the school’s name were hidden by the wearing of a T-shirt or similar over the uniform.

All aspects mentioned above were important considerations for the organisation of my project. Central to the research design was the reflection process.

**Reflection**

*When all of the possible variations are stripped away, we are probably left with reflection being a deliberate and active approach to make sense and meaning of experience. This may be individual or collaborative*  
(Smith, 1999, p. 9).

In my research, reflection has been the quintessential element in this cycle, because it is in this phase that so much of the hard work but at the same time exciting work is done—the learning and relearning. Reflective thinking is the initial means by which reflective action occurs. Again this is cyclical and the kind of reflective action is dependent upon “the time frames within which both occur (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 35). Hence the terms “reflection on action”, which has its origins in the work of (Dewey, 1933), and “reflection in action” Schon (1983) are central to action research methodology. Reflection on action requires the researcher to stand back from the action so that “thinking about one’s practice, discussing it with others, and reading about aspects of it, in order to plan new, improved action” (Orton, 1994, p. 93) can occur. About reflection in action Schon (1983) states:
When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case. His inquiry is not limited to a deliberation about means which depends on a prior agreement about ends. He does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he frames a problematic situation. He does not separate thinking from doing, ratiocinating his way to a decision which he must later convert to action. Because his experimenting is a kind of action, implementation is built into his inquiry (Schon, 1983, pp. 68-69).

It is the process of reflection on action and reflection in action that makes action research such an accessible research methodology for drama educators because the cyclical nature of both the process in its entirety and the reflective process within, is analogous to the framework of many drama practitioners’ programs (Taylor 1992 & 1996). For instance, inherent in educational drama methodology are the connections between the preparation, enactment and reflective stages (Arnold, 1991, p. 18). These stages are cyclical and in combination affect the ensuing drama through the process of negotiation and renegotiation. Furthermore, action research “goes beyond investigating an event to participating very overtly in them (Errington, 1996, p. 28). The role of both facilitator and participant in the drama means that reflection in action is occurring often and has implications for what proceeds as indicated throughout the journal that I kept as one of the data collection tools for this project (Appendix J, p. 287). Specific instances of both reflection in action and on action are detailed in the following two articles.
Introduction to articles in Chapter Nine

The first article is titled “You just have a better idea of the feeling”: How drama before and during the reading of narratives enhances critical reading practices (Hertzberg, under review). This manuscript has been submitted to the journal *Research in Drama Education* (Appendix K, p. 292). The aims and scope of the journal is described thus:

*Research in Drama Education is a well established international, refereed journal aimed at those interested in drama and theatre conducted in educational contexts. It offers a dissemination of completed research and research in progress... The definition of research is an eclectic one, allowing for contributions that reflect the many forms of work in the field*  

(Research in Drama Education, [http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/alphabetlist.html](http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/alphabetlist.html)).

The manuscript reports on how drama enhanced the language and literacy development of children prior to and during the beginning sections of the book *Onion tears*. During interviews (Appendix L, p. 293), students articulated how drama helped them consolidate specific language and literacy skills so necessary to the overall reading process through the reconstruction of the meaning of the text. In particular, the affective aspect of role-taking was a feature of these findings. Students reported that assuming roles enabled them to interpret the text and empathise with characters, related themes and/or issues in a way that is unique to drama. Children reported that demonstrating their understanding was made possible using the language of drama.
The second article is titled "So we can learn something as well as doing something fun": Learning about reading through Readers’ Theatre [in press]. This article was submitted to and accepted for publication by The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, which is the refereed journal of the Australian Literacy Educators’ Association. It will be published in the February 2000 edition (Appendix M, p. 303). Details of this organisation have been provided in the preface for Chapter Four.

The article demonstrates how the drama form of Readers’ Theatre can be used as an oral reading activity within literature-based reading programs to develop children’s oral reading skills. Using a teacher prepared script (Appendix N, p. 304) that had been adapted for this purpose from Dahl’s poem (1984), children prepared and presented their interpretation of the text. The findings of the preparation and presentation stages of this forty-minute session, is reported and discussed, with reference to some of the major theoretical principles in reading and generic teaching pedagogy.

"So we can learn something as well as doing something fun", begins the title for this article. It is a quote from one of the participants. Both articles in this chapter demonstrate that children enjoy drama. The common perception by some students and teachers that because drama is fun it is not a rigorous learning medium persists. The following articles illustrate that drama can be both a rigorous and challenging learning medium for the critical reading of texts and enjoyable at the same time.

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ARTICLE ONE

"YOU JUST HAVE A BETTER IDEA OF THE FEELING": HOW DRAMA BEFORE AND DURING THE READING OF NARRATIVES ENHANCES CRITICAL READING PRACTICES.

(Hertzberg, under review)
"You just have a better idea of the feeling": How drama before and during the reading of narratives enhances critical reading practices.

Abstract

This article reports on an action research project using one Year 5 class (ten and eleven years old) in a Sydney suburban primary school as a case study. The project’s purpose was to examine how educational drama can be used as a critical reading teaching/learning activity both prior to and during the beginning pages of a shared reading of *Onion tears* (Kidd, 1989). In reporting the findings, a range of stakeholders’ perspectives is provided. Prominence is given to the children’s voices to indicate how they thought drama involved them in a critical interpretative reading of the themes and issues explored in this book.

Introduction

This article reports on a research project that investigated how educational drama can be used as a teaching/learning activity both prior to and during the beginning pages of a shared reading (Holdaway, 1979) of a book.

Exploring the initial stages of the book was done to prepare readers about the likely themes and issues by building up the field (Bachman & Palmer, 1993; Halliday & Hasan, 1985). The book selected for this drama program was *Onion tears* (Kidd, 1989). Although based on factual circumstances surrounding the migration process for many refugees from Vietnam to Australia, it is the universal themes of isolation, identity, friendship, betrayal and emotional abuse that are highlighted through the telling of a fictitious story with cross-cultural difference being a major focus. In brief the story is
about a 12 years old refugee girl's early beginnings at both school and home in Australia. The purpose of the drama sequence was for children to make links between reality and fiction using drama strategies that engage them in making both explicit and implicit connections between their own lives and the fictitious world of both the drama and the literature (Booth, 1994; Cockett, 1998; Wilhelm, 1998; Wolf, Edmiston, & Enciso, 1997), so that the recurrent themes and issues of displacement and cultural difference within the book can be critically read (Shor, 1992).

Initially a brief synopsis of the research project is given. Examples of responses to the project are provided from a range of stakeholders' perspectives in order to explore the impact of this drama program on language and literacy development.

**Historical evolvement of research project**

This research project originated with a pilot study in December 1996. A teaching friend (recognised for her teaching expertise and academic achievements, but not conversant with educational drama methodology), asked me to run some drama workshops with her class of thirty ten and eleven years old students. The four two hourly workshops were designed to show both her and her class how to use a variety of drama teaching/learning activities with books they were reading. Work samples were collected and semi-structured audio interviews conducted with the teacher and four children. The purpose of these interviews was to ascertain participants’ views about whether these activities helped enhance the reading of narrative texts. In one semi-structured interview (Powney & Watts, 1987), Rodrigo, a ten years old phase two ESL learner\(^1\) was explaining his

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\(^1\) Phase two learners are able to communicate in familiar situations, but still require significant English assistance.
enjoyment of the drama sessions in glowing terms with me. Striving to assume the role of impartial devil’s advocate we had the following exchange:

*Margery:* Well that’s great Rodrigo and it’s great that you enjoyed the drama, but we could have learnt as much by discussing the book.

*Rodrigo:* Yeah, but, like you had a better, like you could see better see how your body would look, um, how like what you would say.

*Margery:* And you think you can do that in drama and you can’t do that in discussion?

*Rodrigo:* No, because in a discussion usually you just talk and like you won’t have a better idea because just other people say it, and you put more in acting and then you like are acting the person and like you actually [his emphasis] are the person. When she is teased you feel down you feel whatever she is feeling in the book. You just have a better idea of the feeling (4/12/96).

This response endorsed one of my reasons for using drama in literature programs, but as a single piece of data it is not representative of children’s views about using drama as a means for understanding what they are reading. In addition, the teacher stated in her thank-you letter: “I was amazed to see how involved the children were with reading the book and how much they wanted to re-read bits so they could do their drama activities—just wonderful and they enjoyed it! It seemed that the activities challenged them to read the book more carefully—because it (Onion tears) wasn’t an easy book (Viv, 14/12/96). However, Viv also made an important qualification about teaching drama, which in part defines the problem that this research project addresses. Her concern was whether one could account for using drama in terms of providing tangible products. Viv (like many teachers in the current Australian classroom climate) was under considerable pressure to demonstrate children’s learning using tangible work samples. Of course drama journals and other forms of writing during drama sessions
(for example, Booth & Neelands, 1998; Hertzberg, 1998 & 1999; Hertzberg & Ewing 1998) are tangible, but these are only part, albeit important aspects, of any drama experience. Taking photos or a video is also a possibility and, although realistic on specific and planned occasions, it is unrealistic for this to occur regularly. Furthermore, so often the spontaneous events are the most revealing—frequently when the equipment is switched off or not there! Therefore, I took up the challenge to develop a project that would include the collection of some rich descriptive data from all participant students, a co-researcher and myself. The video data would provide the basis for a professional development resource (Hertzberg, in progress-a). The project’s findings would provide support for those teachers who already use or want to learn how to use drama as a teaching/learning activity. It would demonstrate that drama does enhance the development of literacy skills.

**Research context**

The data for this consecutive fourteen-day research project came from one mixed ability co-educational year five class (ten and eleven year-olds) in a large Sydney government school. Parent, student and school approval was sought and received before the project began. All drama sessions took place in the first three and half hours of each of the fourteen days. The overall objective was to investigate how a variety of drama forms and techniques could be used to enhance the critical reading practices of students when reading a range of narrative texts. Altogether three different drama plans were written in consultation with “Molly” the co-researcher (class teacher).

The “Onion tears” plan reported in this article, was deliberately designed to analyse how drama strategies prior to and during the reading of narrative develop critical reading skills (in this case issues dealing with cross-cultural diversity). Other drama plans
within the overall investigation included the use of Readers’ Theatre to enhance interpretative oral reading skills (Hertzberg, in press) and the use of teacher in role, improvisation and playbuilding to read the visuals in picture books (Hertzberg, 1999; Hertzberg, in progress-b; Hertzberg & Ewing, 1998)\textsuperscript{2}.

My role as researcher was to facilitate the teaching of each session and the co-researcher’s role as critical friend involved taking anecdotal running records. Other data gathering techniques included video taping, semi-structured audio and video interviews with both students and co-researcher, written work samples from children and both researcher’s reflective journals.

All sessions took place in the regular classroom. It was important that sessions be as authentic and realistic as possible. In many schools, the luxury of a suitable room for such activities is either not available or requires booking well in advance and hence precludes using drama spontaneously.

**Research paradigm and methodology**

*Reflection needs to lead to specific plans for change that are put into action and then subjected to observation and further reflection. It's this on-going cycle of research in practice and practice in research with which we can hope to change our schools from within (Booth, 1998, pp. 19-20).*

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\textsuperscript{2} This drama process was developed over several years and earlier work has been published in for example (Hertzberg, 1997b).
The research project was positioned within the interpretive paradigm because a central
endeavour was "to understand the subjective world of human experience ... to get inside
the person and to understand from within" (Cohen & Manion, 1989, p. 3) through
interpreting "holistic pictures of actions, thoughts and outcomes in specific sites"

Both action research (Grundy, 1995) and case study methodologies (Yin, 1994) were
used. Because the study had its beginnings in the 1996 pilot study and subsequent
smaller studies (Hertzberg, 1997a & 1998), it was an example of an action research
process. A revised plan (based on my preceding plans, actions, observations and
reflection), contributed to the plan for this research project. This investigation of my
practice as a drama educator embodies the concepts of "reflection in action" and
"reflection on action" (Schon, 1983), and so the process continues. At the same time the
study was a case study investigating students' language and literacy learning during
drama activities in one unique setting. Although distinct methodologies, in this
particular study they became inextricably linked when the analysis of data took place
and subsequent reporting of findings and discussion ensued. This is illustrated in the
following diagram.
The practice→response cycle

Diagram 1. The practice→response cycle

This diagram explains how at each case study site I have reflected on how my practice influenced children’s language and literacy development through an analysis of both my own practice and the responses by children to the drama and their demonstration of language and literacy development during these sessions. This in turn has influenced
my subsequent planning both at the time and in subsequent settings. The two-way arrows at the end of each spiral indicate that my analysis of past plans influences future planning.

**Analysing data**

*One way to hold doubt at bay is to delineate the analytic decision rules,*

*to show the reader how the story was constructed (Wolf, 1998, p. 9).*

Audiotapes were transcribed and each drama strategy or form distinguished and coded. For instance, “SIPD” represented how the use of the drama strategy of Still Image prior to and during the reading of narrative developed critical reading skills. A similar process was also undertaken with all journals. I then viewed the video tapes, noting examples from both the teaching sessions and interviews that related to language and literacy practices. Not only did the video remind me of what happened—it showed me things that I did not see while in the action. Confucius is believed to have said, “Keep your eyes on things you cannot see”.

The term thick description is often applied to case study (Yin, 1994). As I immersed myself in repeated readings and viewings I consciously restricted my analysis to the original research focus—how drama enhances the reading of narrative texts. At the same time the “unexpected outcomes” or themes that emerged were noted. Some of these included classroom dynamics; cooperative learning patterns; motivation and teacher/pupil relationships.
The data were then matched to specific outcomes and their indicators as presented in the *English K-6 syllabus* (Board of Studies, NSW, 1998) to demonstrate how this drama methodology enables the achievement of the syllabus outcomes. In addition, I asked some teaching colleagues to act as "critical friends" to contribute to the trustworthiness of the analysis.

**Trustworthiness**

Language and literacy practices that I perceived were happening from my reflective journal and viewing of the video, were matched with the responses made by the children and co-researcher in their interviews and journals. However, during this initial stage of analysis it became apparent that the video and my journal were providing me with much of the data. I felt so close to the data and wanted to "distance one's ego and attendant emotions from the experience" (Smith, 1999, p. 12). It was also important to avoid the "problem of premature typification" (Erickson, 1986, p. 144). Thus, I included the strategy of informant feedback (Jameson, 1999) using respondent validation. Three primary teachers distant from both the project and me (Hammersley, 1993) were asked to view the "Onion tears" plan. Summative sketches of the three teachers are provided in the following table.
Table 1. Summative sketches of teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
<th>Drama experience and interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Year of BTeach (Primary)</td>
<td>4 weeks practicum</td>
<td>One semester (2 hours x 12 weeks) Drama Elective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No previous experience and “wasn’t especially interested before doing elective” (26/2/99 meeting).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>DipTeach (Primary)</td>
<td>19 years as Primary teacher—nine of these part-time while raising young family.</td>
<td>Attended drama in-service courses since 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GradDip (Language)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enrolled in MEd</td>
<td></td>
<td>Has used some drama previously, but not integral to her program in present appointment because “it’s difficult to demonstrate children’s learning and in this school I am under constant pressure to fill up the work sample portfolio” (28/2/99 phone conversation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandy</td>
<td>DipTeach (Primary)</td>
<td>Taught primary full-time for 25 years</td>
<td>Attended drama in-service courses since 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Part-time lecturer in literacy at two Sydney Universities (last 5 years)</td>
<td>Professional reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEd</td>
<td></td>
<td>Uses drama in literature-based reading programs “but I’m always looking for new ideas and would love to view the video data” (25/2/99 phone conversation).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As critical viewers their brief was to:

- view the video and highlight aspects they thought related to language and literacy learning;
• match these episodes to outcomes in the *English K-6 syllabus* (Board of Studies, NSW, 1998);

• highlight sections they thought would be useful to include in the edited version of the video as a professional resource for mainstream teachers.

With the exception of one activity all teachers commented on each separate teaching/learning activity and identified the same sections that I had. Similarly, their matching of episodes to English syllabus outcomes and indicators was almost identical to mine. Their comments were insightful, making interesting links between the drama methodology and generic pedagogic practices and the combined effect on the critical reading practices of the children. Therefore, the report on findings is structured thus:

• initial outline of critical viewers’ analysis;

• my response to their analysis which elaborates—often with reference to some of the theoretical principles informing the praxis;

• excerpts selected from semi-structured interview transcripts with both the children and the co-researcher.

**Reporting findings**

*The only basis upon which an interpretation or an opinion is to be accepted or rejected is on the basis of rational discussion of the evidence. Position and power bring no privileges in action research* (Grundy, 1995, p. 17).

Due to space requirements, findings from only five of the nine teaching/learning activities are reported in this article to highlight how the drama enhanced critical reading practices\(^3\). First, each teaching/learning activity is briefly explained in the boxes. Underneath each box are the critical viewer’s comments and their reasons for

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\(^3\) The entire “Onion tears” plan can be found in (Hertzberg, 1997b) although it should be noted that the plan used in this study was altered as a result of “reflection on action” since its publication.
highlighting this activity. In the section titled "Researcher's discussion of the
practice↔response cycle", I then respond to their comments by further elaborating on
both the reason for the practice and how it contributes to critical literacy learning
("reflection on action"). As well, I explain my reflections on how the children's
responses influenced my practice (both "reflection on action" and "reflection in action").
At times, links with the theoretical underpinnings that inform both literacy and
educational drama pedagogy are made to qualify these points. Furthermore, the
discussion makes further connections about what the children were learning in the actual
teaching sessions with reference to semi-structured interviews on both audio and video
tape.

Findings and discussion of teaching sessions

*When all of the possible variations are stripped away, we are probably
left with reflection being a deliberate and active approach to make sense
and meaning of experience. This may be individual or collaborative*

(Smith, 1999, p. 9).
Drama prior to reading the book (prediction teaching/learning activity)

Students made a still image (Boal, 1992) of an event based on immediate past knowledge and/or experience as a pre-reading predictive activity to focus on one of the major themes (isolation) that occurs at the beginning of the book.

To make connections between the children’s experiential framework and those in the book, I asked them to imagine they had been victims of recent flash flooding in their city. They were unable to return home from school and were found emergency accommodation in community halls, volunteers’ homes and so forth. Due to power failures contact with family was not possible. Children were asked to convey how they might feel using still image. Children then relaxed these positions and I continued the recount, explaining that by morning the flood waters had receded and they were reunited at home with their loved ones. Children were asked to show again in still image how they might feel then.

Critical viewers’ responses

Sarah: It shows how to link real life events to help children imagine and relate to a feeling in the book itself.

Jill: ... activity allows children to begin empathising with others, that is, putting self in other’s shoes which is what literature is all about. Busy teachers often forget when asking children to read that many/some will need explicit teaching to visualise the images in the text. Being able to visualise at this stage likely events that will happen in the story (that is prediction) assists greatly with comprehension.
Researcher's discussion of the practice-response cycle

Nam-Huong’s sense of isolation from her family is a recurrent theme throughout the text. The focus of the predictive activity (Smith, 1971) was to engage children in thinking about how they might feel and react to being isolated from their family. This activity is not in my original plan (Hertzberg, 1997b), but resulted from reflection on action in the 1996 pilot study. It was included to enable children who have not experienced displacement make connections by “building up the field” (Bachman & Palmer, 1993), before reading the book. This was done using their prior knowledge of a recent flash flood in a neighbouring city. Still image was planned as the predictive activity because it combines “the use of mental imagery with still image” (DuPont, 1992, p. 51). Of interest were the different interpretations on a theme—an important aspect of critical reading—that such a strategy enabled. All children conveyed this message but had interpreted it slightly differently—some standing, some in a crouched position and a variety of hand and facial gestures were used to portray anxiety and/or crying.

Unfortunately for Nam-Huong she is not reunited with her family. However it was deemed important that the children experience both sets of emotion. As they were in shadow role only, to leave them with feelings of anxiety at this stage would not have provided the necessary emotional safety for some (Arnold, 1994), especially as I was unaware of their backgrounds in any detail.
Drama activities during the reading of the book

- Still image and adding dialogue to unpack critical moments in a text
- Showing, viewing, reflection and debriefing

The following excerpt from the text was displayed:

> Everyone at school keeps asking me what my name means.
> “Does it mean princess?” Mary says.
> “COCONUT!” Tessa shouts.
> “Butterfly!” “Dragon!” They all try and guess.
> “I know,” says Danny. “It means DIM SIM!”
> But I just shake my head.
> One day I’ll tell them what it means.
> My Mum, loved my name. She said it was very special.

(Kidd, 1989, p. 9)

- The children made a depiction of this scene in friendship groups of four, and assumed the role of Nam-Huong, Danny, Tessa or Mary. Each group in turn then showed their depiction to the class.

This excerpt was selected for children to unpack because it is the first critical event to address the recurrent themes of isolation and identity, using in this case an event that highlights cultural difference on the basis of names. As it foregrounds later events it was selected for explicit focus using the drama strategy of still image to convey interpretation.

Critical viewers' responses

Sarah: Children on task interpreting their own scene from information read. All children displayed their ...(scenes) willingly and all were very different. Children appeared to really like talking about their ...(work).
Jill: (This activity) allowed the children to think more deeply about the characters and what they did in a way that other activities such as character sketches/description don’t allow because there is often only a superficial reaction to the character. The strategies used are varied and keep the children’s interest. When the children had to say the comments from the book it allowed for the development of confidence, gestures both facial and body, timing and overall performance. This was unscripted and spontaneous but very good.

Mandy: Freeze presentation by each group showed that students really related to tasks. Excellent feedback by Kate ... (about the actual performance); so students were beginning to critically review the process as well as they had previously talked about the emotions involved. Then when the discussion returned to the book itself it was interesting to see that children related Nam-Huong’s situation (teasing) to their own school experience, for example, David’s comment that “you might get a referral if you behave like Danny”. Debbie’s comments were amazing i.e. Nam-Huong’s situation happens to a lot of kids everyday at school.

Researcher’s discussion of the practice->response cycle

Preparation and doing of still image

Still image was used because children can interpret the dramatic moment using body language, in particular, expression, gesture and position. To do this, children need to read the text carefully in order to adopt roles and arrange and position themselves to capture the moment. Using drama, and by implication, paralinguistics as a means for
interpreting a point of tension helps because children are able to “represent more than they would be able to communicate through words alone” (Neelands, 1990, p. 19). In order to do so they need to discuss possibilities with their group.

In this segment, and using the extract, it was clear to students that this scene was a portrayal of emotional abuse (bullying and teasing), but through assuming roles and then planning the still image, students explored the physical nuances that contribute to the development of both the characters and the themes. Of interest was the amount of discussion about the roles of Mary and Tessa. As the children had already read on further (page fourteen) they were aware that Mary was trying to include Nam-Huong, but were not quite as sure about Tessa’s intention. The following group’s discussion whilst in the process of planning their still image illustrates their interpretation of meaning through attention to linguistic form:

Chris: Yeah, but Mary was asking her to come bike riding remember, so she is nice.
Tim: What about Tessa?
Chris: I don’t know.
Sam: Hey but look, coconut is in capitals so she’s shouting at her. I don’t think that’s nice.

(The group then moved closer to the overhead transparency)

Chris: Yeah and princess is nicer than saying coconut or dragon.

The group then began positioning themselves and decided that Nam-Huong be seated towards the front, with Mary nearest to her because she was trying to be kind. Tessa was positioned further away. Danny was placed furthest away and stood in an upright and aggressive manner.

Of importance at this stage was the reading and re-reading of the text done by students
in order to delve more deeply into the meaning (Wolf, 1998). Furthermore, because the emphasis is on facial and body gesture and choice of position, students not only analysed the author’s meanings, they brought to it their own voices and experiences (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; McDonald, 1992; Pascoe, 1999). A further purpose for using still image at this point was to “reveal the specific in the general, so the specific can become the material for the next part of the drama” (Morgan & Saxton, 1987, p. 110). Having analysed the extract through non-verbal communication, children were then asked to select and add the dialogue from the extract. At the end of each spoken part they were asked to freeze momentarily their positions in response to this dialogue, before moving onto the next spoken part. The aim was to intensify their interpretation of the character’s actions through a more careful examination of the language of the text (Chambers, 1995; Meek, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1978). In the viewing and reflection stages this was further discussed as it is at this stage that “students are taken out of the action of the plot and into the action of the theme” (Morgan & Saxton, 1988, p. 36).

*Viewing and reflection of the still images*

When all groups had finished preparing and rehearsing their moving depictions, we viewed each group’s still image and discussed what these images were saying. Kate opened the discussion by focusing on the drama skills themselves and children’s use of these to convey meaning. Other children then offered constructive criticism on these skills in relation to both their own and other’s performances. In the main, discussion centred on the timing of the frozen images and the use of vocal expression. What concerned them most was that the holding of frozen moments was too short. With the exception of one remark, all comments were stated in a supportive way. I was impressed with the children’s maturity, especially as this drama methodology was new
for most of them. In this discussion it was evident that children were attending to both the drama and English teaching/learning focus using reflective processes.

O’Neill and Lambert (1982) caution the use of long and extended reflection periods. Similarly Bolton (1979) and Morgan and Saxton (1987) suggest that reflection is best done within the drama itself. Although there is a distinction between reflection and debriefing, often the two will be intertwined (Fleming, 1994) and this was such a case. After several children had made comments on the drama process itself I did intervene. I sanctioned the previous comments stressing their importance, particularly if we were going to perform for an external audience. Nevertheless, I did refocus the discussion to allow students to debrief, aware that some children would need and want to express their reactions to the roles they had adopted and then played with their peers. The students were asked to contemplate how they felt in their particular role and/or opinions on the messages being conveyed in their interpretations. Clive was eager to respond and said, “like if you were Nam-Huong you’d feel really sad”. It is significant that it is unusual for Clive to volunteer his thoughts in larger groups and I encouraged him to continue by asking:

Margery: How did you feel (as Nam-Huong)?
Clive: Sad.
Margery: (sympathetic tone) Yeah.
Clive: I didn’t actually feel sad but I acted sad.

This gave him the opportunity to put the situation into the past tense and either pretend or clarify in front of peers how he felt. His response prompted others to talk about their role.

Also in this session children justified the position of various characters and events within the book. Although all children felt Danny’s actions were inappropriate, the
actions of the other two (Mary and Tessa) remained disputable—particularly Mary.

Clara: Mary wasn’t being mean. She was just calling her a princess and butterfly—nice things which isn’t mean and compared to Danny—well Danny could get in trouble for teasing her and if he was her he wouldn’t like it.

Rob: Clara said Mary was being nice by saying she was a princess but she was being sarcastic by saying “oh well she’s a princess”.

In terms of critical literacy, this discussion is interesting. Multiple interpretation of meaning is acceptable (Lankshear, 1994) because individuals respond to a text based on their own unique and socio-cultural background (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993 & 1997). As this scene comes at the beginning of the book, both viewpoints are feasible and important and I affirmed the validity of both.

As well, Danny’s character was explored. One child said she thought Danny was a bully and all the class strongly agreed. In the subsequent discussion almost all children wanted to give reasons as to why children bully—some relating their own experiences. In relation to the book extract, Rachel said that “he was just showing off to the girls”. Eloise said that teasing her about her name was mean and in any case “if Danny lived in Vietnam his name might be the weirdest name”. The conversation also focused on the link between the text and reality. For example Debbie said, “If you think about it, really lots of kids do actually get put in the position that Nam-Huong is in every day at school so… really there isn’t much pretending for some kids”.

In this session it was apparent that many children were responding to the text but from an “as if stance” because they had taken the meaning from the text and applied it to their own world. After this activity, students were asked to consolidate and reflect on their
learning by responding to and recording their understanding in their journals (Hertzberg & Ewing, 1998).

**Role Walk** and **Tapping-in** to examine a character’s thoughts. I read to page 21 and used the extract below as the impetus for the following activities.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Rice and pork.} \\
\text{And funny black sauce.} \\
\text{Whose lunch is it?} \\
\text{Nam’s lunch.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Kidd, 1989, p. 21)

- **Role walk:** Students were asked to close their eyes and imagine they were Nam-Huong. Next, a role walk was conducted with students in role as Nam-Huong. While walking in a circle, participants were asked to think of one word to describe how they would feel as Nam-Huong when they read this “poem”.

- **Tapping in:** While the role walk was in progress, participants were tapped on the shoulder to signal that they could speak their thoughts. They were invited to say “pass” if they didn’t want to share their thoughts at this stage.

**Critical viewers’ responses**

Sarah: Validating their (children's) responses, but some children do not seem comfortable just using one word to describe Nam-Huong’s feelings during the role walk.

Jill: Empathy with the characters in the book is an important skill not only in reading and literature but also in values education. Empathy with characters is what reading is all about. It makes us want to keep reading to find out what will happen next. The essence of narrative is the complication and suspense. …Themes (in this book) are often difficult for primary children to grasp fully.
Mandy: Enables each student to comment on Nam-Huong's feelings as Nam-Huong.

**Researcher's discussion of the practice ↔ response cycle**

The purpose of this activity was to focus on another point of tension at the beginning of this book. In this case the cultural example is difference in food. By selecting the excerpt I was controlling the content for discussion, and there was the risk that children's response could be aligned to the "guess what the teacher wants to hear" variety. Giving children the opportunity to say pass was aimed at both mitigating this possibility as well as alleviating the pressure to share thoughts at this stage. However, for children to have the opportunity to read this book critically, these recurrent themes do need to be highlighted and this is one way of doing it. I am reminded at this point of Sebesta's comment "... you can decode and comprehend and still not care. You can become adept at answering thought questions without really responding from the heart or the creative mind" (1997, p. 545). Nevertheless, because students were only in shadow role it was necessary to protect and respect their right to keep thoughts and feelings private. Furthermore, it is quite possible that the time frame was insufficient for some children to think of words they felt adequately expressed Nam-Huong's thoughts.

Role walk is just one of many drama strategies that encourage children to imagine how a particular character is feeling at a given moment (Neelands, 1990), but as for many drama activities through protection in role children can and might express their own feelings. Unknown to me before working with this class, a child had been the victim of frequent emotional abuse by some other children, in part because of physical stature and
appearance. When tapped this child’s response was not a single word, it was the phrase “feel like wanting to bash them all up”. At the same time as speaking the words, the child stopped, put hands to hips and glared at the camera as the words were spoken. At that moment I sensed this child’s need to vent his/her opinion, so I tapped the child again. The child responded even more vehemently. It made not only this role walk but also subsequent discussions very powerful. It seemed to give all students what the coresearcher and I referred to from there on in as a “voice to speak” (video interview 1/9/98), both in terms of their own experiences and those of the characters in the book. Possibly because of this incident, and in combination with the strategy itself, the use of body language during the role walk was notable. Although explicit suggestions were not given about using body language, throughout the role walk children walked slowly, heads bowed, shoulders slouched and so forth.

It was at this stage that the drama moved from the text itself to a point of metaxis—seeing two worlds at one time (Boal, 1995) not only in terms of prior planning, but within these participants’ heads.
**Parallel improvisation**

In friendship groups of 4 to 5 students were asked to:

- Improvise, an incident in which someone is humiliated/bullied/teased using the following framework questions:
  
  Who are we?  
  Where are we?  
  What are we doing?  
  Why are we doing it?  
  How are we going to show it?  

- Using this framework brainstorm ideas and select one person to scribe the group’s ideas in his/her journal.

- Begin the improvisation as a still image and end as a still image just as the incident is about to be resolved. No time limit was suggested, but they were about 1 minute in duration.

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**Critical viewers’ responses**

All teachers had similar and lengthy comments. Mandy’s comment is a synthesis of them all. Highlighted words are her emphasis.

Mandy: The section ... is useful ... in terms of the development away from the text itself, but so they can return to it with greater depth. I thought the planning process itself was important to show teachers. Highlight/explain the guiding questions that provide the children with some structure to work with. **Time** is important—groups need to be given time to work out these ideas and providing a structure helps this. Good for teachers to see this process taking place, so they understand groups need **time and space** and some **rehearsing and noise and planning** so that they experience the creative process. I thought this segment was most useful in reinforcing the need to provide such opportunities to students.
Researcher's discussion of the practice-response cycle

Parallel improvisation

Improvisation is being used as a generic term to include the forms of drama that students develop without a written script (Fleming, 1994, p. 88). The purpose of this activity was to make explicit connections between the text and their own experiences. Children were asked to consider issues familiar to them (thus acting as a metaphor to the book), but within a fictional context so that actual experiences or feelings remained protected. Few children want to acknowledge either bullying or victim status and as teachers we must protect this right. Furthermore, nobody would wish the real experience of "refugee-ism" on a child, no one would wish the real experience of being teased on the basis of cultural difference, and for most children in this class both aspects (fortunately) are/have not been experienced. Therefore, expecting or wanting children to understand the specific nuances of refugee migration is not the issue. What is the issue is that empathy is realised about issues so commonplace in the world.

The concept of metaxis inherent in parallel improvisation (O’Neill & Rogers, 1994) is one way to achieve this within a negotiated fictional context. Accordingly, the selected planning framework allowed children to develop their own interpretation from within a teacher directed theme (O’Toole, 1992). The framework not only helped children produce a clear plan, it also aided in developing a drama as opposed to a simulation. The enactment of real or imagined events is central to drama, and the framework questions helped establish this. Groups initially spent time planning and discussing possibilities, and one group member recorded these under the framework headings. This not only helped by "reinforcing event-sequencing skills" (McMaster, 1998, p. 579) through talk, it aided participants to establish the focus and point of tension, for as
Rachel said: “if you just sent us away we wouldn’t know what we were doing, but if you gave us these instructions you’d make it better … they didn’t tell you what to do but sort of how to do it … so you actually have to sit down and plan it …” (video interview E). As I moved between groups and when appropriate, they were encouraged to get up and rehearse, as it is in the “doing” that most refinement occurs (Cusworth & Simons, 1997).

In all there were six improvisations, each addressing the concept of emotional abuse but within different perspectives and contexts. They included harassment from younger siblings, picking on smaller or weaker children, threatening revenge after school and humiliation for poor sporting skills. The strategy of still image to both begin and end the improvisation assisted in highlighting the focus and therefore the tension. Directing that the improvisation end just as the problem occurs is referred to by Bolton as “the ‘art of constraint’, the technique that maintains tension by postponing the climax” (Cusworth & Simons, 1997, p. 8).

**Reflection and Debriefing**

*As for previous sessions the children and teacher sat in a large circle and discussed what they had just done.*

This was the culmination of all that had gone before. It not only gave children the opportunity to debrief, but reflect upon their own dramas including the preparation and rehearsal that resulted in a play.

**Critical viewers’ responses**

Sarah: It is good to see how frankly children discuss issues that are important to them and you can see how this helps them understand what is happening in the book… .
Jill: The relationship developed between teacher and class and teacher/pupil in these lessons is very strong. All the children listen to the opinions of others. As there was so much verbal communication the quieter children began to speak up as time went on. Enough time was allowed to develop children’s responses. This seemed to be an important part of the lessons in that it didn’t seem hurried and the children knew that their voice would be heard.

Mandy: It was good to go around the circle for points of view as that gave each child an opportunity to speak if they wanted to, rather than the more outgoing children dominating the discussion.

*Researcher’s discussion of the practice→response cycle*

The discussion did provide evidence that many children were moving beyond surface impressions to discover and penetrate the deeper meaning of issues both within the book, and of their own situations.

The following excerpts from this fifteen minute discussion are in sequence and demonstrate how the conversation both alternated between, and combined the features of, reflection and debriefing. It also shows how the discussion fluctuated between real life, the drama itself and the book (Wagner, 1998a & b). I began this session thus:

*Margery:* Let’s talk about the play not in terms of how people acted because you all did a very good job considering that some had not done drama before and others had done a lot, but in terms of how you felt about the part you were playing. Sometimes we take on roles of people that perhaps we don’t really want to be. Anybody want to say something about the part they were and how they feel about it now? I
want to say to all those people who were being bullied that I hope you're not feeling bullied now 'cause that was the play and not for real. (Hands shot up).

Kate: In mine I was like the victim 'cause I was being bullied and when I was being bullied I didn't like it 'cause um it wasn't fair on me because I wasn't able to swim, because I wasn't able to get lessons, so they shouldn't have teased me about it.

Margery: Right. 4

Kate: But that's 'cause it's not in real life 'cause I wouldn't like it otherwise.

Margery: Exactly. Has anyone bullied you in real life?

Kate: Ah not very much, but occasionally.

Margery: Right—suppose we all do sometimes, we lose our temper with people and so forth.

Julie: At the end how I was getting bullied after Eloise (and) well I think I should have told on her because it is all right to tell because she was eating chewing gum.

Margery: Your play was interesting from that point of view because when do you tell and when do you not tell?

A lengthy discussion on this issue (an issue that also comes later on in Onion tears) ensued and opinions were varied. Some thought you should only tell when physically hurt, but others disagreed and gave reasons for telling when verbally abused. In the following transcript it can be seen how this issue continues and is then changed by the next speaker into a debriefing statement.

Rachel: If someone's teasing you or hurting you or something or threatening to do something to you it doesn't matter what they do or say. ...you should go and tell somebody 'cause that's wrong. They shouldn't be allowed to do that and keep doing that to you. Until you tell someone they will keep doing it until you tell someone.

Margery: Eloise?

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4. I do use the term 'right'—a euphemism for 'Okay' used by some Australian speakers, but in future I should avoid this, because it may have been misinterpreted by some children as meaning 'correct'.
Eloise: Um can I say something about why I didn't like being bullied (in the play)?

Margery: Sure.

Eloise: I didn't like being bullied because like when you've got a big gang it doesn't matter if you don't say anything in the gang because you still think you're big and tough because you've got someone to stick up for you. But when you're the little person over there being teased you don't have anyone to say it doesn't matter—like your back-up person. So if you say something wrong they might beat you up but (when you're part of a gang) you have someone to go tell or something like that to know you're okay.

Margery: So you got that feeling when you were acting did you?

Eloise: Yeah.

The next person to speak was the person who in real life is the victim of emotional abuse. For ethical reasons (this child could be identified because of the content of the conversation), I will not report this, or the frank and empathetic responses to what this person said, but it was a most poignant experience for all involved. The fact that this person (who normally does not participate in whole class discussions) spoke out again about his/her own circumstance really impacted on both the perpetrators and other class members. Many children became so protective of this child and what was happening, by then saying what they thought of bullies and how they dealt with it, that at the time it didn't feel appropriate to intervene. However after the session, the co-researcher (rather than myself, because she knows this child well) did speak with the child for quite some time about his/her feelings during this session.

After several more comments specific to this one child, the conversation returned to the issue of when you tell and when you don't, but with a twist.
Lisa: Well you can tell but they’re not going to do that much.

David: Well what Lisa said is right but if you tell them about three or four times they might get kicked out of school and then you wouldn’t be teased.

In this sequence the consensus was why bother telling because most teachers don’t take any notice and/or can’t do anything in any case. Maybe children in this class were now appealing to the teachers to help this particular victim?

The students were then asked more generally why people bully. Reasons included being seen to be tough and picking on easy victims for fun, with children relating reality to the fiction of the story—specifically to emotional abuse as it relates to cultural diversity.

Rachel: I reckon that bullies reckon they’re tough but they’re not really tough, like they reckon they are so good and everything but they’re not really good. I bet you they’re scared inside but they want to be really tough like some other people who are tough, so they bully other people to make them feel down and out and to make them look really tough. ... I reckon he (Danny) was just showing off in front of the other girls like Tessa and just trying to make other people feel bad to make him feel good about himself.

Eloise: Well usually bullies pick on people who are smaller or not as popular or “whimpier”. ...and they think that just because they’re bigger and taller and like Danny he’s the person like he has a normal name ’cause he comes from Australia so all the Australians probably think Danny’s a normal name. But when they go into where ever Nam-Huong lives (other children interrupt and say Vietnam) Danny might be the weirdest name there and so...

Margery: What about food?

Eloise: Danny might have Macdonald’s and Nam-Huong might have Dims Sims and that’s just their sort of food, like Macdonald’s is really nice and Dim Sims might be really nice there. (Several other children interrupt: I like Dim Sims / but I like Dim Sims). So they’re just the different
things that people like to eat and look like. Nam-Huong might be a really nice person like but bullies kind of judge people by the cover. Like you can’t judge a book by the cover—it might be really stupid but the book might be really good. So Nam-Huong might not look that good on the outside but she might be really nice on the inside and she shouldn’t be bullied because she comes from a different culture.

In this session it was clear that all children who spoke (21 out of 27) were making connections between their own dramas, their own real life experiences, other people’s experiences and the text itself. It is this sort of transaction that critical reading pedagogy aims for. Despite the critical viewers’ observations that the quieter children are more prepared to speak their thoughts, for some this large group situation was still and possibly will always be daunting and does not allow for extended elaboration. Small group discussion and regrouping are preferable even though the motive for the large group was to tape all children’s views. This is an example of data collection overriding and interfering with sound teaching practice and I will rethink my data collection procedure for collecting participants’ spoken thoughts in future. In addition, it should be noted that it was intentional not to intervene at this stage when comments aligned to stereotyping and generalisation issues such as the above comments on food were made. The aim was for children to address these in subsequent sessions and Rachel’s comment for instance, after finishing the book demonstrated this:

*Well Nam-Huong is being teased and like if this was real I wouldn’t like to be teased about the food I ate because they wouldn’t know what it’s like to eat that food. Maybe they’ve never tried it and they don’t know what it’s like. Like in the book, she (Nam-Huong) actually invites him*
(Danny) over to the restaurant and he actually liked the food and he was teasing her about it before (video E).

Further findings from interviews with the students and co-researcher that indicated that the drama was helping student's critical reading practices now follow.

Findings and discussion from semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all students (thirty) and the co-researcher. The aim was both to ascertain their opinions about using drama as a teaching/learning activity in shared reading sessions, and to investigate language and literacy development.

Student interviews

These were voluntary, but all students wanted to participate. Twenty children, in child-selected friendship groups that ranged from two to five people were audio taped. Ten children (five girls and five boys) volunteered to be individually interviewed on video. In each interview we discussed all three drama strands. Although the purpose was not to discredit the use of other teaching/learning activities, these interviews were intended to investigate their views on how drama differed from two common book response strategies used in their class—whole class discussion and written comprehension work in reading journals. In part, my reason for this arose from the interview in my pilot study with Rodrigo. The themes that emerged in my analysis included cooperative learning patterns; confidence and self-esteem enhancement; drama skills; peer
relationships; journal writing; motivation and learning; drama strategies that promote language and literacy; affective learning and active learning.

Since the purpose of the “Onion tears” strand was to investigate how drama can be used prior to and during the reading of a book, the interviews were explicitly planned to gain student’s views on this aspect. Just some of these responses are now provided. It is interesting that the ability to feel situations through role-taking permeates the children’s responses in all themes on how drama helps them learn.

*Drama and re-reading*

All groups reported that doing drama as opposed to simply reading a book helped them understand the story as the following examples demonstrate:

*John:*  
*Because it, like, helps you in reading, writing. Helps you understand heaps of stuff that you never understand, as well as if you don’t do drama. Usually, like, when you read books you don’t understand it but when you’re doing drama you understand why they’re feeling and how (audio one).*

*Bill:*  
*Yeah, like, you understand it more if you did a play on it, you’d understand, like, the people more who are in the story (audio one).*

*Rob:*  
*Well, if you’re just reading the book and you see Nam-Huong being teased, you don’t really get the feel of the book, but if you’re doing drama about it then you really know how she’s feeling about it (audio two).*

*Jake*  
*...you can understand it, ‘cause you’re the one who’s like in the shoes sort of and you’re the one who’s doing it, so you understand it (audio three).*

*Stephen:*  
*If you’re doing drama you’re better at it and you know how they feel, but when you just read a book you don’t know how they’re feeling (video A).*
Drama strategies that promoted understanding

When asked to comment on drama strategies that helped them in reading Onion tears children’s responses included:

**Sally:** (Still image)...because like you’re actually doing frozen moments like you sort of feel like how they would be feeling (video B).

**Kate:** (Still image) to see from Nam-Huong’s point of view how she felt… (video C).

**Luke:** Still image 'cause I like working in groups... . It’s like interesting to hear all the ideas that other people have and you learn to cooperate and combine your ideas with theirs ... . And the improvisations 'cause you learn about the character and then make up what you think the character would do, so you can learn more about the character’s personality (video D).

**Ned:** (Viewing and reflection) I really liked watching everybody else ... to see what interpretation they have of it (audio five).

**Active Learning: Drama or whole class discussion?**

All children said they learnt more by doing drama (and by implication the discussion within), in contrast to regular whole class discussion sessions. Comments included:

**Bill:** Yeah, but like, acting out that character, like, it makes you feel like you are them, you know more about the character (audio one).

**Rachel:** You could a little bit (understand the book in discussion activities), but not that much because you’re not in that position you’re just talking about it (video E).

**Clive:** (It's) good to act out ... so you just don’t talk about it. You can just like do it, so you know like you can like actually do more about it. Like you can act it out more and you can do more than talk, you can act out and everything like that. Because when you’re just talking about it you’re just talking about it, you’re not actually doing anything, you’re just sitting there and talking. But when you’re acting you're standing up and doing something so
it gives you more opinion what you're doing. It's more interesting to do things like that (video F).

Motivation and learning

Children also thought they learnt in drama because it was fun. Playing devil's advocate I often said in interviews that, although fun, they might not be learning anything, to which, for example, Kate replied: *It's fun this way but (we are learning because) the expressions on your face and the way you're sitting or moving around people can tell how you feel* (video C). In response to my saying that it was exhausting, Tom and Bob (audio two) said:

*Tom:* Well, it is a bit exhausting but it's not that bad. I found it more fun than exhausting.

*Rob:* Yeah. And 'cause it's fun you want to do it rather than if you're just sitting on the floor reading, you think, oh, it's boring.

*Margery:* But are you learning anything? Some of you might not be learning anything?

*Rob:* Yeah, you are because you want to learn about it because it's fun. If it was just boring, you wouldn't want to learn about it... (audio two).

Summary

The above transcripts are representative of the class because 29 of the 30 children did think that drama helped them understand some of the themes in the book, and in a way that differed from their more familiar pattern of book discussion and/or written comprehension work. Notable was the affective aspect. For many of these children it would appear that the crux of this difference is the ability to feel situations through role-taking. In addition, they enjoyed being actively involved. Students thought that active participation in drama experiences either directly related to the text and/or in metaphorical interpretations based on their own experience, enabled them to engage
with what they were reading, for as Tom said “there’s a link between fiction and reality” (audio two).

Co-researcher’s response to this drama program

In the six interviews with Molly, the topics discussed were diverse and also related to very specific issues within this particular context. The range included language and literacy learning; academic, social and emotional needs of particular children; class dynamics; generic issues such as cooperative learning; confidence and self-esteem enhancement; management techniques in drama and the ease in which boys took on the roles of girls. All are important issues, but for the purpose of this paper the following transcript is presented as a summary of Molly’s opinions on the use of drama as a critical reading teaching/learning activity prior to and during the shared reading of a book.

*I think the early part of the drama was amazing—how it got them into understanding her character. If I’d just read that story to them and just done a few discussion things and drawing and writing activities it would never have had the same effect as I told you in what happened at the end.*

... *When I finished this story they were all sitting up and they were all leaning forward and when it ended it there was just silence. I wish you’d had the video there to see what happened to them there, because there was just silence and you could see all of them thinking.* *And then David said “but I thought she’d find her mother and father”— you know he thought it would be the happy ending— that she would find her mother and father and he got really upset because all he could think of was this little kid being alone in a strange country and being teased by kids. And*
the drama in the beginning gave them the insight into how she was feeling and they identified with that right through the rest of the story.

(video interview B).

Conclusion

From an analysis of the data, it can be concluded that the critical respondents as well as the children and researchers in this particular context, considered that this drama strand helped the students understand the themes and issues of this narrative. In particular, participants stated that learning was occurring because of active participation in activities that helped them investigate from an “as if stance” what the characters might be feeling and hence develop an empathy toward the issues covered. At the same time they were learning more about themselves and their relationships with peers. The power of metaxis through enactment in a fictional context which aids in connecting the real world to the fiction of both the drama and the book is the unique quality that drama can bring to a critical reading of a text. By making connections with events in the book to the children’s own experiences might mean that they can more deeply explore issues beyond their immediate lives. But this alone may not be enough. The atmosphere must be one that is supportive—where all children feel they have a “voice to speak”—where children can then debate and challenge their own thoughts and the thoughts of others. Planning drama work that encourages this is the challenge and so the practice↔response cycle continues.

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ARTICLE TWO

"SO WE CAN LEARN SOMETHING AS WELL AS DOING SOMETHING FUN": LEARNING ABOUT READING THROUGH READERS’ THEATRE.

“So we can learn something as well as doing something fun”: Learning about reading through Readers’ Theatre.

Abstract

In Readers’ Theatre children read a script that has been adapted from a piece of literature. This article reports on a collaborative action research project using one Year five class (ten and eleven years old) in a Sydney suburban primary school as a case study. The purpose of this study was to examine how the drama form of Readers’ Theatre can be used as an oral reading activity within literature-based reading programs to develop children’s critical reading skills.

Because many students enjoy drama it is sometimes not regarded as a rigorous learning medium. On the contrary, this investigation found that Readers’ Theatre led children to a rigorous and challenging analysis of a text, which they then interpreted and conveyed to others in an oral reading. It was also fun. The findings of the preparation and presentation stages of one forty-minute session, is reported and discussed, with reference to some of the major theoretical principles in reading and generic teaching pedagogy.

Introduction

“So we can learn something as well as doing something fun”, Alex wrote at the end of my first forty-minute session with his class. We were involved in an action research project using his class as a case study to investigate how educational drama teaching/learning experiences might develop children’s understanding of narrative. In
this session I had introduced the drama form of Readers' Theatre using the poem *Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf* (Dahl, 1984) which I adapted for this purpose.

Firstly, the concept of Readers' Theatre as a reading of a script adapted from a piece of literature was explained to all students. Then in groups they participated in the rehearsing and presentation of this oral reading. After this, and in preparation for future Readers' Theatre sessions, in which students would be involved in their own script writing, I gave each student a copy of the original poem to compare with the adapted copy. As a whole class we found the first few examples of changes to the original text and analysed why I had made these changes. Then with a partner the students were asked to find further examples of changes and/or deleted words. The instructions for this task were: "Find where I have made changes to the original text. Highlight these and then explain why you think I made these adaptations to the original text". Alex (who had a quietly rebellious nature) wrote at the top of his page "So we can learn something as well as doing something fun". This was not the expected response to the task! When encouraging him to complete the task, Alex explained that I had given them this written work to do so they could learn something after having a fun time—the performance of Readers' Theatre. When writing my reflective journal that evening I further reflected on his comment, and wrote: "The phrase ‘as well as’ in ‘so we can learn something as well as having fun’, is important. Alex viewed the written work as the learning and the “doing” of Readers' Theatre as an additional benefit—fun and, by implication, not real learning ..." (journal entry, 31/8/98).

Alex's view encapsulates how some educators and children perceive drama. It's fun but not serious learning—a misconception well documented in, for example, Mienczakowski, 1994; Taylor, 1994—and anecdotally lamented by other drama
theorists and practitioners. In the first forty-minutes of this study I had data that concurred with this. Yet research (for example, McGregor, 1996) supports the concept that meaningful tasks that are enjoyed enhance learning more efficiently.

One teaching session of a research project follows to demonstrate how children’s reading was developed during the preparation and presentation of an already prepared Readers’ Theatre script. Before describing the lesson along with the data analysis in detail, background to the project is briefly provided.

**Background**

**Drama as a learning medium**

Recent research studies support the use of drama as a learning medium across curriculum areas because it actively engages children in critically examining the themes/issues/content within the area of study (Barnes, 1998; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Hertzberg & Ewing, 1998; Yau, 1992). In the field of language and literacy learning specifically, findings indicate that drama is ideally positioned because in the process of enactment students often use all four modes of language—speaking, listening, reading and writing (Booth, 1987; Booth & Neelands, 1998; Flennroy, 1992; Koa & O’Neill, 1998; McMaster, 1998; Wagner, 1988; Wolf, 1998). Based on the literature supporting the use of drama for language and literacy development, this article investigates what can be learnt through Readers’ Theatre sessions.

**Readers’ Theatre defined**

Readers’ Theatre is the oral reading of a text adapted for this purpose from a piece of prose or poetry. It should be noted that the scripts are adapted so they are suitable for an
oral reading. For example, indirect speech might be altered to direct speech, but the original meaning and vocabulary used by the author is retained. The scripts are written so that the characters in the text are allotted to different readers. In most cases the script includes one or more narrators who fulfill the function of the third person in literary texts in the telling of the story. While Readers' Theatre can be rehearsed and refined to include elaborate stage sets and costumes (Wolf, 1994), when used as an activity within a reading program the focus remains strongly on interpreting the text itself.\(^4\) Therefore, there is usually an absence of stage sets and costumes. Performers remain “on stage” for the duration of the reading and they read the script rather than memorise lines. In addition, there is minimal movement on stage by performers, and they face the audience as they “tell” the story. Readers' Theatre is sometimes described as “theatre of the mind” (for example, Cusworth, 1991), because with its semblance to a group story telling, the audience visualises the story through interpreting the readers’ use of voice, facial and body gesture to convey meaning.

**Readers' Theatre/Interpreters Theatre and reading development**

A major rationale for the use of Readers' Theatre in reading programs is that it enables children to practise oral reading skills and develop their fluency (Hoyt, 1992; Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1999). But fluency alone is not reading, if reading is defined as more than “barking at print” (Saxby, 1991, p. 4). Reading is meaning (Clay, 1982; Goodman & Burke, 1980; Smith, 1971), making Readers' Theatre’s other name—but one less common at this time—**Interpreters Theatre** (Smith, 1993) more useful in explaining the power of this drama activity. Children develop reading skills through analysing the text’s meaning and then interpreting this meaning through performance. In terms of

\(^4\) If a Readers' Theatre script is used for a performance, then copyright must be obtained.
critical literacy the emphasis on critically analysing, questioning and discussing texts in order to delve below surface meanings (Shor, 1992), to interpret implied gaps (Iser, 1974) are important features of Readers’ Theatre. For instance, if there are four groups performing the same script, four different tellings will result. The way groups choose to position themselves, use verbal expression (tone, volume, pace, pitch and inflection), other sound effects and facial and body language all contribute to their unique telling.

While reading aloud may be an important skill for children to acquire for future vocational reasons (Manzo & Manzo, 1995), there are immediate reasons for developing children’s oral reading skills. Firstly, and of prime importance, is that reading literature aloud enables children to “hear” the literary discourse (Booth, 1991). Secondly, reading aloud is commonly used by teachers to assess children’s success with the overall process. However, oral reading requires different skills from silent reading because the reader needs to externalise what s/he is reading to an audience, using both voice and body gesture. It is the most difficult type of reading to do because while reading aloud s/he needs to simultaneously read on silently for what is coming next—a process with a six to seven second interval delay. All too often however, unprepared “round robin reading” is the only experience offered to children. At best this practice is boring and at worst humiliating (Cox & Zarrillo, 1993), a sentiment anecdotally affirmed by many past and present students.

In contrast, Readers’ Theatre allows students to practise their oral reading in a fun and motivating way because children rehearse (and therefore re-read) several times in small groups before sharing their work with an authentic purpose in mind—reading to an audience (Cusworth, 1991; Latrobe, 1996; Martinez, Roser & Strecker, 1999). Re-
reading is an important aspect of reading instruction (Mason, 1991; Rasinski & Zutell 1990), not just for fluency and accuracy (grapho-phonics), but also for meaning (semantics and pragmatics). Selecting activities that motivate children to re-read is important (Rasinski, 1998), making the “fun” aspect of Readers’ Theatre suitable for this purpose. In addition, with the reading focus on voice, facial and body gesture, children also discuss and analyse how the different uses of these contribute to interpretation of meaning as this study demonstrates.

**Research Context**

This Readers’ Theatre session was part of an intensive and consecutive fourteen-day drama program. The data came from one mixed ability co-educational Year 5 class (ten and eleven year-olds) in a large Sydney government school. Parent, student and school, approval was sought and received before the project began. The project was based on both action research and case study methodologies. It was an action research project because it was an investigation of my practice as a drama educator. It was a case study project (in one unique setting), because it investigated the students’ language and literacy learning during drama activities planned as part of their literature-based reading program. The drama program was planned in consultation with “Molly” the co-researcher (class teacher) to incorporate the drama forms of Readers’ Theatre, parallel improvisation and playbuilding during the reading of narrative texts. My role as researcher was to facilitate the teaching of the program. The co-researcher’s role as critical friend involved taking anecdotal running records during teaching sessions and keeping a journal. Other data gathering techniques included video taping, semi-structured audio and video interviews with both students and co-researcher, written work samples from children and both researcher’s reflective journals. In accordance
with Action Research methodology these data collection techniques were selected to adhere to the principle of triangulation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) and ensure trustworthiness (Grundy, 1995) in the analysis of “reflection in action” and “reflection on action” (Schon, 1983).

**Analysing data**

To analyse how the preparation and presentation stages of Readers’ Theatre developed reading skills, one forty-minute session was deliberately selected for analysis as the emphasis in this session was on the oral reading of a script rather than script writing. The video recording mainly tracks the progress of one randomly selected child and her group. The data were analysed and then matched to relevant outcomes and their indicators as presented in the *English K-6 syllabus* (Board of Studies, NSW, 1998). The theoretical underpinning of this syllabus is based on a sociolinguistic theory of language (Halliday, 1985). This syllabus was chosen because it is the mandatory syllabus for teachers in NSW where the study took place. Both the co-researcher and other staff members requested that analysis of data be matched to this document—the document they use for programming. The similarity of these outcomes and indicators to, for example, the *National Curriculum and Statement on English for Australian Schools*, (Curriculum Corporation, 1994) make the findings relevant for teachers in other states.

**Reporting findings: Readers’ Theatre and its link to literacy development**

Findings are taken from data analysed from this teaching/learning session, as well as excerpts from semi-structured interview transcripts with both children and the co-researcher.
This section begins by listing the *English K-6 syllabus* outcomes most directly related to this session. Outcomes are “specific statements of the results intended by the syllabus” (Board of Studies, NSW, 1998, p. 15).

**Outcomes**

**Talking and listening**

- Interacts productively and with autonomy in pairs and groups of various sizes and composition, uses effective oral presentation skills and listens attentively (Board of Studies, 1998, p. 17).

**Reading**

- Critically analyses techniques used by writers to create certain effects, to use language creatively, to position the reader in various ways and to construct different interpretations of experiences (Board of Studies, 1998, p. 18).

- Uses a comprehensive range of skills and strategies appropriate to the type of text being read (Board of Studies, 1998, p. 18).

Each outcome in this syllabus is accompanied by a set of indicators. Indicators are not intended as a checklist, rather they provide examples for teachers “of the behaviour that students might display as they work towards the achievement of syllabus outcomes” (Board of Studies, 1998, p. 15). As such they are more specific. Whereas the above outcomes relate in general terms to the session as a whole, the indicators denote very specific behaviours. For that reason I matched critical episodes from the video data to these indicators. These sequential episodes are presented in table format. A discussion titled “Reflective discussion on praxis” follows each table. In this reflection on action discussion, further connections between the findings (video, field notes and semi-structured interviews with the children and co-researcher) are made with reference to
some of the major theoretical principles in reading. Deliberate reference is also made to
generic teaching praxis, acknowledging the influence and effect of this on any subject
specific teaching/learning experience.

**Sequence of critical episodes**

Table 1. Introduction—Teacher reading *Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf* to the class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators (Board of Studies NSW, 1998)</th>
<th>Session summary based on video recording analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gives extended procedures with</td>
<td>Children are seated on the floor. Seven children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accurate directions (p. 21)</td>
<td>familiar with Readers’ Theatre (Hertzberg, 1997) help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observes and discusses the way</td>
<td>explain this drama form to other class members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voice and body language affect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>audiences and can be used to</td>
<td>Roald Dahl’s poem <em>Little Red Riding Hood and the</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enhance meaning and influence</td>
<td><em>wolf (LRRH)</em> is put on the overhead. I explain that I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpretation (p. 27)</td>
<td>have practised reading this poem with expression to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explores the relationship</td>
<td>convey the meaning. Children are asked to follow as I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between intonation, emphasis</td>
<td>read before they work independently in groups. The</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and meaning (p. 27)</td>
<td>video captures Anna intently mouthing the words. As</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>well, while I read the lines, “The small girl smiles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One eyelid flickers.” Anna smiles while attempting to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wink.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Reflective discussion on praxis**

Modeling and the role of an enabling adult (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1976), are
important. Although Anna does not have major reading difficulties her word
recognition ability is not commensurate to many other students’ and interferes with her
understanding of class texts (video interview with co-researcher: 1/9/98). My modeling
helped Anna attend to individual words as evidenced on video by her silent mouthing of
some words as I read. Furthermore, modeling is also important because as Martinez,
Roser and Strecker state:
Sometimes teachers request "read that again with expression," but children don't always know what expressive reading is. By listening to good models of fluent reading students can hear how a reader's voice makes text make sense (1999, p. 328).

Anna was involved in what Sartre (cited in Meek, 1988, p. 7) calls “private lessons”.

Mimicking Red Riding Hood’s gestures as I read, indicated an active involvement in what she was reading and, by implication, her own construction of meaning.

Table 2. Responding to text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Session summary based on video recording analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student:</td>
<td>I finish reading, smile and wait for children to respond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Justifies own preferences for a particular interpretation of text referring to text details and own knowledge and experience (p. 33)</td>
<td>The children then recall different versions of <em>LRRH</em> and the variations on Grandma’s fate adding their own preferences. This version begins at Grandma’s house. Wolf eats Grandma immediately and then waits for Red Riding Hood (RRH). Just as Wolf strikes, Red Riding Hood “whips a pistol from her knickers”, and kills the wolf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• recognises reader response expected by the author (p. 33)</td>
<td>Tom’s comment that “RRH doesn’t have a firearm (in other versions)” leads into a discussion about the purpose of this poem. I ask the class if they think Dahl has written this for five year old children. “No,” they all reply and David concludes saying that “it is a take off—a comedy type thing”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• recognises that people with special interests and expectations are the target audience for particular texts (p. 33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Reflective discussion on praxis

The use of “wait time” (Rowe, 1986) encouraged children to respond spontaneously. In this sequence children were engaged in an intertextual discussion (Chambers, 1993; Meek, 1988) by drawing on their knowledge of other texts. Encouraging their comparison of Dahl’s satirical ballad to traditional versions is important because providing opportunities for intertextual links “contributes to the possibility of multiple meanings” (Stephens & Watson, 1994, p. 32).

Table 3. Preparing for the reading of Readers’ Theatre script

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Session summary based on video recording analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reads texts demanding a degree of technicality and abstraction (p. 29)</td>
<td>Using the exemplar (see Appendix A) the major features of Readers’ Theatre are explained—verbal and body language, position and sound effects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• talks about expressive features such as gesture, facial expression as well as voice quality, tone, volume and clarity (p. 27)</td>
<td>Referring to body language I ask “What is meant by other body gestures?” Lily mentions hand gestures and Jock says “use your legs”. When asked to clarify this he finds it difficult to express, so I ask the children to stand up and explain that on the count of three I will be a sergeant (Teacher in Role) inspecting soldiers (children) at a military line up. They need to portray this image using facial and body gestures. In role I command them to stand to attention and freeze in this position. Out of role I then ask two soldiers to retain their positions while other students discuss the messages these two soldiers convey through facial and body language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can compare difference between a set of instructions and a set of rules (p. 29)</td>
<td>Discussion returns to the Readers’ Theatre exemplar which I explain will remain on the overhead for reference during their practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflective discussion on praxis

Whole class discussion is often necessary but the amount of time and its purpose requires consideration. Rather than just talk about the meaning of body language, this
passive session for most (whole class discussion) was altered to an active one for all. In addition, and with two tangible examples (soldiers) to view, the children were now able to use appropriate language to describe the features of body gesture—a useful strategy for all children and particularly ESL students (Gibbons, 1991).

Furthermore, the co-researcher’s field notes (31/8/98) stated that groups referred back to the exemplar during the following practices providing the “learner with a background for the drama as well as essential language items to be used while participating in the activities” (Koa & O’Neill, 1998, p. 118).

Table 4. Planning and rehearsing of Readers’ Theatre script

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Session summary based on video recording analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ... Self corrects when meaning is disrupted while reading e.g. pauses or repeats words or phrases to maintain meaning or attends closely to print (p. 30)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uses group interaction strategies to work collaboratively (p. 23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• observes and discusses the way voice and body language affect audiences and can be used to enhance meaning and influence interpretation (p. 27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• recognises recurring character types and their traits (p. 33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First reading practice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The class divides into friendship groups of five and they decide the roles for each member of the group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The video follows Anna’s group. Although Anna makes some syntactic miscues (stumbles or deletes words within a phrase) she self corrects, but her slow fluency rate makes her reading laboured—a factor also exacerbated as she attempts to “keep pace” with her more proficient peers. However, she is gently prompted by one friend and another says kindly “lets do it again and fix it up.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second practice:</strong> Anna only occasionally hesitates and her voice and body language is improving. For example, in character as Wolf she reads the following exchange with Little Red Riding Hood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRH: What great big eyes you have Grandma,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolf: All the better to hear you with, (‘hear’ is emphasised and she cusps one hand to her ear as she reads).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRH: What great big eyes you have, Grandma,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolf: All the better to see you with, (‘see’ is emphasised and she uses her finger to point from her eye to RRH).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout both rehearsals Anna is smiling and confident.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflective discussion on praxis

After this second practice it was evident that Anna had mastered the four main aspects of reading needed for an oral reading of this text—grapho-phonics, syntax, semantics and pragmatics, the interrelationship (Goodman, 1986) of which was highlighted in her overall achievement. The following factors contributed to her success. Firstly, repeated readings enabled her to self-correct initial miscues and subsequently interpret the meaning of the text through “thinking the dialogue” (Ross & Roe, 1977). Secondly, Kate (a more proficient reader) who played RRH provided a scaffold (Bruner, 1986) by modeling expressive features in their exchange. Thirdly, Anna enjoyed the activity and was therefore prepared to take risks (Groundwater-Smith, Cusworth & Dobbins, 1998). When Anna miscued she did not appear concerned or embarrassed, yet when asked if she liked reading aloud she forthrightly said “I hate (her emphasis) it because I get embarrassed when I make mistakes”. Other children interviewed (1/9/98), confirmed the benefits (and enjoyment) of these rehearsals. Maria said that when reading aloud in “round robin” type reading sessions “it’s like oh well, I’ve never read this before, you know, so you really haven’t adapted to having to speak to everybody, but in Readers’ Theatre you’re enjoying yourself and you have time to rehearse and you sort of feel a lot more comfortable”. Larry added: “you don’t feel stupid if you make a mistake because they all know you’re only practising, and it’s not like the whole world’s going to see it”.

Bill (a phase two ESL student) said: “Well the first time I’m not reading really good with people. The first time I mean I get embarrassed, but not when I’ve done it lots of times”. And Oliver agreed also stating that “sometimes we had to do it over (again) because we started over again and we thought of something else … (we wanted to do)”.

5 Phase two learners are able to communicate in familiar situations, but still require significant English assistance. Generally speaking they have been learning English for less than three years.
Many of the co-researcher’s comments on the rehearsal stage are reflected in the above discussion. In addition however, she noted its benefits as an assessment tool for listening to children read. Molly distinguished between the need for testing children on unseen passages for diagnostic purposes and the value of using Readers’ Theatre as both a formative and summative assessment tool for developing and maintaining a profile of student development. She began by explaining why she did not use “round robin” reading activities, stating that her alternative was the conference reading approach where children read individually to her. However, after observing this Readers’ Theatre session she said: “I think Readers’ Theatre is just the best way to do it. Within fifteen minutes I had heard every one of my children read ... and it wasn’t a boring activity for them to do. It is more meaningful reading for the reader and the audience, and it’s fun” (audio interview 1/9/98).

Table 5. Showing/viewing and reflective response to Readers’ Theatre interpretations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Session summary based on video recording analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student:</td>
<td><strong>Third Practice:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uses gesture, posture, facial expression, tone of voice, pace of speaking to engage the interest of an audience… (p. 23).</td>
<td>All groups perform their interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• explains/discusses possible reasons for people’s varying interpretation of and reactions to a text (p. 33).</td>
<td>I explain that although their presentations are not ready for performance to an external audience (and nor is this the purpose), we will view each group’s performance to see how they have prepared their telling of the story using the features of Readers’ Theatre as outlined at the beginning. All groups perform their Readers’ Theatre. After each reading, viewers are encouraged to make comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• evaluates own and others oral presentation in terms of such features as tone, volume, intonation, body language (p. 33).</td>
<td>Many varied comments are offered focusing on how each group’s use of voice, facial and body language aids in their unique interpretation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflective discussion on praxis

The purpose was not performance to an external audience. Rather, each group’s presentation was viewed to discuss textual interpretations thus far. This distinction between performance for external audiences and presentation within the subject specific learning experience is important because the objectives of the experience can change (Fleming, 1994). For children to perform for an external audience more rehearsals would have been necessary, with the focus moving from textual interpretation to refining and perfecting acting skills.

By this third rehearsal, the significance of Readers’ Theatre’s less common name Interpreters Theatre was truly realised. Viewing each group’s interpretation enabled children to see how multiple meanings of text (Kress, 1985; Meek, 1988) can be realised because the reflection period sanctioned children to focus on interpretation and to conform or challenge what others were doing (Wolf, 1998). Furthermore, and as Koa and O’Neill state: “Reflection is a way of making students aware of the learning that has taken place and demonstrating the significance of their achievements, both socially and linguistically” (1998, p. 32). For instance when Anna’s group performed, the class laughed with Anna in her role as Wolf, enjoying the interpretations which were further refined. For example, as the narrator’s script described Wolf’s actions Anna mimed these and she now had a “wolf voice” to indicate her role as Wolf and a “granny voice” when pretending to be Grandma. Comments on her group’s performance related to the combination of voice, body language and the positioning of characters “on stage”. Anna’s group placed the three narrators standing together in the middle of the stage, RRH to stage left and Wolf to stage right. When questioned about this feature they explained that this positioning not only considered the narrator’s function in the telling
of the story, but also separated the two settings—inside Grandma’s room and at the front door.

Another group’s interpretation of the ending intrigued the class and caused much discussion. Alex, a member of this group, in interview later said he liked doing Readers’ Theatre because it allowed you to have “different ways of saying”. In his group’s performance, and as the character RRH, he read the poem’s concluding lines “Hello and do please note, my lovely furry WOLFSKIN COAT” (Dahl, 1984, p. 40), while in the act of draping his body over the now dead wolf. Their group interpreted the poem’s concluding satire in a way only possible through the combination of voice and gesture.

In addition, the co-researcher’s reflection about Readers’ Theatre for reading development is salient. Referring specifically to four ESL children, Molly remarked that they frequently struggled with the semantic and pragmatic reading aspects, particularly in literary texts. After observing this session, she stated the benefits of Readers’ Theatre for these children:

Jock, Sarah, Bill and Sasha were reading the text more than once... .
They are saying the words the character’s saying, they are doing what the character is doing, they are feeling what the character is feeling, so they are looking at mental, verbal and material processes—you know all the grammar part. I didn’t realise how important it was for ESL children and children with weaker language development—it has to be the way to go because they are actually experiencing the language (video interview; 14/9/98).
Chapter 9  "You can learn through drama"

Conclusion

This article began by recounting a comment made by Alex who viewed the “doing” (reading) of Readers’ Theatre as fun but not learning—a perception held by some students and teachers. At the conclusion of the research project this same child said he learnt about reading by doing Readers’ Theatre because it gave you “different ways of saying”. However, the fun element remained and the following interview excerpt is representative of the children’s responses. When Sarah was asked if she thought drama helped her learn English she replied:

*Sarah:* Yeah, 'specially Readers’ Theatre because you’re reading and it helps you read.

*Teacher:* Can you explain that further?

*Sarah:* Well (and she described the main features of Readers’ Theatre and how it is done) ... (and) because you’re doing activities having fun and you’re learning stuff, so like you’re having fun while you’re still working.

*Teacher:* Working hard?

*Sarah:* Yes.

*Teacher:* In what way?

*Sarah:* Well we had to use our minds a lot because we had to think up ideas.

In presenting a snapshot of just one forty-minute lesson, this article demonstrates that the oral reading segment of a Readers’ Theatre activity is fun, but at the same time does enhance children’s reading development. In preparation and rehearsal for an already prepared Readers’ Theatre script the focus is on the text itself. In order to interpret this text children re-read it to attend to the linguistic features. This attention to discourse is different from that given to silent reading because oral reading involves an audience.
Therefore, not only do children internally register the meaning of the text, they externalise this by adding voice and body expression to convey their interpretation to others. In the process of both rehearsing and viewing, they also learn to analyse and reflect on the different interpretations that people bring to what they read.

Appendix A

Readers' Theatre Instructions

Practise reading the script together.

In the following practices think about the following aspects and as a group decide on:

- **Verbal expression**: How will you speak your part?

  - *tone* (e.g. happy/sad)
  - *volume* (e.g. loudly/softly)
  - *pace* (e.g. quickly/slowly)

- **Body language**

  - *facial expressions*
  - *hand and other body gestures*

- **Position**: In Readers’ Theatre you do not move very much and you face the audience

  - *where will you stand or sit?*
  - *will you alter your position at times?*

- **Sound effects**

  - *do you want to use some instruments for sound effects?*
  - *do you want to use body percussion?*

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References


Board of Studies NSW. (1998). *English K-6 syllabus*. North Sydney, Australia: Board of Studies NSW.


CONCLUSION

What the research community and teachers need are more richly detailed observations of teacher-led classroom drama, descriptions that capture the immediacy and power of the student's struggle to make meaning. ...

Studies of drama as a process can illumine and inform teachers who are looking for ways to use drama in the language arts class. The new observational studies provide rich descriptive detail of the teaching act, of the participants' planning of their dramas, of their performances in role, and their critiques and discussions out of role (Wagner, 1998, p. 235).

This portfolio demonstrates my research journey in investigating how students' language and literacy development is enhanced through the process of educational drama methodology. In so doing, the articles in this portfolio illustrate both my personal growth as a scholar and practitioner and the contribution I have made to preserving, extending and applying knowledge to the general educational community.

The articles are both temporal in sequence and interdependent. Although each article stands alone in addressing how particular drama strategies enhance specific language and literacy issues and/or aspects, as a combined collection the articles articulate the major theoretical perspectives that underpin the rationale for using drama to enhance language and literacy development. Thus, my research addresses a further need identified by Wagner (1998). In calling for more research on educational drama as a way of knowing she states:
What we don’t yet have are enough studies of drama that are embedded
in solid theories of learning, cognition, child development,
psycholinguistics and mental imagery, to name just a few related
fields. ... Research in our field will of necessity be interdisciplinary and

The major theoretical perspectives that underpin my research are socio-psycholinguistic
type, critical reading theory and educational drama. Making explicit connections
between theory and practice has enabled me to analyse data and then sanction the
justification for educational drama methodology as a pedagogically suitable
teaching/learning activity for language and literacy development. The specific focus for
this portfolio has been to demonstrate how children’s language and literacy
development is enhanced through using drama both to read literary texts critically and
to tell their own stories.

Stories are the cultural basis from which we learn more about ourselves, and how and
why we interact with those around us. However, using stories as a means for skill based
instruction relegates literary texts with basal readers—the very resource they are meant
to replace. For readers to transact with stories the teaching/learning activities that
surround them must attend to the meaning of the stories. Re-interpreting the meaning of
text through the fictional world of drama enables students to understand how the author
constructed a story. It also, as demonstrated in Chapter Nine, empowers students with a
“voice to speak”—to explore what they have learnt about themselves and others in the
light of their re-interpretation.
Just as drama enables participants to transact with and re-interpret texts from multiple perspectives, the interpretive paradigm enables the researcher to interpret the events and the "multiple ways of understanding the world, that arise from different circumstances" (Eisenhart, 1998, p. 393). All articles in this portfolio explore how drama actively engages students, using specific examples from particular sites where my research has been conducted. My investigations were primarily concerned with process rather than product—I investigated how and why children learn through enactment rather than measuring what they learn. A major focus of my inquiry involved investigating the responses of participants when I engaged with them through the facilitation of specific drama plans.

As stated in the Introduction to this portfolio, one of the major aims of action research is to further the researcher's understanding of their own practice. This goal has been important for me because "personal knowledge is at the heart of the action research process: personal knowledge is the source of the ideas and interpretive categories used by teachers to articulate their experience and bring it under self-conscious control" (Carr & Kemmis, 1993, p. 237). My understanding of both educational drama methodology and language and literacy teaching has developed and is more clearly understood because of my work in a range of unique and non-reproducible settings.

As is characteristic of the action research cycle my objectives for the 1998 investigation arose from earlier research. The articles that report on this earlier research provide detailed descriptions on specific aspects of language and literature that collectively address many of the objectives for my 1998 project. Chapters Five and Nine directly relate to the 1998 project and address specific aspects of these objectives through the
reporting of findings from the analysed data. However, I acknowledge several limitations of my research projects and these are now discussed.

First, is the issue of generalisability in case study and action research methodology. As Walker (1993) states:

*The justification usually given for case study research is that it gives insight into specific instances, events or situations. ... The objection most often raised to case study is the 'generalisation problem'. This is seen in terms of the limited reliability and validity of the case study* (Walker, 1993, p. 166).

As the findings for all investigations were based on one class in one specific socio-economic and cultural context, any conclusions drawn from each setting must explicitly acknowledge that they may only relate to this particular setting and are not necessarily transferable to other contexts (Hammersley, 1992). Nevertheless, this lack of generalisability does not preclude such investigations as an important form of research, or their results as less than useful. As Orton (1994) states:

*The transfer of findings is not the responsibility of the researcher. The responsibility of the researcher ends with the provision of a fair and trustworthy account, which is sufficiently detailed to allow others to understand the given situation, to perceive bias and be able to recognise similarities with their own situation* (Orton, 1994, p. 93).

The responses by children in the variety of settings cited in this portfolio might have ramifications for other teachers in their unique contexts. In addition, my own reflections on these experiences may also be useful to other researchers.
Secondly, and although my most recent research project was designed to collect a range of data, many of the earlier investigations were not designed to gather the same wide variety of data samples. My findings in these earlier projects relied heavily on just my own field notes, reflective journal and children’s work samples. Not withstanding the issue of trustworthiness within these earlier projects, it also meant that detailed comparison of data between projects was not possible.

A third limitation in all research settings is that I have only observed children during drama sessions. In the 1998 project, the co-researcher regularly mentioned the high level of involvement of two of the ESL children and two of the shy children in these sessions. Whilst the co-researcher’s observations were important, these are comparative features that I would have liked to observe myself and I intend to incorporate this feature in subsequent research projects. It would enable me to examine children in a variety of learning contexts and may provide some comparative data on their involvement during the drama sessions. This is of consequence bearing in mind some of the unexpected outcomes that the children highlighted.

One of the features of the interpretive paradigm is that the data can “make the familiar strange” (Erickson, 1986, p. 121). Two unexpected issues raised by some children in many previous settings, and reiterated in the 1998 project, particularly intrigue me for future in-depth exploration. Firstly, six children said at interview or in informal talks with me that they felt less shy in class because of these drama sessions (Hertzberg, in progress). Secondly, nine children voluntarily either wrote in their journals or said in interview that one (of many) reasons for enjoying the drama sessions was because drama helped them learn how to work with other children (Hertzberg, in progress).
Although aware of the benefits of educational drama as it relates to these two issues, I had not expected these to be prominent from the child’s perspective.

These unexpected outcomes relate to learning styles and learning theory. These aspects intrigue me because I do not have expertise in this area. And so the spiral continues—a spiral that aims to improve my knowledge of educational praxis through a process of critical reflection, and ACTION to examine how children learn through drama.

End note

That one can learn through drama is not restricted to the very young. What I have learnt when facilitating and working with participants during the process of drama is demonstrated in this portfolio, but the journey is on going. Further publications of findings from the 1998 project are yet to come. As indicated throughout this portfolio there are works in progress. As such, a portfolio/thesis/book reporting on research cannot end. The conclusion of this portfolio is just a pause and part of the jig-saw of a never-ending inquiry. For as Greene (1994) states:

Works of art, of all human creations, are occasions for explorations, not for completion. Indeed, they remind us that history and the human story can never be completed. In this way, literature, as with other forms of art, can become a harbinger of the possible (Greene, 1994, p. 218).

References


Hertzberg, M. "So we can learn through drama": How to use educational drama to enhance language and literacy development. Video and Video notes (monograph). [in progress].


APPENDIX A

SELECTION OF PAPERS PRESENTED AT CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS


Hertzberg, M. So we can learn through drama. Forthcoming paper to be presented at *The Drama Australia 2000 National Conference: Eve of Construction, 3-5th March*, Adelaide, Australia. [in progress].
APPENDIX B
FIRST PRACTICE TEACHING REPORT

Introductory activities good—pleased to see you involved too. You managed this segment extremely well—there are dangers inherent in this sort of free expression, but the kids responded well (and enjoyed themselves). Good that you were able to help with useful suggestions and that you were liberal in your praise and commendation.

You get on very well with the children—this is a great asset in this type of lesson. The fact that you were not afraid to move in yourself and do something helped those boys in particular who were a little shy about the whole business. Your “machines” were great—the kids really got into the swing of things—even those shy boys were thoroughly involved. The progress of activities was excellent, although they tended to become a little similar. However, they still exercised the children’s imagination. The idea of groups is excellent, but you probably noticed that several children tend to dominate and thus stifle any individual creativity. Try to encourage the kids to make as large an action as they ...(?). This helps to break down inhibitions.
APPENDIX C

EXCERPTS FROM KATE'S JOURNAL

Two entries are presented. The first entry was written on the second day of the 1998 research project and the second entry towards the end of the project.

1/9/98

To dear Melissa,

Today we had drama with Ms Hertzberg. First she read us a bit of Onion Tears and we had to get into groups and act it out. We also got into 2 groups and said a word in different ways.

We did all of this to show you can read and also do fun things in drama.

When I was doing it I felt good about learning in different ways. We did drama to express ourselves and learn what drama's about. We expressed ourselves to show how you feel.

From (Child's name)
10/9/98

To Melissa,

This morning Mrs. Hertzberg came and we did some drama. The first thing we did was a frozen moment for Onion Tears. The thing that was confusing was well nothing really. Everything was easy, but the thing that was hard was not to giggle. I worked in the same group as I did yesterday. Another thing we did today was Readers' Theatre. It was good working in a group.

We achieved nearly everything. We did the Readers' Theatre so it was like we had a script and were real movie stars. My views and opinions to this are very high. Today was probably the best day of the time Mrs. Hertzberg came because it was a lot of fun.

From (child's name)
APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF CO-RESEARCHER’S FIELD NOTES

This is the co-researcher’s summary of her field notes (31/8/98 – 8/9/98). The summary has been typed and only includes sections pertinent to the Readers’ Theatre and the “Onion Tears” programs. Just a sample of the co-researcher’s original copy (page one) is provided. A copy of the complete original can be obtained from Margery Hertzberg.

Reflection on Drama in the Classroom to Enhance Literacy: 8/9/98

1. Excellent for poor readers/ESL (Readers’ Theatre) as:
   - They feel the character’s feelings;
   - They say what the character’s might say or really say (verbal processes) in the text;
   - They do the actions of the characters (material processes);
   - They discuss this;
   - They write about it.

   i.e. they are experiencing the language first hand

2. The slower/poorer readers have to return to the written text more often when completing the drama activities. This was a great way to help them do what, for any other activity, may have seemed onerous or boring.

3. Readers’ Theatre provides an opportunity for the classroom teacher to hear every child read in a short period of time. It is more meaningful reading for the reader and the audience — A great assessment task!

4. The writing phase (journal) is important. It is guiding the children to write critically which is very difficult to teach.

5. The children were floundering as critical writers in the first week. The second week it appeared they were beginning to understand what was required—perhaps an even more structured framework than the one we gave them may be required. (This was a good activity as the kid’s weren’t experienced at writing so critically. They were really only experienced at describing their tasks).

6. The drawing of figures with thought clouds/speech bubbles was very successful—this did not appear (to the children) to be so demanding. Perhaps start with this for the journal then move to more structured writing—might help them become more critical.

7. Constructing parallel dramas to those in the books is a good way to assess the children’s understanding of those dramas in the book (being studied).
8. Perhaps writing "writing in role" as one of the characters e.g. Nam-Huong/ Danny/ Miss Lilly from Onion Tears could be a follow up activity.

9. The circle of children talking about how they felt after the parallel bullying scenes was a very important debriefing session. Class teachers need to be persuaded to understand the importance of this step in drama activities particularly drama dealing with serious issues. We were all touched by (child's) comments.

10. Doing these activities with older children is important—not enough is done in Years 5, 6 in schools. Infant teachers are aware of and use more drama activities in their reading sessions and up 'till recently it has appeared to be the "domain" of the junior years in Primary. It can be an even more powerful teaching/learning tool in the senior years. More serious issues can be dealt with by choosing appropriate texts and using drama to enhance literacy development and understanding of these issues.

11. The voice collage created a powerful impact in between the parallel dramas on bullying. The group of boys (names of four boys provided) showed they were fully committed to the drama in this. They "forgot" themselves and became part of the drama. Up until then they had not taken it as seriously as they could have done.

---

Reflection on Drama in the Classroom to Enhance Literacy

8.9.98

1. Excellent for poor readers/ ESL:
   a. They feel the characters' feelings (mental processes)
   b. They say what the characters (verbal processes)
   c. They do the actions of the characters (material processes)
   d. They discuss this
   e. They write about it
APPENDIX E

STAGE 3 OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS (BOARD OF STUDIES, 1998)

These are the outcomes and indicators (Board of Studies, 1998) that the co-researcher had identified in her program for that term.

Talking and listening outcomes and indicators

Learning to talk and listen—Talking and listening

Outcome TS3.1

Communicates effectively for a range of purposes and with a variety of audiences to express well-developed, well organised ideas dealing with more challenging topics.

Purpose

- joins in group or individual recitation of a variety of familiar and new poems...
- listens to longer more challenging stories read aloud ...
- listens to more involved procedures such as instruction for investigations, outline of a more complex task
- listened to an notes key ideas and information from guest speakers, ... re-enactments
- recognises when an opinion is being offered as opposed to fact (if culturally appropriate)
- gives considered reasons for opinions and listens to those of others
- engages in discussions involving more than one point of view about characters and events

Audience, Subject Matter

- recites a variety of poems in groups and individually
- takes part in a variety of team-speaking situations
- explores ideas and topics in a group set up by teacher or peer
- engages in more extended, productive group discussion with greater student autonomy
- participates in drama production

(Board of Studies, 1998, p. 21)

Learning to talk and listen—Skills and strategies

Outcome TS3.2

Interacts productively and with autonomy in pairs and groups of various sizes and composition, uses effective oral presentation skills and strategies and listens attentively.

Listening skills

- listens in group discussion and records key issues

Interaction skills
• makes a decision to work constructively with a peer to solve a problem
• uses a variety of ways to seek relevant information
• uses group interaction strategies to work collaboratively
• uses a range of strategies to participate cooperatively in small-group discussions, ...

Oral presentation skills

• speaks with clarity and uses appropriate intonation, volume and pauses when presenting
• uses gesture, posture, facial expression, tone of voice, pace of speaking to engage the interest of an audience as culturally appropriate
• prepares a spoken presentation considering the needs of familiar audience such as predicting questions and planning answers...

(Board of Studies, 1998, p. 23)

Learning about talking and listening—Context and Text

Outcome TS3.3

Discusses ways in which spoken language differs from written language and how spoken language varies according to different contexts.

Purpose

• selects appropriate spoken text for any purpose encountered and justifies choice

Audience

• understands that the listener can influence the speaker, e.g. the listener can ask questions to clarify meaning

(Board of Studies, 1998, p. 25)

Learning about talking and listening—Language structures and features

Outcome TS3.4

Evaluates the organisational patterns of some more challenging spoken texts and some characteristic language features.

Text structures and features

• talks about the use of pause and repetition for effect in spoken texts
• talks about appropriateness of spoken language features in spontaneous, planned and rehearsed situations

Grammar

• discusses the nature of colloquial language and situations in which it may be considered suitable or unsuitable

Expression

• observes and discusses the way voice and body language affect audiences and can be used to enhance meaning and influence interpretation
• explores the relationship between intonation and punctuation ... and intonation, emphasis and meaning
• evaluates own oral presentation in terms of such features as tone, volume, intonation, body language

(Board of Studies, 1998, p. 27)

Reading outcomes and indicators

Learning to read—Reading and viewing texts

Outcome RS3.5

Reads independently an extensive range of texts with increasing content demands and responds to themes and issues.

Shared, guided and independent reading

• interprets a variety of literary and factual texts

Responding to texts

• reads longer, more involved recounts, e.g. historical, empathetic
• can compare difference between a set of instructions and a set of rules
• understands causal explanations
• identifies and interprets ideas, themes and issues in literary texts

Subject matter

• reads texts demanding a degree of technicality and abstraction

(Board of Studies, 1998, p. 29)

Learning to read—Skills and strategies

Outcome RS3.6

Uses a comprehensive range of skills and strategies appropriate to the type of text being read.

Contextual and semantic information

• attempts several strategies when reading difficult texts, e.g. rereading or reviewing parts of the text, making notes about key features
• uses several strategies for finding information in texts, e.g. skimming for gist, scanning for specific information...

Grammatical Information

• identifies reference links

Graphological and Phonological Information

• uses a range of word-identification strategies to decode words in a text
• uses appropriate speech patterns selectively, e.g. pause, pitch and emphasis
Information skills

- summarises key information

(Board of Studies, 1998, p. 31)

Learning to read—Context and Text

**Outcome RS3.7**

*Critically analyses techniques used by writer to create certain effects, to use language creatively, to position the reader in various ways and to construct different interpretations of experience.*

**Purpose**

- identifies typical structures in different text types, such as narrative and exposition
- explains how the structure of a text is related to its purpose

**Audience**

- recognises reader responses expected by the author

**Responding to Texts**

- recognises that texts could have been written or produced differently
- identifies how camera angle, viewer position, colour, size and shading in a visual text construct meaning
- discusses how people from different sociocultural or minority groups or people in particular roles are represented in texts and whether these representations are accurate, fair, stereotypical
- reports on different interpretations of a text after a group discussion or interviewing
- justifies own preferences for a particular interpretation of a text, referring to text details and own knowledge and experience
- justifies opinions about the motives and feelings of characters in literary texts
- explains/discusses possible reasons for people’s varying interpretations of and reactions to a text
- considers events in a text from each character’s point of view

(Board of Studies, 1998, p. 33)

Learning about reading—Language structures and features

**Outcome RS3.8**

*Identifies the text structure of a wider range of more complex text types and discusses how the characteristic grammatical features work to influence readers’ and viewers’ understanding of texts.*

**Text structure**

- identifies the structure of persuasive text and features such as modal works and connectives
- recognises mixed text types with more than one purpose
- identifies examples of different text types within one text
Grammar

- identifies relationships between words in a text, e.g. word chains involving synonyms, antonyms, repetition
- explains the use of tenses in different text types, e.g. past tense in recount and narrative...
- reflects on how writers use of modality to create a sense of either definiteness or tentativeness
- identifies figurative language such as simile, metaphor, idiom and personification in texts and discusses the effect.

(Board of Studies, 1998, p. 35)

Writing Outcomes and Indicators

Learning to write—Producing texts

Outcome WS3.9

*Produces a wide range of well-structured and well-presented literary and factual texts for a wide variety of purposes and audiences using increasingly challenging topics, ideas, issues and written language features.*

**Joint and independent writing**

- uses a variety of drafting techniques
- plans writing through discussion with other by making notes, lists or drawing diagrams
- contributes to joint construction activities
- organises written text to suit a multimedia product
- writes personal responses to artworks and performances

**Channel of communication**

- discusses the similarities and differences between spoken and written language
- works with different text types using different channels of communication, e.g. poetry, dramatic performance

(Board of Studies, 1998, p. 37).

Learning about writing—Context and text

Outcome WS3.13

*Critically analyses own texts in terms of how well they have been written, how effectively they present the subject matter and how they influence the reader.*

**Purpose**

- responds to the writing of others with specific and constructive comments about the organisational patterns in the text
- discusses how metaphor, idiom and personification enhance own poems and other texts

**Audience**

- reflects on own writing, taking into account the interests and needs of potential readers
- discusses how language choices engage the reader
(Board of Studies, 1998, p. 45)

Learning about writing—Language structures and features

Outcome WS3.14

Critically evaluates how own texts have been structured to achieve their purpose and discusses ways of using related grammatical features and conventions of written language to shape readers’ and viewers’ understanding of texts.

Text Structure

- talks about how literary texts are structured in order to entertain the reader’s interests
- recognises how adverbs and adverbial phrases provide additional information in own writing
- discusses how adjectival phrases and clauses have been used in own narratives to build up a character or setting
- identifies figurative language, e.g. simile, metaphor and discusses its effect

Conventions

- recognises the importance of correct punctuation in presentation of published text
- recognises and corrects the spelling of common known words and checks spelling of unfamiliar words

(Board of Studies, 1998, p. 47)

Reference

Board of Studies NSW. (1998). English K-6 syllabus. North Sydney, Australia: Board of Studies NSW.
APPENDIX F

HUMAN ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE: ENDORSEMENT OF RESEARCH APPLICATION

UWS Nepean
PO Box 10, Kingswood NSW 2747 Australia

9 June 1998

Margery Hertzberg
2 Tiree Ave
Hunters Hill 2110

Dear Margery

Re: Using drama strategies to enhance student’s understanding of children’s literature Protocol No HERC 1998/19

Your responses were reviewed and all issues have now been clarified. Your project has now been fully endorsed by the Committee.

You are advised that the Committee should be notified of any further change/s to the research methodology should there be any in the future. You will be required to provide a report on the ethical aspects of your project upon request.

The Protocol No. HERC 1998/19 should be quoted in all future correspondence about this project. Your Protocol will expire on 30 December 1998. Please contact the Human Ethics Officer, Kay Buckley on tel: 02 47 360 169 if you require any further information.

The Committee wishes you well with your project.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Dr Keith Bennett
Chairperson
Human Ethics Review Committee
APPENDIX G (1)

LETTER TO PRINCIPAL AND THE PRINCIPAL’S LETTER IN REPLY

The first letter is my letter asking for permission to conduct the 1998 research project. The second letter is the Principal’s letter giving permission.

UWS Nepean
PO Box 10, Kingswood NSW 2747 Australia

10 June 1998

Dear (Name of Principal),

My name is Margery Hertzberg and I am a trained Early Childhood/Primary Teacher with 11 years experience as a full-time classroom teacher in both government and non-government schools. My last school teaching appointment was as Head of the Primary School at an independent school in Sydney. At present I am a lecturer in the Education Faculty at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur. I lecture in both the Early Childhood and Primary divisions in Drama, English and Teaching English as a Second language.

I am enrolled in a doctorate program (EdD) at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean. To fulfil the requirements of this program I need to conduct some research. My area of research is in the area of drama in primary education. My research topic is ‘Using drama strategies to enhance student’s understanding of children’s Literature’. I wish to conduct an action research project with a Year 5 class and I am writing to ask if you would consider me working in your school? If so, I would also seek permission from the class teacher, students and parents. Permission from students and parents will be sought on the premise that the student’s participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time without penalty.

It is envisaged that I would teach the selected class for approximately 5 sessions over a period of about 3 weeks. The students will participate in the shared reading of a book and then be involved in various activities such as Readers’ Theatre, still image, voice collage, sculpting, parallel improvisation and playbuilding. Methods of data collection for this project includes:

- video filming of the teacher and children during the teaching sessions
- collection of children’s written work samples
- interviews with children (volunteers will be sought)
- reflective journals written by both the chief investigator and classroom teacher

The results of this research project will be documented in two related ways, both fulfilling in part the requirements of this doctoral program. The data, and analysis of these, will be used as the basis for an academic written report. Another requirement of this doctorate program is that I develop and then teach a masters subject in my research area—drama. The video footage will be made into a video and used as a professional teaching resource for developing non specialist drama trainee and practicing teachers’ expertise in process drama methodology. It will be shown in this subject and will also be viewed in staff inservice programs.

While this study will occur during school time it will not interfere with the regular school curriculum, as I will plan with the class teacher and work within the literature based reading program s/he has planned for her/his class.

The issue of anonymity for the students, school and community is important and at this stage I am discussing the research. Should you have any concerns about this research project in...
principle, I would welcome a meeting with you to discuss specific details further, particularly in relation to the video.

Video
As the video will be shown to audiences in the future, complete anonymity is not possible. However, only first names will be used and the anonymity of the community and school will be protected if the children wear civilian clothes or plain T-shirts that do not show the school emblem. Any other reference made inadvertently to the school or community during the recording will be edited in the final version.

Towards the end of the study a meeting time will be arranged so that you, the class teacher, children and parents can view a draft version of the edited video before it is finalised. At this meeting all parties will be encouraged to give feedback. It should be noted that only the edited version of the video will remain at the conclusion of the study. The raw footage will be destroyed.

Journals, work sheets, audio tapes
These materials will only be used for the basis of the academic research report. Should any of these materials be used as examples in this report then real names will be substituted with pseudonyms.
All these materials will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

At the conclusion of the project I would welcome any opportunity to share my results with you, the teachers, parents and students.

I enclose a copy of the application made to the Ethics Committee which provides extra details and I would be glad to discuss this project with you in more detail. I can be contacted on (02) 9817 2994 during business and after hours.

Yours sincerely,

Margery Hertzberg

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Nepean’s Human Ethics Review Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Human Ethics Officer (tel: 047 360 169). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Dear Margery,

Thank you for your letter outlining the work you wish to do in Drama with children from this school.

I have discussed the proposal with the teacher who takes our Drama groups, and she is very keen to be involved.

I would be very happy to discuss any aspect of the work with you and to assist in the organisation of the work where necessary.

Yours sincerely,

Principal.

[Signature]

15/6/48.
APPENDIX G (2)

LETTER TO CLASS TEACHER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT

UWS Nepean
PO Box 10, Kingswood NSW 2747 Australia

Year 5 teacher

20th July 1998

Dear [teacher’s name],

I believe [Principal] has contacted you about the possibility of conducting some research with you and your class and that you have agreed to participate, for which I thank you. As [Principal] has already given you a copy of the letter that I wrote to him as well as the Ethics Review Application I will not interrupt your busy day with undue repetition. Rather, I include information below that directly relates to your involvement in the project.

We will need to meet before the commencement of the project so that the following can be discussed:

- The voluntary nature of your involvement. It is important that you are aware that although at this stage you have volunteered to participate in this project, if for any reason you wish to withdraw you may do so without explanation or penalty.

- Book selection. We will need to discuss the books you plan to read during the shared reading time. Then we will be able to decide which one would be suitable for the drama work that I envisage.

- Your role in the project. As class teacher it is envisaged that your role during the teaching sessions will be as critical observer. You will be asked to take notes of critical incidents during these sessions. At the end of the teaching day for each session, I will conduct an open ended interview with you where the lesson will be further reflected upon. This interview will be audio taped.

- Issue of confidentiality. Any data with the exception of the edited video will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project. You will remain anonymous. Should I directly refer to anything that you have written or said in any of the written reports, a pseudonym will be used. Similarly the identity of the school and community will remain anonymous.

At this point I want to stress that your teaching expertise is valued. Your involvement in this project is important and I would welcome any suggestions that you have. It is crucial that you feel comfortable with the project, so please do not hesitate to ring me during business hours or at night on 9817 2994.

Thanking you once again for your interest in this research project.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Margery Hertzberg

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Nepean’s Human Ethics Review Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Human Ethics Officer (tel. 047 360 169). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
APPENDIX G (3)

LETTER TO PARENTS REQUESTING PERMISSION FOR THEIR CHILD TO TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

UWS Nepean
PO Box 10, Kingswood NSW 2747 Australia

18th August 1998

Dear Parents,

I am writing to ask your permission to conduct a study with your child’s Year 5 class which has the support of both the Principal ( ), and your child’s class teacher ( ). The study is part of my doctoral work at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean. This study will examine what children learn in reading classes when they engage in various drama activities. A video will made of the children participating in these activities. This video will be edited and used in teaching in-service programs to show how to use drama in primary schools. To help explain this project in more detail, I have arranged the information under the following headings.

Who is the researcher?
My name is Margery Hertzberg. I am a fully qualified teacher and hold a current authority to teach in NSW Department of School Education schools. I have 11 years experience as a full-time classroom teacher. At present I am a lecturer in the Education Faculty at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur. I lecture in both the Early Childhood and Primary divisions in Drama, English and Teaching English as a Second language.

What will the children be doing?
In these lessons the children will be required to read a book and then participate in some drama activities that relate to the book itself. Some of these drama activities include Readers’ Theatre and improvisation. As well, the children will keep a journal of what they have done and complete some worksheets about the book they are reading. To ensure that the children do not miss out on any work already planned for this year’s curriculum, the lessons will relate directly to the reading program that Mrs. has already planned. I will be teaching most of the lessons but Mrs. will remain in the classroom at all times.

What information will the researcher have about my child?
In order to collect the material for this study all the teaching sessions will be video taped and some lessons will also be audio taped and photographed. Written work samples will also be collected. Children who volunteer to do so will be interviewed. These interviews will be conducted in pairs and children will be able to select their partner. These interviews will be audio taped only and will not be used for the video. The information in these interviews will be used in the written report.

What will the researcher do with these materials?
I will be doing two things with this information:

1. At the conclusion of this study these materials will form the basis of an academic research report.

2. The raw video footage will be edited to make a video that explains how and what children do in drama and how this can help their reading comprehension. This will be shown to teachers. For example it will be used in the drama subject I teach at University and it will be shown at staff meeting in some schools.
How will my child's identity be protected?

Video
Obviously in the video your child's face will be seen but only first names will be used throughout. However, anonymity of the community and school will be protected and so only those parts of the school uniform that do not show the school emblem will be worn during the video taping of the lessons. This means that girls can wear the full school uniform as it does not identify the school. However, the boys' school shirt does display the school emblem. Therefore, boys will be asked to bring a plain T-shirt to school which they will change into during the taping of the lessons. We would prefer a white or black T-shirt, but if you do not have these any other colour will be okay so long as it is a plain one without any writing or pictures on it.

Only the edited version of the video will remain at the conclusion of the study. The raw footage will be destroyed.

Journals, worksheets, audio tapes
These materials will only be used for the basis of the academic research report. Should any of these materials be used as examples in this report, then real names will be substituted with pseudonyms. All of these materials will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study and in the meantime will be locked in a filing cabinet.

Does my child have to participate?
Your child does not have to participate and can only do so if you grant permission and if the child themselves want to. If at any time during the project your child does not want to continue being part of this study, or you do not want them to continue, they may freely end their participation in the study without explanation or penalty.

Will I be kept informed about what is happening?
Yes I will be happy to talk with you at any time about the project. Towards the end of the study a formal meeting time will be arranged so that children and parents can view a draft version of the edited video before it is finalised. At this meeting you will be encouraged to give feedback. Should you for any reason not wish to give this feedback in public, arrangements will be made so that you can contact me in private and/or speak to the teacher or the Principal.

If you have any queries about the nature of the project either now or in the future, please ring me on 9817 2994 during business or after hours. If you are happy to give your permission for this project, please complete both copies of the following slip. Keep one for your records and return the other to

Many thanks in anticipation,

Margery Hertzberg

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Nepean's Human Ethics Review Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Human Ethics Officer (tel: 047 360 169). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Researcher’s copy

I have read the above information and on this basis give permission for my child —— of class —— to be involved in the research project about drama and reading comprehension.

------------------------------------------- parent/guardian ——— date

Parent/guardian copy

I have read the above information and on this basis give permission for my child —— of class —— to be involved in the research project about drama and reading comprehension.

------------------------------------------- parent/guardian ——— date
APPENDIX G (4)

LETTER TO CHILDREN REQUESTING THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

UWS Nepean
PO Box 10, Kingswood NSW 2747 Australia

18th August 1998

Dear Children,

I am writing to ask if you would like to take part in a research project. I am doing a course at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean. This project is my homework for this course. This research project will look at what you learn in reading classes when you participate in various drama activities. A video will be made of your class participating in these activities. This video will be edited and used in teacher staff meetings to show how to use drama in primary schools. To help explain this project in more detail, I have arranged the information under the following headings.

Do I have to participate?
You do not have to participate, but if you do want to your parents or guardians need to also give their permission. If you begin being part of this project and then at any time after this decide you do not want to continue, you may leave the project and nobody will be cross with you.

Who am I?
My name is Margery Hertzberg. I am a fully qualified teacher. I have 11 years experience as a full-time classroom teacher. At present I am a lecturer in the Education Faculty at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur. I lecture in both the Early Childhood and Primary divisions in Drama, English and Teaching English as a Second language.

What will you and the other children be doing?
In these lessons you will be required to read a book and then participate in some drama activities that relate to the book itself. Some of these drama activities include Readers' Theatre and improvisation. As well, you will keep a journal of what you have been doing and complete some worksheets about the book you are reading. To make sure that you do not miss out on any work already planned for this year, the lessons will relate directly to the reading program that your teacher has already planned. I will be teaching the lessons but (teacher) will remain in the classroom at all times.

What information will you have about me?
In order to collect the material for this project all the teaching sessions will be video taped and some lessons will also be audio taped and photographed. Some of your written work will also be collected but it will only be the draft copy. I am only interested in your ideas and will not be worried about spelling or how neat it is. You may also volunteer to be interviewed. These interviews will be conducted in pairs and you will be able to select your partner. These interviews will be audio taped only and will not be used for the video. The information in these interviews will be used in the written report only.

What will you do with these materials?
I will be doing two things with this information
1. At the end of this study I will write a project like you do at school, but at university they call it a research report or thesis.
2. The raw video footage will be edited to make a video that explains how and what children do in drama and how this can help their reading comprehension.
UWS Nepean
PO Box 10, Kingswood NSW 2747 Australia

This will be shown to teachers. For example, it will be used in the subject I teach at University and it will be shown at staff meetings in some schools.

How will your identity be protected?
Video
Obviously in the video your face will be seen but only your first name will be used throughout. However, anonymity of the community and school will be protected and so only those parts of the school uniform that do not show the school emblem will be worn during the video taping of the lessons. This means that girls can wear the full school uniform as it does not identify the school. However, the boys' school shirt does display the school emblem. Therefore, boys will be asked to bring a plain T shirt to school which they will change into during the taping of the lessons. We would prefer a white or black T shirt, but if you do not have these any other colour will be okay so long as it is a plain one without any writing or pictures on it.

Only the edited version of the video will remain at the conclusion of the project. The raw footage will be destroyed.

Journals, worksheets, audio tapes
These materials will only be used for the basis of the written research report. If I use your work in this report, then your real name will be changed to a pretend one so even my teachers won't know who you are!
You can keep a copy of your work but my copy will be destroyed at the end of the study and in the meantime will be locked in a filing cabinet at my work.

Will I be kept informed about what is happening?
Yes I will be happy to talk with you at any time about the project and questions you have. Towards the end of the project a formal meeting time will be arranged so that you and your parent's/guardians can look at a draft version of the edited video before it is finished. At this meeting you will be encouraged to give your opinion. Should you for any reason not wish to speak in front of others, you can talk to me in private and/or speak to your class teacher or Principal.

If you have any questions about this project either now or in the future, you can ring me on 9817 2994 during business or after hours. If you are happy to give your permission for this project, please complete both copies of the following slip. Keep one for your records and return the other to your class teacher. If you do not want to do it, that is OK too and you do not have to sign anything.

Thank you,
Margery Hertzberg

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Nepean's Human Ethics Review Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Human Ethics Officer (tel: 047 360 169). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
UWS Nepean
PO Box 10, Kingswood NSW 2747 Australia

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Reseacher's copy

I want to participate in this project about using drama in reading lessons. I understand that I can leave the project at any time.

I understand that Ms Hertzberg will collect some of my work to help her write a report on what we did in these lessons. She will also be making a video of what we did. I understand that I will be asked to look at this video before it is finished and that I can say if I am not happy with some of it.
I also know that my real name will not be used on any of my work that Ms Hertzberg might show to other people.

Signed-------------------------------- Date----------------------

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Student's copy

I want to participate in this project about using drama in reading lessons. I understand that I can leave the project at any time.

I understand that Ms Hertzberg will collect some of my work to help her write a report on what we did in these lessons. She will also be making a video of what we did. I understand that I will be asked to look at this video before it is finished and that I can say if I am not happy with some of it.
I also know that my real name will not be used on any of my work that Ms Hertzberg might show to other people.

Signed-------------------------------- Date----------------------

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APPENDIX H (1)

CRITICAL VIEWER’S RESPONSE—“JILL”

Jill’s notes were originally handwritten. For this appendix selected excerpts have been typed with just a sample of the original provided. A copy of the complete original can be obtained from Margery Hertzberg.

From page 4 of Jill’s response to viewing the video

I was amazed that the children’s questions about the story e.g. does she talk to Chu min etc and their ability to talk so fluently about the book (they must be experienced in discussing books like this).

The drama activity using o’head 25: 29 (and doing) a still image allowed the children to think more deeply about the characters and what they did. With activities such as character sketches/description, there is often a superficial reaction to the character.

The strategies used are varied and keep the children’s interest. Sophisticated drama activities such as when the children have to say the comments about Nam-Huong’s name allowed for the development of confidence, gestures both facial and body, timing and overall performance. This was unscripted and spontaneous but very good. Children analysed each other’s work — evaluation is a useful tool in drama. Empathy with the characters in the book is an important skill not only in reading.... (End page 4).
From pages 8 and 9 of Jill's response to viewing the video

Learning to Read: Direct supports from *English K-6 Syllabus* for drama activities used in “Onion Tears” Program

Discussions in a circle for “Onion Tears” program and responding to texts, parallel improvisations

- Makes some inferences about ideas implicit in a text
- Offers an opinion about a story or aspect of it
- Reacts to texts which express a point of view using supporting arguments
- Retells and discusses interpretation of texts viewed or read with attention to main ideas

RS2.6 (contextual and semantic info)

When performing extracts e.g. sculpting, still image and cooled drama

- Reads texts aloud
- Draws on experience and knowledge to work out meaning of unknown words
- Uses a range of automatic monitoring ...

Grapho and phonology info

- Reads aloud using appropriate pitch, pause emphasis and information

RS2.7 Purpose

Going beyond the text

- Recognises and describes the purpose of a narrative
- Identified writers intended audience
- Main elements of structure orientation, complication, resolution

The “Onion Tears” program shows how characterization can best be understood through drama as evident with second last child being interviewed. We expect (as teachers) that children can understand the motives and actions of characters without an in-depth study of them such as this. This is first had experience with the characters themselves.
APPENDIX H (2)
CRITICAL VIEWER’S RESPONSE—“MANDY”

Mandy’s notes were originally handwritten. For this appendix selected excerpts have been typed with just a sample of the original provided. A copy of the complete original can be obtained from Margery Hertzberg.

TAPE 2—NOVEL

Still image (group or individual)
Body sculpting
Body language/gesture/position/facial expression

Imagine a scene—a flood—rain came very suddenly.
Close eyes, place body into position of how you would feel in a strange person’s home for the night.
Freeze your body in any position to depict your scene and emotion.

Next day — you can get home — how do you feel? — freeze in that position
(3, 2, 1 freeze)

Repeat both scenes. Change situation on the teacher’s clap.

TAPE 2—00: 23: 20

Students discussing aspects of text with partners is an excellent strategy for students to explore/examine ideas in relation to their own experience and understanding—one student building on and commenting on the views of another. (D’s excellent comment about "Nam feeling insecure" was referred to by the next student. This was excellent to show training teachers or any teachers intending to work with narrative through drama (it is excellent for them to actually hear how even young students can analyse issues and ideas at a deeper, analytical level).

I think it is brilliant to see how the discussion then leads into the drama interpretation (students are already involved and interacting through the discussion session).

This is a slight aside but I thought it was valuable. It was also encouraging for teachers viewing this video to see that boys were quickly immersed and totally committed to the role-plays.

TAPE 2—00: 29: 05

Teasing Nam.

Freeze presentations by each group showed that students really related to tasks.

TAPE 2—00: 31: 27

Dialogue — clap — freeze — dialogue

After each group performed—time for discussion of feelings was really worthwhile.
TAPE 2—00: 36: 06

Is there anyone who would like to comment? Excellent feedback by K about the actual performance—so students were beginning to critically review the process as well as they had previously talked about the emotions involved. You then did bring their thoughts back to the feelings involved. Interesting to see that children related Nam's situation (teasing) to their own school experience. E.g. "You might get a referral if you behave like Danny".

TAPE 2—00: 43: 27

D's comments were amazing. i.e. "Nam's situation happens to a lot of kids everyday at school".

TAPE 2—00: 46: 44

Journals [written activity]
Mary (what she's thinking) voice bubbles excellent follow-up activity
Nam-Hong (what she's thinking)

TAPE 2—00: 49: 25

Nam writes to her pet bird.

TAPE 2—00: 54: 24

Role walk. Explanation to class of the activity. Students walk in a circle thinking about Nam's feelings. Each child comments on Nam's feelings. Write a describing (adjective) word when someone teases you—(sit in a circle, write one word on a card) fold paper, return to teacher, pass papers around circle. Stand, read your word—students stand in rows, read in turn. Excellent activity.

TAPE 2—01: 01: 34

Make up your own play Students discuss in groups their situations, using the headings as a guide:

Improvis play. A child being teased just as solution is reached stop—Take journals with you.

TAPE 3—00: 24: 30

Groups planning their situation One member acts as scribe Groups need to be given time to work out their ideas. Good for teachers to see this process taking place so they understand groups need time and space and some rehearsing and noise and planning so that they are experiencing the creative process.

I thought this segment was most useful in reinforcing the need to provide such opportunities to students.
TAPE 3—00: 29: 44 Group presentations

Follow-up and discussion (reflection) about feelings of being teased, reinforces the importance for questioning/talk at each stage of the process. Children gain insights into their own and others’ feelings and responses.

TAPE 3—00: 45: 13

I think it is a really good idea (as happens in the video) that students are given an opportunity to revisit the play to revise and edit segments. These strategies are so important for teachers who are inexperienced in this teaching process to see.

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Still Image (Group or Individual)
Body Sculpting
Body Language/Creature Position/Facial Expression

Imagine a scene — A Flood — Rain came very suddenly.
Close eyes, place body into position of how you would feel in a strange person’s home for the night.
Freeze your body in any position to depict your scene and emotion —

Next day — you can get home —

how do you feel — freeze in that position.

Repeat both scenes — Change situation on the teacher clap.

---

Students discussing aspects of Unit with partners in an excellent strategy for students to explore ideas in relation to their own experiences and understanding / one student building on a comment on the views of another.

Excellent comment about Nan’s feeling insecure was referred to by the next student, this was excellent to show training teachers or any teachers intending to work with narrative through drama (it is excellent for even young students to actually hear how students can analyse issues and ideas at a deeper, analytical level).
APPENDIX H (3)

CRITICAL VIEWER'S RESPONSE—“SARAH”

Sarah’s notes were already typed

TAPE 2: Onion Tears—Sections that would be useful to show on the video

5-8 minutes It showed how to link real life events to help children imagine and relate to a feeling in the book itself (still image).

8-9 minutes Exploring feelings—without being explicit. e.g. are you happy/sad (still image).

16 minutes Children sharing with a peer their thoughts about initial reading.

19 minutes Distracting noise in the background but children appeared on task.

20 minutes Girls appear to be responding to probing questions about the character of Nam.

22 minutes Cognitive—making their own sense/interpretation of Nam’s character—by interacting with a partner.

23 minutes Margery identifying the following activity is a drama experience.

24 minutes Friendship groups and how this works

26 minutes Children on task interpreting their own scene from information read

30 minutes Guidelines given by Margery. NB.
• all children displayed their improvisation willingly
• all were very different
• children appeared to really like talking about their thoughts

38 minutes Linguistic and feeling—children verbalising their thoughts

41 minutes Relating experiences/feelings to their own real life experience at school. i.e. behaviour management strategies within the school

44 minutes discussing peer group pressures that are relevant to them

46 minutes Cool drama and journal writing
(reading of next section of the story)

55 minutes Role walk—validating their (children’s) responses but some children do not seem comfortable just using one word to describe Nam’s feelings during the role walk

58-59 minutes Cognitive and linguistic—voice collage

(NB. Informal arrangements of children. e.g. sitting on the floor (both Margery and children))

End of Tape 2
This letter was sent to the parents and children involved in the 1998 research project inviting them to view and negotiate the contents of the edited draft of the video.

June 28th 1999

Dear Parents and Children,

You might recall that in September last year I conducted a drama research project with the Year 5 class and your child was involved in this.

One aspect of this project was to make a video as a professional development resource for pre service teachers. I have now completed the first draft edit. I would like to show you this before going ahead with the final edit and voice over. Although I do not think it includes any controversial material, I do believe it important to show you what could be in the final version and gain your approval before taking this step. Apart from reasons related to research ethics (negotiating the content), I too have young children and realize how important this aspect is for both the children involved and their parents.

To this end I invite both children and parents to view this draft in the school library on Tuesday 20th July at 6.30 pm.

The video footage is just under one hour. I will also explain what the likely script would be. Therefore, all up it will take about one and a half hours.

Sincerely,

Margery Hertzberg

Margery Hertzberg
phone: (02) 9817 2994
email: m.hertzberg@uws.edu.au
APPENDIX J
RESEARCHER’S REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

This is an excerpt from my reflective journal. It is day two of the 1998 research project and in the main relates to the “Onion Tears” drama program.

Tuesday 1st Spring! 1998 and it’s National Poetry Day

- Most children here today—only one absent (name of child)
- Began “Onion Tears” program
- I began by handing out the journals and asking them to put their names on these. I did this because I want this to be an integral part of the drama program. They see journals as “work” (that they don’t like) and become unmotivated—possibly because of journals for other subjects. I was prompted to do this as a result of (child’s name) comment on the LRRH sheet, “Because I guess we have to learn something as well as having fun”. I explained that the aim of the journal was for them to record their ideas/thoughts/opinions—that they would not be “marked”. Also stressed that any work in these would be regarded as first draft only—I was not interested in spelling and grammatical structure. Stressed that if I wanted to use any of their ideas I would gain their permission first and give them the opportunity to make changes. Also stated that I would help them fix up “typos” if they wanted me to and that if I did refer to their work I would use a pseudonym. Hope all this alleviates the pressure, as these children really dislike writing apropos yesterday and the activity for the LRRH Readers’ Theatre script.

- Began with the still image activity as a prediction activity—the scenario being the recent floods. Children asked to imagine that (name of suburb) was as affected as Woollongong and they couldn’t get home for the night.
  This went well. I think it did help build up the field—a factor that had concerned me when working with Val’s class. It was also a good introduction into the concept of still image before having to learn this strategy at the same time as analysing the text excerpt, because most children are unfamiliar with the still image strategy.

- Began reading the book. As I was reading, I sensed that as a collective group, they were not understanding/responding to some of the nuances and funny bits but that they did understand the gist. Maybe this was because of the camera and they were not responding outwardly like groups have done in the past. Therefore, rather than explaining the questioning in role strategy and then asking them to think of questions, I decided to alter this. Instead, I finished reading and then asked them to work with a partner. With this partner they were asked to discuss what they already knew about Nam-Huong. Then they were asked to discuss what more they would like to find out about her. I did this because I sensed that if I went straight into explaining the questioning in role activity, and working out questions for this purpose they might be confused. This worked really well. I’ll need to check M’s
(co-researcher’s) notes and hopefully the video picked up some of the questions and talk because it’s interesting that so many of them are inferential questions—already children are delving below the surface meaning. I think the prediction activity helped because the children were really focused on the issue of names and identity and isolation. Check M’s notes for what was said. Hope the video got it, because (Child x) and (Child y) made some very salient points. However, I sensed that some children were “switching off”. I’m always reminded of Vaughan’s statement at this point re the only one listening is the one arguing with you. In this case, it was a group of about six children arguing and analysing the point re Tessa and Mary, so I didn’t go on with discussing the other characters and at the last moment decided against the Questioning in role. I’ve always been a bit ambivalent about it at this stage in any case and at the time I thought that this particular discussion was a good lead into analysing the scene re Nam-Huong and her name. In retrospect, the prediction activity is better than Q in R at this stage. I’ll change the plan to do this in future although of course the next group might be better with a Q in R activity. It really depends on what responses the children provide at the time.

- Onto the depiction of what do you think her name means excerpt. All the boys seem OK about being Nam–Huong. It’s not the issue that M thought it might be. I think that’s because I stress that we are not trying to take on the role of a female—rather the role of a person in this situation. Of course maybe the video camera there and the fact that they have been selected for this project contributes to all children being extra co-operative? Then again, I haven’t had a problem with boys being Nam-Huong at DB or AV schools.

- This class does not have a very long attention span and I’m concerned that I rush in order to get to the “doing” stage but I think I can justify this. After all, it is in the “doing” that they are doing the unpacking themselves. As for classes in the past, all the groups were reading and re-reading the excerpt on the overhead and debating the words like princess and coconut. (Child’s) group noticed the font size and punctuation and discussed how this all impacted on the meaning. Fortunately I was there and managed to jot down what they were saying (Refer to blue exercise book for those notes).

- After the depiction scene we had a debriefing session GOOD COMMENTS THAT NEED LOOKING AT. Good comments re understanding below the surface meaning and I need to unpack this myself in terms of implications re critical literacy. I’m concerned that so much of the literature now tends to focus on just discussion activities for delving beneath the surface. Should check up on this further, because here is an e.g. of how the talk during drama and after drama means that all are actively involved and it’s informed discussion, because it’s from an “as if stance”. Will need to get some theoretical support for this. Although the notion of metaxis is not really realised, because I haven’t really put the structures in place for a “drama” yet, the concept is there. I’ll need to get my head around metaxis more. O’Neill explains it well in the English journal article and look at Bolton & Heathcote’s new book.
After this, and in their journals, I asked them to draw their depictions and write speech and thought bubbles. I think they found this more or less hard to do. CHECK. Need to ask some of them in interview. I think the combination of drawing and writing helped those that balk at anything to do with a pen or pencil. (Child's name did a really perceptive one to include skateboard and football), so he is really starting to think of characters. As a third phase ESL child this is also interesting because he is able to express this through drawing and did all the talk and action in the preparation for his still image. Did this help? Need to follow this up re Gibbons research re talk and Wagner's NADIE article. (Also, this worked really well at DB in 96—could cross-reference with the work samples from them).

Started this activity just before recess time and I was wondering whether to do it then or leave it till after recess. Decided to start it, because it is meant to help children debrief and distance themselves from the drama—especially those who didn't speak in the whole class discussion. Also it's a way for children to consolidate the meaning of text and will be used as an assessment tool by me and so don't want it to be "history" for them. As well, it's a good e.g. of a tangible product which so many educators are concerned about at the moment.

Bell rang and dismissed the class, but it was surprising how many wanted to stay and finish including some of the boys who think drama is "uncool". I should have finished this activity after recess but left it for M to do with them in the afternoon. Was aware that I might be wasting the video team's time—this is becoming a difficulty in terms of programming (from a pedagogical viewpoint).

After recess read the next section of the book up to Danny's poem. Children much more attentive than before and laughed at the funny bits. I really want them to enjoy Kidd’s writing and the humour as well as the pathos, although of course it’s these issues that are at the heart. But what I like about Kidd's writing is that she doesn’t lecture or moralise re what Viv Nichols et al write about.

Role walk: The logistics are difficult because the room is too small. Not much I could do unless I got them to make two circles, but that means heaps of organising and then the focus is on the circles and not on the strategy. But wow! What a powerful moment for the group when (child) said that s/he felt like bashing up everyone (Check video and M’s notes for actual words). S/he said it with such conviction you could have heard a pin drop. M. explained afterwards that (child) is really picked on because of (child’s) physical features and (child) takes on a victim status that some of the kids really run with. Poor kid. In our interview afterwards M and I decided that the drama had given this child a "voice to speak". Perhaps that’s going to be one of the unexpected outcomes and Ros Arnold’s works re critical moments and empathetic teaching might come in—refer to her article in Forum ? journal.

Then onto writing one’s own words to describe what it’s like to be teased for the voice collage. Note that (another child) wanted to write and write. This child is not teased at school but has some family problems. S/he has much to say on the issue of teasing and I should be more aware of this tomorrow. Good e.g. also of putting papers back in the middle of the room so the words spoken are not one’s own, because it does protect some children.
• The voice collage worked quite well. Of course the usual problems with butting in and repeating of words but I'm not going to worry about it at this stage because I think it will become more believable for them once interspersed with their parallel improvisations. Tomorrow I think I should play the clapping game before we begin the voice collage to illustrate how in drama we need to work with and accept offers.

• Then onto the parallel improvisation. Was a good idea to ask children to write the framework questions in their journals and take these away with them for the planning of it. Usually I just have these displayed on a poster. I hadn't thought of this until I was explaining it and suddenly thought that this might show them one of the purposes for the journal. Tomorrow I will add the "how will we show this" planning question, but I didn't want to overload them at this stage. However, had I done so it may have given even more direction. Interview children about this.

• Interesting critical moment. The group of boys that are often teased got into this activity (Parallel improvisation) straight away and on task the whole time. M. was quite amazed. She'll have a lot of this in her notes and we talked about it on the tape.

• Some groups are using names of children in class in the Parallel improvisations themselves—i.e. names of real bullies in class are names of bullies in their improvisations. My dilemma is whether to ask them to change the names or not. Just spoke to Susie (friend who is a school counselor), Robyn and M. for their opinion. They all think leave them. I think leave them too as they might inadvertently censor the content and/or loose ownership and at this stage it's not offensive—interesting to see how this pans out. At this stage we haven't made links back to the book, but I think there will be some interesting discussion. The children are becoming more inquisitive, but I'd like to see if they do this without prompting by me.

• M. is going to do the peer writing journal in the afternoons, but I really must do this myself, because I want to get away from it being a "chore" time. I should have planned and/or warned the video crew that this would be happening and to take a coffee break.

• Back to the parallel improvisation. There is a group of 5? boys who do not want to admit that they want to do drama on the basis that it is less than masculine. I think (name of child) is a bit on the outer of the cool group—check with M. When I was with his group, he asked if for the question "why are we doing this?", he could just write because we were told to. I said words to the effect of "well OK" which I shouldn't have. But when I called them all back together to say that time was up he raced up to me and asked if they could show their improvisation "because it's really good!" ...
• I really should be interviewing more kids nearer to the time before it becomes history, but there is just not the time or should I be doing this in some of their lunch times? Then again, my conversations with M are going well. Perhaps when they are working I could pull some children aside and ask them.

(End of notes for 1/9/98)
APPENDIX K

COVER LETTER SENT WITH MANUSCRIPT

This is the cover letter sent with the manuscript submitted to the international refereed journal Research in Drama Education. The manuscript is presently under review.

2 Tinee Ave
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Australia
Ph: 61 2 9817 2994
e-mail: m.hertzberg@uws.edu.au

17th October, 1999

Professor J Somers
The University of Exeter
School of Drama and Music
Thornlea
Exeter
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United Kingdom

Dear Professor Somers,

With this letter, I am submitting a manuscript for consideration as an article to be published in Research in Drama Education. My paper is entitled "You just have a better idea of the feeling": How drama before and during the reading of narratives enhances critical reading practices.

Yours sincerely,

Margery Hertzberg
Lecturer, Faculty of Education and Languages
University of Western Sydney, Macarthur
APPENDIX L

SEMI-STRUCTURED AUDIO INTERVIEW

This is an example of the semi-structured interviews that I conducted in the 1998 research project. This example was an interview conducted with two boys.

TAPE 3 - Interview with Tom and Rob, 8/9/98.

*Marjory

Tom and Rob, I want to read to you something that a famous children's author called Katherine Paterson wrote and she wrote in an adult's work book for teachers about reading, okay? So it's not meant for children this quote, but I thought I would just see what you thought about it. Katherine Paterson is a famous children's author, she wrote a book called .......... Have either of you heard that?

(Bridge to Terabithia)

*Children

No.

*Marjory

No? Okay. You might like to. It's quite a long book but I think you're both quite good readers. It goes this way. Just listen to it. "The wonderful thing about books is that they allow us to enter imaginatively in someone else's life and when we do that we learn to sympathise with other people, but the real surprise is that we also learn truths about ourselves, about our own lives that somehow we hadn't been able to see before." What do you think that's all about? Can you understand that?

*Child

Yeah.

*Marjory

Have a think about it. What does it mean to you? Tom, got any ideas?

*Tom

Well, it's a good statement because it's true.

*Marjory

In what way?

*Tom

Well, because it shows what she said, what it says in the book can sometimes really be going on in our liv...

*Marjory

Can you give us an example?

*Tom

Like, say the person's being bullied and your being bullied as well, you really.

*Rob

........

*Tom

Refer to the character.

*Marjory

Sorry, Tom, what were you saying? So you're actually now saying, you're linking this to one of the stories we read? Are you?

*Tom

Yeah.
"Tom
"Onion Tears". Sometimes you might be reading a story and they might be being bullied in the story and the same thing's happening to you, so there's like a link between reality and fiction.

*Marjory
What do you think?

*Rob
Yeah, they're the same thing 'cause if you say if, if you're reading a book and there was a really cool person and you were really, like ........, there was a really popular person in the book and you were really popular and they did stuff, you could be able to just read it and link to the person and get the full understanding, whereas someone who's bullied and reading about someone popular they would understand but not as much as if you were popular.

*Marjory
Do you think if some kids who do bully other kids, if they read about say, like how Nam Hong felt, do you think that they might start to think about whether it's fair to bully kids who are smaller than them or less cool or whatever?

*Rob
Well, in some degrees yes, but in some not because if they read it, like if they were smart alecks they'd just think, oh, it's a stupid book and they wouldn't think anything of it, but if they had a brain, like half a one, at least they'd be able to think about it and say, yeah, they shouldn't be doing this or should stop before they get really in trouble or something like that. And they start to think about how the people they're bullying feel about, say they're being bashed up and if you've just gone and done that to someone, now if you read the book then you'd know how the person that you've bashed up felt afterwards.

*Rob
And then you think if someone was doing that to me, I wouldn't like it.

*Tom
Yeah.

*Margery
Okay. Well, you were getting quite philosophical. Very interesting point coming through. Well, we did some drama with "Onion Tears". What did you think about that?

*Tom
Well, it was pretty fun, but if you were the bully like I was you kind of feel bad about what you've done to the person.

*Margery
Can you explain that, explain your, you're talking about your improvisation, Tom; are you?

*Tom
Yeah.

*Margery
Or when you were Danny?

*Tom
I was Nam Hong but in the other bullying play that we did, when all the kids ganged up on the one kid, like you really stop and think about whether you should really be doing it.
• Rob
In one of our plays I was the one getting teased in the first one we did of our bullying one, no, the second one, and like, I was on the ground like, pretending to cry because they'd taken my things and bullied me and I thought, it must really feel like this when we, like, when it's really happened and then in the first one, I was the bully and I thought when I had to say my things 'cause I was Tessa, I was thinking about whether I should be really doing this and I forgot what we were doing 'cause I was thinking about if I should be doing it or not and then a couple of minutes later I got out of it and said no way, but it wasn't fun. I was thinking about it, that's why I forgot what we were meant to be doing.

*Margery
You forgot that you were still involved in it?

• Rob
Yeah.

*Margery
Yeah, okay. Do you think that it helped you understand what was happening in the book more?

• Rob
Yeah.

*Margery
.........drama?

• Tom & Rob
Yeah.

*Margery
In what way?

• Rob
Well, if you're just reading the book and you see Nam Hong being teased, you don't really get the feel of the book, but if you're doing drama about it then you really know how she's feeling about it.

*Margery
Okay. So if we just had, we could have just had a discussion, though, couldn't we?

• Rob
Yeah.

• Tom
It would have helped people, but not as much as if you did drama.

*Margery
Is that right?

• Tom
Yeah.

*Margery
Which particular drama really helped you, do you think, which drama activities?
Rob
The play and the voice collage helped me but that could be different for other people.

Margery
Yeah, exactly. What about you, Tom?

Tom
I ... a play, I thought just a play ... really effective on how you felt about the person.

Margery
And you've read a bit more of "Onion Tears" now, haven't you?

Tom
Yeah. The next little chapter I think it was.

Margery
Are you enjoying the book at all. I think some of you are finding it a bit slow, are you?

Rob
Well, it's okay but I'd be lying if I said it was like, the best book I've ever read.

Margery
Fair enough.

Tom
Yeah.

Margery
Which is the best book that you've ever read?

Tom
Don't really have one because I might read better.

Margery
Fair enough, but what's one that you really, you know, it's really memorable that you can think ... o know, as soon as I say, oh, think of a book you really enjoyed reading? Or perhaps you don't enjoy re

Tom
Madam ... was a pretty good book.

Margery
Who wrote that?

Tom
Brian Jack ....... It's a whole series of books that are really good 'cause it's like, all these animals and ... going to war against each other.

Margery
Do you think you could do some drama with that?

Tom
Probably, yeah.

Rob
Yeah, I read a bit of that and I thought it didn't really do anything for me.
*Margery
So we've looked at "Onion Tears" and then we've been reading a picture book, "Our Excursion" and we've done some activities with that. One of the ones that we did was we had to really have a good look at all the characters in our groups by reading the pictures as well as the writing and then we did questioning in role. Why do you think we did that?

*R. Rob
'Cause there wasn't really, it didn't really say anything at the start like an introduction, like, to the characters, there was just at the front, there was just a drawing of all the people and said whoever it was and then that just started straight off where it said it didn't really give you.

*Margery
The written word, the written word didn't tell you, did it?

*R. Rob
No.

*Margery
Didn't describe the characters like a big novel.

*R. Rob
It didn't say oh, Jason.

*Margery
So how did you learn about the characters?

*T. Tom
Well, with the questioning in role we could ask them questions about how they felt, going on the excursion and things like that.

*Margery
But we actually learned about the characters through reading the pictures, didn't we?

*T. Tom
Yeah.

*R. Rob
But not as much. If you questioned in role, it's better because the people on the floor or wherever they're sitting that were asking the question that's the role, they get an understanding of the book as well as the person that asked the questions. I was the person being asked the question, I was Miss Mobbs, and some of them you have to make up and some of them, like, you can tell just from remembering the pictures and what she says and stuff.

*Margery
Did you like being questioned?

*R. Rob
Um, yeah, it was fun and so, and you have to remember what she had for lunch and what she did and stuff like that. We did twelve finding out more information ........ Miss Mobbs first and then we did Carmel, so I knew heaps about her.

*Margery
But how did you know heaps about her?
• Rob
Oh, from what she does and in the pictures, what she's looking at and pointing at and saying, the written text.

*Margery
  Tom?

• Tom
With the pictures, they might be saying, oh no, but you wouldn't really know what their facials were like, but with these pictures it would really show how they're feeling when they say it. Like, their facial expressions could be, like, really sad or happy and you would know if they were just sort of happy or really happy.

• Rob
Or frightened.

*Margery
Or frightened?

• Rob
Yeah. Like when Roberto was falling into the hole, you could see on his face the look of

• Tom
Fear.

• Rob
fear, yeah, and when Anne stepped in dog poo, you could just see her going.

*Margery
Sort of holding her nose?

*Rob
Yeah.

*Margery
What picture did you depict?

• Tom
We did the motorbike scene when the dog was about to be run over. It didn't say it in the written text, but with the picture you could tell what was happening.

*Margery
And you portrayed your characters very well. Can you explain who you were, Tom, and how you acted?

• Tom
I was the dog in the middle of the road and I just acted like I didn't know what was really going on with the motorbike going past me and all the people jumping up and screaming and stuff and Miss Mobbs running after me.

• Rob
In ours, I was Roberto and I was falling into the hole and because it was a frozen moment, I had to hold it for ages and I was on my hands and I had to hold it and I didn't really need to act 'cause I was really holding it and as I was trying to hold it, I had my look like, already like this saying don't let go 'cause I hurt my feet on the desk when he was going to drop me.
*Margery
So you were really feeling it as drama as though that's Roberto.

* Rob
Yeah. I didn't want to fall over and smash my face in the carpet.

*Margery
Fair enough.

* Rob
And then when you ........ for the depiction of the scene, I had to hold it for about a couple of minutes and that was hard but I didn't really have to worry about my facial expression.

*Margery
What about the journal writing, how did you feel about doing that?

* Rob
Um, well, with the journal writing, if there was, say we did an activity and we weren't really sure about what it was for, then when we go to our journals and we were about to write it in we could think about it, about why we did it and that and the journal helped to do the writing and stuff like that.

*Margery
But you don't really like it much, do you?

* Rob
Oh, I don't really like doing all the writing and stuff.

*Margery
But you can see the purpose?

* Rob
Yeah.

* Rob
When we were talking about the book and that, like just when we read it and then you said, go back and do something in the book, like, it was easier for me when we did the play first and then go back and write abt it because I learned more using the play.

*Margery
Oh, that's interesting.

* Rob
........... before, 'cause if you just read ........, half the time you don't take any notice and then when you do the play you have to act it out all the time, so it was easier for me to do the play and then write about it rather than here, you read and then going back and writing out the thing for a while.

*Margery
What do you normally do in your work books in class? What sort of activities? Do you normally read?

* Tom
We read, sometimes (teacher) reads and then she writes up questions on the board, we have to answer them and sometimes we do silent reading and we just write about it, like who the characters were and what they were doing in the scene. That's all we do, we just write about the book.
*Margery
So have you found writing in your journal after you've done the play easier than just writing from

Tom & Rob
Yeah.

*Margery
doing comprehension questions? You found it easier?

Tom & Rob
Yeah.

*Margery
You've worked hard at it though.

(unclear)
.........

*Margery
.........exhausted after we'd done drama. What are you thinking .......?

Tom
Well, it is a bit exhausting but it's not that bad. I found it more fun than exhausting.

Rob
Yeah. And 'cause it's fun you want to do it rather than if you're just sitting on the floor reading, you think, oh, it's boring.

*Margery
But are you learning anything? Some of you might not be learning anything?

Rob
Yeah, you are because you want to learn about it because it's fun ......if it was just boring, you wouldn't want to learn about it, like maths. I like maths.......... 

*Margery
Because it's fun, too, perhaps?

Rob
No, 'cause it's like harder and easy at the same time.

*Margery
Which parts of, well, you know, we've done all these things, we've done voice collage, Readers' Theatre, frozen moments, improvisations, we've made up, put our improvisations in order and made up our own play; what have you enjoyed doing most?

Tom
Probably the play.

*Margery
So we've been interrupted yet again, but that's okay, it's probably given you some time to think about some of the things that you liked doing in drama and why and so forth. You know, if you haven't got any preferences, you don't have to answer all the questions, but got any ideas?
• Rob
I don't have any preference because they're all, like the play, we had to do a frozen moment in it and the frozen moment we did exactly the same thing and the voice collage we just did it in turn and then after that, we did it just whenever, but with our voice collage we didn't really hear everyone, about five people were on at the same time at the end. That's what I think.

• Tom
With the plays, you can, whatever character you're doing, you can know how they feel .........that's how I learned .........

*Margery
We also did some Readers' Theatre, do you remember that poem "Come Here"?

* Tom & Rob
Yeah.

*Margery
Were you here that day?

• Rob
Yeah.

*Margery
Did you enjoy doing that?

• Rob
Yeah, that was pretty fun because we learned to do different speech, like first it's all sweet and kind, come here, and then .........his son gets stern and then really angry and so, yeah.

*Margery
We could have just read that poem,

* Tom
But it wouldn't sound the same, just going come here over and over.

• Rob
It would sound boring and stupid .........come here, come here, come here. You're not putting anything in it, like come here, .........come here, and then COME HERE, .........just keep going come here, come here come here .........different voice, like when you're reading .........

*Margery
Okay. Well, we could sit down on the floor and read it with expression. Would that be as good as what you did? You didn't sit down on the floor and read it, did you?

• Tom
I don't know how we did it.

*Margery
It was a while ago now, a few days ago. What did you have to do? So it wasn't only your voice that you had to use, you had to use gesture as well, didn't you?

•
Tom
Yeah. On the, I think it was the fifth one, we both put our hands on our hips and the sixth one, we stamped our feet and that's what we did.

Margery
Okay. What are some of the things that you haven't liked doing? If we were training other teachers to teach children drama, what would you suggest that we've been doing that you think, naaa, don't want to do that again? And I want you to be honest because you're helping us.

Rob
Probably writing to a friend because they just think you're an idiot because you're doing drama and they won't get it, that it's fun and stuff, they'll just think.

Tom
'Cause they haven't been doing it, they wouldn't know.

Rob
Yeah, 'cause they wouldn't know.

Tom
It'll probably sound boring.

Rob
Yeah.

Margery
Oh, I see. So you're a bit worried that it might sound boring to your friend?

Tom
No.

Rob
And if we said it was fun and they thought, and the way we said it they might think it sounded boring so they would probably bag us out about it.

Tom
Yeah.

Rob
They'd probably, like, say that doesn't sound very fun.

Tom
But some people would have a different view on it than us.

End of interview. End of Side A.
APPENDIX M
CONFIRMATION OF PUBLICATION

Letter from the editors of the *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* to confirm publication of the manuscript: “So we can learn something as well as doing something fun”: Learning about reading through Readers’ Theatre.

**Drs Jan Turbill & Bev Derewianka**  
**Editors: Australian Journal of Language and Literacy**  
**Faculty of Education**  
**University of Wollongong**  
**Northfields Avenue, Wollongong, 2522 NSW Australia**  
**Phone: (02) 4221 4133 (Direct) (02) 4221 3973 (Secretary) Fax: (02) 4221 3119**  
**Email: jan_turbill@uow.edu.au & bev_derewianka@uow.edu.au**

1 September 1999  
Ms Margery Hertzberg  
2 Tinte Ave  
Hunters Hill NSW 2110

Dear Margery,

I am pleased to inform you that your revised manuscript: **SO WE CAN LEARN SOMETHING AS WELL AS DOING SOMETHING FUN: LEARNING ABOUT READING THROUGH** has been accepted for publication in the *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*.

Your manuscript will appear in the February 2000 volume, provided there is space. If not it will definitely appear in a future issue.

Would you please forward an abstract, an updated description of yourself, current position, research interests and address for correspondence in soft copy for the *About the Authors* section as soon as possible.

Upon publication, a complimentary copy of the Journal will be forwarded to you from the Head Office of the Australian Literacy Educators' Association in Melbourne.

Congratulations on the success of your publication, I look forward to receiving future manuscripts from you.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Jan Turbill & Bev Derewianka  
Editors  
*Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*
APPENDIX N (1)
READERS' THEATRE SCRIPT

The Readers’ Theatre script used in the 1998 research project. For copyright reasons the majority of this script is deleted. This excerpt is provided to indicate how the text was adapted. It was used only as a classroom teaching activity and was not performed for an external audience.


| Narrator 1         | As soon as Wolf began to feel  
|                    | That he would like a decent meal.  
|                    | He went and knocked on Grandma’s door.  
| Narrator 2         | When Grandma opened it,  
|                    | she saw  
|                    | The sharp white teeth, the horrid grin, And Wolfie said,  
| Wolf               | May I come in?  
| Narrator 3         | Poor Grandmamma was terrified,  
|                    | He’s going to eat me up she cried.  
| Narrator 2         | But Grandmamma was small and tough,  
|                    | And Wolfie wailed,  
| Wolf               | That’s not enough!  
|                    | I haven’t yet begun to feel  
|                    | That I have had a decent meal!  

Children were asked to examine and then explain why certain phrases or sentences were deleted from the original text when it was made into a Readers' Theatre script. In addition to completing this task, Alex wrote that the reason he asked them to complete this worksheet was “so we can learn something as well as doing something fun.”
How does educational drama enhance children’s language and literacy development?

A portfolio submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Doctor of Education

from

University of Western Sydney, Nepean

by

Margery Louise Hertzberg

Dip Teach. *Sydney Teachers*’ College
B.Ed. *Sydney College of Advanced Education*
M.Ed. (with Merit) *University of Sydney*

December 1999
Abstract

The articles in this portfolio provide a detailed account of how educational drama enhances language and literacy development, and in particular the reading of narrative texts, in a range of Australian Primary (K-6) classroom settings.

The research for this portfolio was positioned within the interpretive research paradigm. A combination of both action research and case study methodology was used to investigate how the researcher’s teaching practice influenced children’s language and literacy development, and how the student’s responses during drama sessions influenced the researcher’s subsequent practice.

The theoretical underpinning for these investigations was based on socio-psycholinguistic theory and critical reading theory. Both theories explain why literature as opposed to basal readers is a better resource for the development of critical reading practices and both maintain the need for teaching/learning activities that attend to the distinctive features of narrative texts.

As a collection, these articles illustrate how drama strategies and/or forms such as still image, questioning in role, parallel improvisation, teacher in role, Readers’ Theatre and play-building enable participants to interpret and reconstruct the meaning of a text. Furthermore, and through the process of metaxis, children reflect upon universal themes and issues through the enactment of their own stories within a fictional context.

Educational drama is thus positioned as a pedagogically appropriate teaching/learning methodology for enhancing language and literacy development in primary classrooms.
Dedication

In memory of my Mum

Nancy Hertzberg (Nancy Keesing)

A woman of worth
Acknowledgments

Those who have contributed to this study at both a professional and personal level are too many to name individually, but their support and guidance will always be remembered with gratitude.

In particular, I wish to acknowledge the contribution of all the teachers and children who have so willingly offered their expertise and energy in each of the case study sites for my research projects. Demonstrations of practice, insightful comments, and above all inquisitive questions have enabled me to continue my own journey of inquiry with enthusiasm. Special mention and thanks are due to Mirelli Farrell and the children in her class who participated in the most recent research project.

I wish to thank my colleagues in the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur: Faculty of Education and Languages. Their friendship and scholarly support is appreciated.

Particular gratitude is owed to my supervisor Dr Robyn Ewing. Patience, intuition and guidance are important supervisory skills, but one also needs a supervisor who can challenge and provoke because of their distinguished scholarship. I am honoured to have had such an experience.

At a more personal level, I wish to thank four special people: my husband Greg for his love and encouragement; my father Mark, who through example, has inspired me with his passion for learning as a life long process; and my children Sarah and Mark for inviting me to share their sense of fun, love for stories and dramatic play. We are learning so much about each other and about our world.
CERTIFICATE

I certify that the material in this portfolio, except where otherwise acknowledged in the text, is my own original work, and that it has not been previously submitted towards a higher degree at any other university or institution.

[Signature]

22/12/1999
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INTRODUCTION

Research products have the potential to be an influence and a resource for professional growth when they emanate from questions which grow out of practitioners' concerns of practice, when they reflect practitioners' voices and purposes, and when they provide insights and understandings into real-life situations and dilemmas. When research products are written in a language and in forms that are accessible and useful to both theorists and practitioners, these products have the power to do what good literature, good plays, good poetry and good films do for us—they enrich our understandings, open new possibilities and choices, enable us to empathise with others and to extend the range of our imaginations and action (Beattie, 1997, p. 11).

The articles presented in this portfolio arise from questions and concerns raised by practitioners about the practice and value of educational drama in language and literacy education. All articles relate to drama programs conducted with individual (and by implication unique) classes. My research is in the area of educational drama and language and literacy learning. It is embedded within a theory of language and literacy development based on socio-psycholinguistic theory and critical reading theory. The specific focus has been to examine how educational drama methodology enhances the

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1 The first person is used throughout. As a portfolio that demonstrates my growth as a scholar through an exploration of my research journey this personal genre is appropriate.
language and literacy learning of children (K-6)\textsuperscript{2} when used as a cross-curricula learning medium in reading programs.

The title of the portfolio is *How does educational drama enhance language and literacy development?* The exclusion of the words “cross-curricula” and “reading programs” in the title is deliberate. Although my research for this portfolio was conducted within a specific key learning area of mainstream\textsuperscript{3} primary teaching (English and specifically reading programs), restricting my topic by including the words cross-curricula and reading programs would preclude the acknowledgment of the many and varied ways in which the process of educational drama enables children to learn. It would also repress the expectation and subsequent analysis of unexpected themes. Although for organisational reasons educators arrange curriculum into subject specific areas, what children learn within these areas is not restricted to the subject area itself as demonstrated in many of the articles. Furthermore, and explained in all articles, my investigation is primarily concerned with process rather than product. That is, I investigate how and why children learn through drama, rather than measuring what they learn.

All articles reporting my research appear in journals, books or conference proceedings whose target audience is practising classroom teachers. The emphasis and/or brief from

\textsuperscript{2} K-6 (Kindergarten to Year Six) is a term used in New South Wales (NSW), Australia to indicate children who are in Early Childhood (also referred to as Infants) and Primary grades. Early Childhood denotes children who are five to eight years old. They are usually in grades kindergarten, one or two. Children who are nine to twelve years old are generally in the Primary grades (three, four, five and six).

\textsuperscript{3} Mainstream teaching is a term that indicates a K-6 teacher who is the class teacher. In NSW, mainstream teachers are responsible for programming and implementing all the curriculum requirements as stated by the Department of Education. Although at times mainstream teachers may have additional help from specialist teachers, it is her/his responsibility to co-ordinate this. At the time of writing there were very few specialist drama teachers, particularly in NSW Government schools.
editors have been that the articles contain practical ideas that teachers can use with their students. This directly correlates with my professional commitment to, and involvement in, the immediate reality of classroom practice, both as a classroom practitioner and as a lecturer of pre-service Early Childhood and Primary teachers preparing for mainstream classroom teaching. My research is characteristic of the interpretive paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Erickson, 1986) because a central endeavour is “to understand the subjective world of human experience ... to get inside the person and to understand from within” (Cohen & Manion, 1989, p. 3), through interpreting “holistic pictures of actions, thoughts and outcomes in specific sites” (Martinez, 1998, p. 98). Through a process of direct participation in both designing and teaching the drama programs within unique and, by implication, non-reproducible settings, a combination of both action research and case study methodology has been used.

The research cycle and me

_Every day, in every classroom, teachers conduct research. In countless daily incidents, classroom teachers, often unwittingly, become naturalistic inquirers—carrying out tasks and implementing strategies that traditionally belong to the ‘researcher’_ (Jameson, 1999, p. 3).

At first glance, this quote (the opening paragraph of a monograph on action research) might seem to answer it all. Of course it doesn’t and Jameson continues to define and elaborate on aspects of action research stating that, “action research is about ‘action’ to explain a phenomenon or solve a problem or question about a system’s operation with a view to improvement or change” (Jameson, 1999, p. 5). Historically, Lewin (1946) is acknowledged as one of the founders of action research. His notion of the cyclical
nature of action research forms the basis for this methodology—the cycle being one of planning, acting, reflecting and then planning again through the systematic collection and analysis of data from within the setting. More recent action research theorists (Grundy, 1995; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Stenhouse, 1979), have adapted and/or elaborated upon this to emphasize how the essential concept of improvement is achieved because of increased understanding through a process of reflection by the researcher/s on their practice (Grundy, 1995, p. 9). Kemmis and McTaggart’s (1988) diagram shown belowportrays this cycle as a spiral model.

The spiraling nature of the action research process portrays my research journey. Although the framework for my drama programs remains cognate, my understanding of the framework has developed and continues to develop as my professional reading, research and interactions with teachers and learners in the field continues. That is, having trialed a drama program and then reacted through a process of critical reflection (Lovat & Smith 1995) on my own and others’ observations, I have revised these programs and the process is on going.

The essence of explaining this process is communication. The early stages involve reading and talking with other professionals. Then early drafts are written and refined both in terms of content and linguistic structure. This cartoon epitomises the process.

Leunig’s (1999) cartoon illustrates the cycle in a rather “off beat” way. Maybe the word obsessed is too strong and/or suggests negative connotations. The related words according to my Word 7 Thesaurus are “trouble the mind”; “recur in one’s mind” and “torment one’s conscience”. All are appropriate terms to describe this cycle because the articles in this portfolio demonstrate how the process has refined my research approach over time. The structure of the portfolio is briefly outlined below.

Structure of Portfolio

Overarching statement

Chapter One provides the overarching statement. This statement explains how the portfolio as a whole contributes to my personal and professional development. It indicates in summary form, the overarching theoretical base from which all articles emanate, thus showing their connection “both in terms of their temporal sequence as well as in terms of their interdependence” (UWS, Nepean, 1997, p. 1).

Accordingly, this overarching statement positions the use of educational drama as a theoretically appropriate pedagogy for the enhancement of language and literacy development. It firstly examines the theoretical perspectives that underpin research supporting literary texts as opposed to basal readers as a more appropriate teaching resource for language and literacy development within reading programs. Through an analysis of the literature, it highlights that a change in resource (in this case quality

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4 Where pertinent, specific details are provided about the research design for a particular research project either within the article itself, and/or in the preface for that article.
narrative) without a change in pedagogy will not necessarily enhance language and literacy development. Pedagogical practices that actively engage students to read texts critically are essential and educational drama methodology enables students to do this.

Articles

Eight chapters follow the overarching statement. Chapters Two to Eight each contain one published article. Chapter Nine includes two articles—one in press and one under review. To introduce each article a preface is provided, which explains the background, context, and forum for which it was written. The articles are presented in chronological order (date of publication) and demonstrate the various paths my research has taken.

The first article (Hertzberg, 1997a) for this portfolio is in Chapter Two. The article that is a chapter in a book (Cusworth & Simons, 1997), details two drama programs that are seminal to the portfolio as a whole. They are referred to in many subsequent articles and were used in my latest research project conducted in 1998. The first drama program was designed for the book *Onion tears* (Kidd, 1989) and the second program was planned for the book *Our excursion* (Walker & Cox, 1994). In addition, both these drama programs have been presented at numerous conferences and other professional development meetings (Appendix A, p. 256)\(^5\).

Chapter Three details a drama program (Hertzberg, 1997e) for the book *Something from nothing* (Gilman, 1992). First, a Readers' Theatre designed for this book is explained to demonstrate how phonological awareness can be addressed in ways other than round

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\(^5\) Papers presented at conferences and seminars, which relate to these drama programs and all other drama programs referred to in this portfolio, are cited in Appendix A, p. 256.
robin reading. In addition, this book is an example of a picture book whose meaning cannot be understood unless the illustrations are read in combination with the written text. This drama plan also demonstrates how a child's understanding of the multiple themes and stories within many picture books can be enhanced using sculpting, still image and improvisation.

The article in Chapter Four (Hertzberg, 1998b), articulates the links between theory and practice. It reports on research findings from an action research project at a school that had an established partnership with the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, where I teach. Using the drama program "Our excursion", this article demonstrates how drama can enhance children's understanding of the multiple role of illustrations in picture book narratives.

Chapter Five contains the only co-authored article in the portfolio (Hertzberg & Ewing, 1998). The article begins by briefly discussing the concept of critical literacy before clearly articulating how central drama is to the development of critical literacy practices. It provides examples of research findings that illustrate how drama strategies and forms have been used to enhance children's understanding and reconstruction of the themes within the book being read.

The article (Hertzberg, 1999c) in Chapter Six is a chapter in a book (Callow, 1999) that examines visual literacy by exploring a diverse range of contexts, situations and forms of visual literacy. This article demonstrates how drama can be used to read the illustrations in picture books. The picture book Something from nothing was the
selected resource because a range of examples of the role and function of illustrations in contemporary picture books are contained within the one book.

The article (Hertzberg, 1999d) in Chapter Seven contains the only drama program in this portfolio that does not use as its stimulus a work of literature. In this case, the stimulus for the drama is a picture and, using a combination of drama strategies, the children develop a drama that aims to enhance their understanding of rhythm, rhyme and alliteration.

Chapter Eight contains a refereed conference paper (Hertzberg, 1999b). It was presented at a national conference for ESL teachers and analyses the differences between educational drama methodology and the more familiar strategy of simulated role-play commonly used by ESL teachers. To demonstrate how educational drama is a more pedagogically sound teaching/learning activity to simulated role-play, the relationship between the theoretical underpinnings of educational drama and communicative language teaching principles are explored.

Chapter Nine features two articles (Hertzberg, in press; Hertzberg, under review) and these report some of the major findings from the research project conducted in 1998. The preface for the articles is more detailed than for previous chapters. It serves as an introduction to both articles and outlines aspects of the research process not referred to in the articles themselves. The first article (Hertzberg, under review) reports on findings about how drama enhanced the language and literacy development of children during the reading of the book Onion tears. The second article (Hertzberg, in press) examines how the drama form of Readers' Theatre can be used as an oral reading activity to
develop children’s critical reading skills. The findings of the preparation and presentation stages of one forty minute session is reported and discussed with reference to some of the major theoretical principles in reading and generic teaching pedagogy.

Summary

This introduction began with a quote from Beattie (1997). It highlights the potential influence that research projects can have when they emanate from practitioners’ questions and/or concerns and are written in a form that is accessible to both theorists and practitioners. The overarching statement that follows initially explains how the research journey demonstrated within this portfolio evolved. It then articulates the theory that underpins the many practical drama programs detailed throughout, thus illustrating how educational drama is a pedagogically sound teaching/learning activity for enhancing children’s language and literacy development.

References


Hertzberg, M. “You just have a better idea of the feeling”: How drama before and during the reading of narratives enhances critical reading practices. [under review].


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