

A Reflective Case Study On Effective English Speaking Through Process Drama

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Abstract

Based on a single case study of a workshop adapted from the novel *The Moon and Sixpence*, this article explores the application of process drama in one English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) class in a Chinese university. It is to examine the impact of drama on effective English speaking within the research context. The author reviews writings on socio-semiotic constructivism pertaining to drama and language acquisition, and writings that promote process drama as an alternative option for ESL classrooms. Three relevant themes – classroom relationships, emotional arousal and language production, and English speaking – were coded and categorised, and then analysed from the perspectives of both the facilitator and the participants. The findings suggest a generally positive response from the participants with regard to the idea of learning English through drama and to the flow of the activities. Meanwhile, this case study also reveals areas of teaching that the author needs to improve in the future.

Keywords: process drama; socio-semiotic constructivism; emotional arousal; body language; discourse analysis

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Introduction

The association of drama and English language acquisition occurred to me during my teaching of spoken English to high school and university students as I reflected upon my own English drama experience throughout my undergraduate study. In fact, the students' performance in English speaking largely resonated with what was cited in Orton's (2004) writing more than ten years ago that:

Native Chinese recounting a story had little trouble with intelligibility and comprehension, but (were) commonly found perceived errors in the domains of intonations, gesture and gaze... Furthermore, the speakers' lack of eye contact, facial expression and gesture led native speakers to consider their behaviour odd and their recount less persuasive. (p. 5)

In other words, it remains challenging for Chinese students to communicate their thoughts in the way that supports their verbal arguments, which causes mistrust and disbelief in the audience. Such disbelief and mistrust certainly do not make them effective English speakers from the sociolinguists' point of view. As Kress (1982) proposed, besides producing situation-specific speech, an effective language user is also required to chain speech with speaking-specific syntax, and to be aware of the textual component of language, which includes both the verbal and nonverbal environments, exactly "the domains of intonations, gesture and gaze..." as cited by Orton (2004).

In fact, English has been regarded equally critical, if not more, to the native tongue of Chinese since early 1980s, the time when Deng Xiaoping carried out the opening up and reform policy. Since then, the ability to conduct effective communication in English has been advocated, with teaching pedagogies evolving along with international trends. For example, in the 1980s, sociolinguists, such as Hymes (1972), superseded the Chomskyans, and came to the fore with their communicative language teaching (CLT) pedagogy, emphasising the ability to apply sentences to specific situations

due to the social and situational features of language. Later in 1993, a new English curriculum, together with a new collection of textbooks, was introduced in secondary schools, where situational conversations were categorised by different themes to cultivate communicative competence in students (Adamson, 2001). And in 2004, the education ministry of China updated the College English Curriculum Requirements (CECR), with the ultimate goal of students being able to communicate *effectively* in the future.

Drama has been widely advocated as an alternative teaching pedagogy for language classrooms, especially in the teaching of speaking and listening. And the effectiveness of drama in fostering students' speaking development has been supported, though not as rigorously in the context of second language acquisition (SLA), by both empirical and observational studies. For example, Wagner (1998) reviewed thirty-two quasi-experimental studies of the effect of drama on oral language, and found that twenty-two of them showed a positive impact. Five out of the thirty-two studies were conducted in the ESL classroom, which also reveals a positive connection between drama and speaking development. For instance, Kao (1994) conducted a teacher-researcher study with college students in Taiwan, focusing on classroom interaction. Through discourse analysis, Kao found that students were more involved in the process, and produced a significant amount of speech, and they appeared to be more fluent as well. A more recent study was carried out in Singapore by Stinson and Freebody (2006), the results of which also evidenced drama's efficacy in enhancing English speaking. However, this kind of drama research still remains an area little touched upon in China.

With that in mind, I decided to focus on one case study, with the case being the scheme of *The Moon and Sixpence*, and turn it into a language-oriented drama workshop with a group of Chinese university students. The research aims to see how participants would respond to the drama scheme I developed, and its effect on encouraging effective speaking.

Literature Review

Drama and Language: A Social Semiotic Construction

The connection between drama and language is an area that has been widely researched over the decades. In fact, both linguists and drama practitioners have been referring to one another's theoretical frameworks in their own theory building. For example, Nicholson (2000) observed that,

In drama, participants operate simultaneously on a number of levels - ideas, thoughts, feelings and values are created and represented in physical, verbal, aural, kinesthetic and visual texts at one and the same time. (p. 176)

Borrowing Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic perspective of language, Leach (2008) regarded performance in drama, as a system of signs, with the actors and their words and actions constituting one type, and the settings, lights, props, etc. the other. Meanwhile, as spectators, the audiences are not passive receivers of all the signs present, but they actively cite their own existing experiences and seek to make meaning of the signs - the words, actions, and spatial signs. Moreover, performance is not limited to stage performances, but is an everyday act of one participant, as suggested by Goffman (1959), that "serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (p.26).

To sum up the understandings of drama and performance, we see that: 1) Performance is social, and we, as actors and audiences in the social actions, act and encounter; 2) Besides language, the verbal utterances, we also utilise all signs available to communicate and make meaning of the social reality; 3) The actions we take often are meant and destined to alter the social reality we are in. Such understanding of people's everyday acts, as a matter of fact, is a view that knowledge is socially constructed, and it is also a perspective that parallels Halliday's socio-semiotic interpretation of language. Moreover, Halliday (1978) believes that language, through encoding the social actions, is one but not the only form of the realisation of social meanings. His

interpretation is not an integrated theoretical statement, but the focus of the general theory which can be put into three compartments: context, discourse or text, and function (Kramsch, 2002; Urban, 1981), each respectively echoing the three principles of performance.

Context is where language takes place, and Halliday (1978) terms it "situation" (p. 109). A situation is more than the immediate environment of the action, but it also involves a higher level, including the complex cultural matrix and the social class background. It determines the "text" (Halliday, 1978, p.108) we produce, and the semantic interpretation of it. In his framework, each situation has three components, i.e. "field" – "the text generating activity", "tenor" – "the role relationship of the participants", and "mode" – "the rhetorical modes they are adopting" (Halliday, 1978, p. 125). And each situational feature is encoded linguistically, though not strictly the case, as a part of the semantic system of language. For example, "field" determines and is reflected on the meaning potential as content, the same case "tenor" is to the meaning potential as participation, and "mode" is to the meaning potential of texture. Accordingly, different situations, or situation types, generate distinctive registers, and the registers we encounter socialise us into what is accepted by our community.

Halliday's interpretation is rudimentarily a functionalist perspective (Urban, 1981). The function of language, from the socio-semiotic point of view, is more than a tool to communicate the social action we are involved in; as part of the social action, it changes and creates new social realities (Halliday, 1978).

In terms of the internal structure of language, the "text", Kramsch (2002) writes that it is neither an accumulation of atomistic structures as structuralism suggests, nor a sentence-making process as Chomskians have argued. But rather:

A social semiotic approach considers language as a holistic network of various signs in the environment, including gestures, silences, body

postures, graphic and other visual and acoustic symbols, which shape a context of meaning and invite us to respond to it. (Kramersch, 2002, p.7)

Therefore, the teaching of a language is not the transmitting of knowledge about grammar and vocabulary, but it is a process of meaning negotiation and meaning making (Kramersch, 2002). Bruner (1983) even argued that it is not so much about the teaching, but “a decent opportunity” (p.66) for the students to play with the language they already possess and test out the effects.

Process Drama and Language Learning

Drama activities used in ESL classrooms can be put into a continuum, with one end being the closed approaches, such as language games and simple scripted or rehearsed role-play, and the other end being the open communication of process drama (Kao & O’Neill, 1998). Simple language games and role-plays are most frequently adopted in language classrooms, for teachers can embed language points into the scripts.

The other end is process drama, an approach that has been gaining currency as an effective pedagogy in SLA classrooms. Process drama (O’Neill, 1992), related closely to “drama in education” or “educational drama” (Heathcote, 1984), is concerned with creating a sustained as-if world. In the creation of the participants, teachers and students assume dual roles in both the real and as-if world, and move the drama forward through negotiation and reflection (Kao & O’Neill, 1998). As the name indicates, this genre of drama does not end with a presentation or performance, but rather, the end product is the process, the experience itself. Kao (1992) perceived process drama as a CLT approach, but what differentiates it from simple role-play is the constant identification and exploration of characters and situations (Kao & O’Neill, 1998).

Process drama is suggested to be a practical approach in altering the teacher-dominated exchange pattern (Chang, 2009). The 2004 CECR

document urges a student-centred teaching model, as opposite the prevailing teacher-centred pattern, in the tertiary English classrooms. However, the hierarchical teacher-student relationship still persists in the majority of classrooms, resulting in the rigid I-R-F discourse pattern (teacher Initiate-pupil Response-teacher Feedback).

In a language classroom with process drama, both teachers and students are entitled to assume dual roles as the drama unfolds. On the one hand, the teacher is the facilitator who selects the drama stimulus based on the teaching objective, invites students' contributions through eliciting their interpretations of the stimulus, and maneuvers the drama development in the direction that responds to the learning objective. On the other hand, the teacher assumes fictional roles, sometimes, roles that pull them away from the dominating position, and strikes conversations with students who are also in role as certain characters from the story. For example, hot-seating is a drama technique that allows the participants to communicate in role, in which the teacher challenges the students in role, referring to various points of the drama work that had happened. Through such interaction, genuine communication is more likely to occur, since it mirrors real life conversation and speaks to the unrestricted speech condition, in which the responses are unexpected from both interlocutors, and the students are at the initiating end.

What is more, with the change of roles and situations, language for a wider range of purposes and used in distinct registers is practised. For example, rather than just the informational talk, which is characteristic of I-R-F pattern, expressive talks and interactional talks among students or between student and teacher in order to convince their partners and move the drama forward are dominant (Wagner, 1998). And the multiple registers and discourse types experienced by students differentiate themselves from the pseudo textbook conversations in that the need to communicate is genuine and real; that is, it is not practising a certain language for the language's sake, but it is trying to use the language to attain the expected result. It speaks to Krashen's (1987) learning theory that language is best learnt when the learners are engaged in something else, like drama. In other words, drama

makes the communication matter to the students. Meanwhile, they learn to make use of conversational skills, such as turn-taking, self-repair, leave-taking, to ensure an ideal outcome (Dodson, 2002).

Just as emotions cannot be devoid of thought (Winston, 2010), the cognitive process of thinking is also inseparable from emotions. Drama is believed to open up an affective space, and engage students emotionally (Winston, 2011). And such emotional engagement further motivates students to dig into the language resources they possess in order to bring about ideal changes. The emotional engagement, according to Maley and Duff (1982), is, compared with decontextualised dialogues, what makes the dramatic language production meaningful and enjoyable. But in turn, drama also serves as an ideal platform for people to express their attitudes and feelings with proper intonation and speaking-specific grammar, which is often found lacking among Chinese ESL learners (Chang, 2009). For advanced ESL learners in China, the aspect of anxiety and fear is considered a major obstacle that hinders them from practising English speaking. Drama is believed to provide a safe zone where all players relinquish their real-life identities for the moment, and speak in role without worrying whether the response is right or wrong. Therefore, Winston (2011) claimed "The roles they play, if engaging enough, can serve the same liberating function of a mask, enabling them to feel safe enough to take risks with language that they would otherwise feel too self-conscious to attempt" (p.3).

Methodology

Case study as the methodology and data analysis framework was adopted to cater to my reflective inclination and the qualitative nature of this research project. For this study, the case is the scheme of *The Moon and Sixpence*, which was developed, practised and researched by a language teacher interested in drama pedagogy. The context is bounded (Yin, 2009) in that it is not intended to represent other schemes, and that it is analysed within the very research context.

The Moon and Sixpence is a novel written by W. Somerset Maugham which describes a story in the early 1900s' Europe. The main character, Charles Strickland, a seemingly plain husband who was believed to have a content and satisfying life in London, abandoned his family and career in order to pursue his dream of painting in Paris. It was chosen due to the following considerations: First, its theme of love, ideal and family, which I believe, will surely strike an echo with the target participants, namely, the university students; Besides, the development of the story is full of tension and unexpected turns that would lure participants into the dramatic world, and encourage them to explore the development of story and characters.

The scheme was piloted in the University of Warwick with twelve postgraduate students with ESL backgrounds, and then revised in accordance. For example, I cut out some characters, such as the messenger character, to strengthen the tension between Mr. and Mrs. Strickland. Moreover, I also tried to be more succinct when giving instructions in the final project.

The revised scheme consists five parts, beginning with some warm up games, line of allegiance, and imagination activity to get students both physically and mentally involved. Part Two starts with the sudden arrival of a letter, which leads to further tasks of close reading, predicting and performing reactions, the writing and performing of a persuasive letter, and then hot-seating of Strickland. Part Three seeks the participants' contribution in dramatising the main character's chosen life and encounters in Paris. Part Four is line of allegiance activity with the same sayings as in part one to see if participants, through the drama work, have changed their opinions. Part Five is the session for reflection and filling up questionnaires.

The scheme was put into work in my undergraduate university, Shantou University, one of the top universities in the south part of China. The workshop lasted for three hours, and was conducted in the English Activity Centre, an empty space big enough for the participants to move about. Twenty-one students, instead of the expected twelve, volunteered into this program, including seventeen girls and four boys. Due to this sudden change

in the number of participants, I decided to stretch and elaborate on the first half of the scheme in order to have the participants thoroughly experience the characters and conduct meaningful talks.

Most of the participants were from the Voice and Accent course, which is only open to students who are more competent in English speaking; the rest of them were from the course of General English for Postgraduates, who are generally less competent, particularly in terms of speaking. Therefore, it was a group of mixed ability participants. A quick survey before the workshop also revealed that none of them had heard of the novel nor experienced any process drama work.

Multiple methods were employed in the data collection for this research project, including participant observation, questionnaires, interviews, and physical artifacts, video and audio recordings, generating both qualitative and quantitative data. What is worth noting here is that the interview took place two days after the workshop. Participants entered the interview voluntarily, and some opted to have the interview in English.

Data analysis and interpretation are two phases in case study research that are not “discrete” but “interactive and iterative” processes (Simons, 2009, p. 118). I will refer to theoretical propositions at points to try to explain or challenge what has been found. Meanwhile, both statistical and anecdotal analysis will be used to cater to both qualitative and quantitative data generated from the mixed methods. Consequently, both inductive analysis and direct interpretation will be adopted, with coding and categorizing for the data generated from questionnaire and discourse analysis, while describing and narrating for the data from observation and interviews, generating what ethnographers call a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973, p.6).

To guarantee the ethical issues, I asked the participants’ permission before filming the entire session, promised not to disclose their names and

pictures without their consent. In this case, I used the combination of gender and number (for example, Girl 1) to present their opinions for privacy protection and also the convenience of analysis.

Findings and Analysis

Three aspects that are critical in a language-oriented drama classroom – classroom relationship, emotional arousal and language production, and English speaking – are generated and will be analysed in accordance, interwoven with relevant theoretical arguments, my own observations and reflection-in/on-action, and the students' insights in order to present a more holistic and balanced interpretation.

I. Classroom relationships

Review of literature has indicated that a language-oriented drama classroom alters the traditional hierarchical teacher-student relationship, and fosters what Freire (1972) called a horizontal relationship between participants, which is key for dialogic conversation to occur. The following writing attempts to describe and explain the classroom relationships present in the drama workshop from two sets of interactions: the teacher-student interaction, and the student-student interaction.

Teacher-student interaction. The employment of drama techniques, such as role-playing and hot seating, is in the very form a departure from the teacher-dominated traditional teaching. The striking moment came at the end of the hot-seating part when I assumed the role of Strickland, and all of the participants sat in a semi-circle to talk with me, the character. The social semiotic interpretation of language posits that language encodes the social context, its field, tenor and mode (Halliday, 1978). That is to say, the discourse produced during the hot-seating interaction actually tells something about the relationship (tenor) between the participants. Therefore, here I present a selected part of the transcription for the hot-seating interaction before further analysis:

Boy 4: You are...do you... you are a selfish ... man.

T: Nay, don't care. I (*Cut off*)

Girl 5: But you know once you are old, and have no money, no one to take care of you. (*Louder*) you'll need...hmmm... your family. (*Gesture*)

T: You blasted fool. All you are talking about is men, women, future, money. I'm sure (*Cut off*)...

Girl 5: You are alone! You are annoying! (*Cut off*)

T: I'm not alone. I'm with art! (*Loud*) It's with me all the time!

Girl 5: Your friend don't like you. (*Shake head*). ... (*Cut off*)

T: It's my life. (*Cut off. Both talking*)

Girl 5: We don't... (*Both talking, inaudible*)

T: Why would everybody come to me and tell me to go home? Why? What's the point of that? I'm only... It's my way of living. It's my way of expressing. Why! Why would I?

Boy 4: You think about... hmm... (*cut off*)

T: Enough! Enough talk! I've got my meeting, hmm, chess meeting... (*end*)

In the excerpt quoted above, I, in role of Strickland, was cut off by Girl 5 for three times, and was criticised by the two students for being "selfish" and "annoying." The exchange was quick and loud. I was also being provocative, such as calling them "blasted fool". It was quite surprising seeing how Girl 5 kept pestering me, the Strickland character, each time with shorter sentences but harsher tones. If it were in a classroom setting, the teacher calling students fools might jeopardise their participation and silence the entire class. Therefore, this type of talking back indicates an equal status between the interlocutors, and I was no longer taken as the facilitator, but also one of the players in the make-believe world. What makes it more interesting is when I terminated the session and invited them to share their ideas and feelings with the entire class. One boy (Boy 3) immediately called out "I don't like you", which brought laughter all over the place. Even when I clarified that I was no longer Strickland, he waved his hand and said, "You will not be my friend!" Similar comments were expressed, such as "You are crazy!" "You are unable

to communicate!", despite the fact that I repeated twice again that I was no longer the character. But meanwhile, it was amusing seeing such retorts, manifested in the emotionally charged language, put forward by a group of adults in public. And I suppose that it denotes a further deviation from the restraints long imposed on them by the teacher-centered tradition.

Student-student interaction. Student interaction is another paramount characteristic of process drama, in which participants are required to communicate with each other and resolve problems in order to move forward the story (Kao & O'Neil, 1998). In this research project, student interaction took place within different sizes of groups in and out of the story, such as peer discussions, small-group work and whole-class interaction. This indicates a sufficient amount of opportunity for students to interact with each other, that is, for them to take control of their own learning. For instance, they were asked to present the rumours epidemic in London with still images in groups of four. The rumours were ideas collected from them, and it was up to them to decide which one to work on. The purpose of this design is to acknowledge their contribution and grant them the ownership of the activity, which might motivate them to be active in the group discussions.

The questionnaire results seemed to suggest that the drama work has largely guaranteed learner autonomy. For the questions concerning student interaction, eighteen (86%) agreed that group-work in this drama session gave them a sense of ownership, nineteen of them (90%) enjoyed working with their peers, and seventeen of them (81%) found their peers' advice helpful.

Interviewing with the participants revealed a more complex reality concerning the interactions among students that happen at which I termed *realistic interactions* as against *imaginary interactions* (which shall be addressed later). When asked about her experience of working with others throughout the drama session, Girl 6 mentioned that she worked with three different groups throughout the session, and she was only "satisfied", actually, really pleased, with one group, "Because... We have more communication with

each other, and they can also agree with my point... Because I really enjoy, if the people can agree with my point.”

She was frustrated working with the other two groups, because her opinions were not valued. Such comparison leads me to conclude that for her, and some other participants as well, the yearning for agreement and other forms of supportive feedback constituted a large portion of their positive experience. Kao and O’Neill (1998) once have affirmed that in drama language classrooms, group-based work, particularly if the group is very big, might not be in favour of the less confident students, and hence reduce their chances to express themselves. Girl 6’s response epitomises the significance of changing partners and teammates from time to time in a language oriented drama classroom, so as to maximise the chances for students to partake and have their ideas heard.

As mentioned earlier, besides *realistic* discussions, the interactions also occurred in *imaginary* settings. Along with the moments seized for elaboration, students assumed different roles, and the relationship varied in accordance. For instance, in the activity of performing the persuasive letter, students were to assume the collective role of Mrs. Strickland and the interaction is more concerned with coordination and consistency in the presentation of the character. In this activity, one group (Girls 6’s group) that received the subtext of “Begging” opted to act in unison, down on their knees, wiping their tears and thumping on the floor to demonstrate the mischief done to the wife.

In a nutshell, the interactions between them happened in a make-believe play world, where no consequence would ensue when the drama terminated. Moreover, in a dramatic presentation of the interaction, nonverbal communication, including facial expressions and physical contacts, were equally as pivotal in self-expression as the verbal. What’s more, in the questionnaires, an overarching majority (20 out of 21) expressed that they enjoyed their peers’ performances.

Thence I postulate that the embodiment of different roles by all participants, including the teacher and the students, together with the genuine collaborative tasks, altered the classroom relationship in both realistic and imaginary settings, and thus contributed to create an overall enjoyable acting and speaking experience for them.

II. Emotional arousal and language production

The emotional arousal generated by an imaginary setting is found to be one of the frequently cited aspects in advocating the efficacy of drama in language classrooms (Nawi, 2014). For instance, Winston (2010) explained that the “thrill, tension or straightforward enjoyment” (p. 3) of the story development opens up an affective space where students are emotionally engaged. But Winston (2010) also warned that such engagement only happens if the drama work is strong enough to lure the participants in.

Research on effects of drama in ESL classrooms also touches upon the emotional aspects (Chang, 2009; Nawi, 2014). Nevertheless, most of them often stop at a general level without elaboration of how participants feel at each seized moment, what is the connection between their emotional arousal and cognitive thinking at that moment, and how this mutual force of emotion and cognition has influenced their language production.

The interview data disclosed that the emotional engagement occurred at two levels, the personal level and a more general cultural level. When asked which moment generated the strongest emotion in them, most respondents immediately voted for the hot seating of Strickland. This accords with my hypothesis because it was a session when most participants volunteered to speak up and pestered me with questions. And the conversations in the interviews provide some clues on the stream of thoughts that prompted the students’ behaviour.

For example, Girl 2 said her emotion came out as she listened to Strickland’s responses, since she recalled her own choice of strongly agreeing

with “I have the absolute right in deciding how to live my life”, the sentence proposed in the beginning. She did not stop when I asked her what kind of emotion that was but continued:

Because in the family perspective, Charles is a really bad guy, but if you stand in the perspective of the Charles, I also agree with that sentence, just like a dilemma... Whether Charles is a ... he is a... I'm still thinking about these questions. (Interview with Girl 2)

Such responses showed that participants tended to relate the imaginary scenario with their own life experience. And the emotions generated were far from a singular one, like pure anger or sadness, but an amalgam which leads to uncertainty about what is right and what is wrong, and about how to cope with it.

The second level of emotional engagement has more to do with the participants' understanding of social moral standards, which seems to be consistent with the attributes of adult learners that they have formed and are persistent with their own values. This was conspicuous with Girl 3 and Boy 2 when they were still very upset about the characters' choice during the interview. They both expressed the social nature of being human that he could not totally cut himself off from the responsibility to his family and society. Girl 3 was still very emotional when she recounted her internal thinking during the hot-seating part. She said she felt powerless because the character turned a deaf ear toward whatever they said and pleaded that she simply could not understand why he had to be that selfish and did not care a penny about anything else. This somewhat unfolds that for those who had strong opinions, the emotions often came with feeling a setback of failing to persuade their interlocutor.

Winston (2010) asserted that an emotional experience is not exclusive of cognition since cognitive thought is “at the immediate level of sensation in order to make sense of it” (p. 45). This assertion indicates that the emotional arousal from the participants resulted from the comparison of the fictional

experience with their own. Whereas Vygotsky (2004) provided another explanation that it is the emotional similarity that connects people's current experience, like watching a performance, with the previous ones. This is congruent with Maley and Duff's view (1982) that the cognitive side fails to function without the emotional elements. In conclusion, whether the emotional elements are the results of or the causes of cognitive thinking, they constitute quite a part of the participants' experience of the moment. Such emotional fluctuation has probably affected their thought, which may later be manifested in language and all other sorts of expression.

Such was found to be the case with most of the interviewees. For example, transcription of the hot-seating session revealed that Girl 2, who was emotionally charged by the thought of whether to live her life her own way regardless of others' thinking, asked "What is your future plan?" Girl 6, who was more concerned with family issues, questioned him "Do you love your children? What do you think if your children all die?" For Girl 3, who was frustrated by Strickland's callous attitude, basically lashed out at him, in a very loud and harsh tone, "Why are you so heartless?" and later, "I know you love painting. But painting cannot be everything! Why do you have to reject all the things that we think are beautiful in life? You could paint, but you can also live a normal life!"

However, the assumption of this correlation between drama activities, emotional and cognitive arousal, and language production was debatable when the experience of more interviewees came into the picture. I noticed that Boy 3, who uttered open disdain at the end of the hot-seating part, did not say a word during the session, actually the only one who remained quiet. That is why it surprised me a little during the interview when he said he was very angry with the character at that time. He said:

I really hated you at that moment. I wanted to ask you 'What if your children were bullied? How could you leave the children like that when you fathered them?' But your facial expression and your answers to the others were really maddening. And I don't think I can find words strong

enough to talk you through. (Interview with Boy 3, translated from Chinese)

In this case, the emotional arousal did not convert to immediate language production. However, it indicates his full attention throughout the activity, which possibly explained the “high” mental status he assumed in the ensuing activities, such as portraying Strickland’s working as a wall painter who got fired, and later in the *Whoosh* part (Part Four) when he volunteered to play the role of Stroeve, the ridiculously generous man. Later in the interview, he claimed that playing Stroeve was his most enjoyable part throughout the project. And upon the two activities, he commented that “I got very high, and so I totally forgot everything. Like I don’t mind how others look at me, and I don’t think about what I am doing” (Interview with Boy 3, translated from Chinese).

III. English Speaking

Of the parts I was able to complete, there were three language-focused activities observable, including the public performance of the persuasive letter, the hot seating of Strickland, and life snippets in Paris. This section sets to explain the features of the language produced from the following two aspects.

Teacher input and the variety of registers. Teacher input for this workshop was conducted at different occasions and in various ways. Largely it was reflected in the design of activities, which aimed to scaffold students to produce the language expected. For example, before performing the persuasive letter, students were tasked to read the letter, figure out the personality of Strickland, discuss and experience the rumour through physicalisation. These activities were designed to tempt them into the dramatic world both cognitively and emotionally, so that they did not find the task of composing a letter meaningless, or short of materials to write about. Besides, after a brief instruction of the task, I divided the students into different groups and went on providing each group with a separate subtext in

terms of the tone they should adopt. In this way, they would come to notice different rhetorical forms of persuasion, something they would not probably be exposed to in a regular English class. Meanwhile, I also chose to give direct language advice, such as pauses, when they were rehearsing, particularly for groups that I found comparatively weak in English.

The speech texts transcribed revealed that students were generally able to make use of the vocabularies and phrases from the previous scaffolding activities. For instance, the words that most of them were not familiar with, such as “rumour”, “have an affair”, “coward”, were found present in their speech to refer to their purpose and attitude. And some groups used the phrases in the letter Strickland wrote, such as “everything is all right”, in a rhetorical way, for example “How could you say everything will be OK (all right)! It’s not OK!”

The subtexts given to different groups generated contrasting language features and effects, and also varying persuasive approaches. Two groups received the subtext of “begging”, and interestingly, both groups chose to start most sentences with “I”, emphasising that it was her (the wife’s) mistake, and that she still loved him. Meanwhile, they were more inclined to persuade him to come back for the sake of love. In contrast, for the groups that received the subtexts of “rational reasoning” and “accusing”, they tended to start the sentences with “You” (Strickland), much as pointing at his nose and giving him a lesson. They both chose to articulate from the perspective of reputation and responsibility. While for the group that got the subtext of “threatening”, the speech was full of sentences such as “If..., I will....” and “Otherwise”, indicating a grave consequence if the other side decided not to follow the commands, such as taking revenge on his lover’s family. The distinctive syntactic and semantic composition of the speech texts suggested that students were exposed to practise various registers of speech.

Body language and other communication strategies. Body language was a strategy employed by almost every group when they were asked to bring the emotional level of persuasive speech from level 5 to level 10. For

example, for one “begging” group, at level 5, they were more relying on phrases such as “Please... Please...” and the change of intonation, such as a rising tone at the end of “Am I not good enough?” While at level 10, they kneeled down on the floor when they said “Dear Charles” all together, and stayed like that while producing the following speech, wiping away their tears occasionally. The effect was more like melodrama, and most students were holding back their laughter at that scene. Some of the members of this group expressed that they would definitely not do this in real life, and resisted this idea of begging in the beginning. But on second thought, particularly recalling the TV drama they watched, this might be the very reaction of Mrs. Strickland, and that was why they decided to put on such a scene. The reception of their performance of “begging” was twofold based on the interview data. On the one hand, most of the participants were amused by their classmates’ exaggerated performance. Yet on the other hand, they actually felt the desperation and miserable situation the wife was portraying.

In this sense, body language was a strategy the participants adopt to convey a stronger emotion, and to bring about the desired effects, for instance, to emotionally provoke their audience. This finding echoes the conclusion from Kao and O’Neill (1998) that ESL learners tended to view exaggerated body movements and changes of intonation as compensation for their inadequate language ability. Meanwhile, it concurs with the idea of emotional persuasion that the persuader appeals to the emotional arousal or the expected arousal of the audience, or what Aristotle termed “*pathos*” as against “*logos*” (the logical and well-reasoned argument) (Miceli, de Rosis, & Poggi, 2006). “*Logos*” was the persuasive approach employed by the “rational reasoning” group, the performance of which was quiet and calm without exaggerated body movements, nothing impressive as reported by other group members.

To summarise, in this persuasion task, participants were encouraged to turn to multiple rhetorical skills to effectively persuade their audience. In the process of persuasion, the role of body language seemed to create a stronger effect than the verbal utterances. And the immediate feedback of such effects

during the reflection session might make students more aware of body language, and more receptive to using it in the upcoming drama activities.

In the following activity where students were tasked to improvise the possible encounters Strickland had in France. Different from the public speech mode where the dialogic interaction was not present, other strategies were also used throughout the conversations to sustain the communication by all groups. The following text is a description of one group's performance of Strickland getting fired. Student A and B were passengers, walking past Strickland's working place. Student C was the employer of Strickland trying to fire S (Strickland):

1. A: Look at the painting! It's so... ugly! (*Pointing at the painting*)
2. B: Look at his clothes! (*Stepping back*) So dirty!
3. A: And tha...t ... smell... (*Holding nose and walking away*).
4. C: Hi Charles!
5. S: Hey man! Hey Boss! What's up? (*Loud, fast, not stopping his work*)
6. C: Look at what you are doing! (*Pointing at the easel/chair*). And what smell in your clothes! (*Gesturing his clothes*)
7. S: (*Stopping his work, smelling his clothes, holding his nose.*)
8. C: Do you know it's very...(walking closer) it's not decent when you...
9. S: (*Hands in pockets*)
10. C: Um... dealing with customers. Do not come, because you get me to lose.
11. S: So you want me do what? (*Stepping back a little, looking right into the eye of the boss*)
12. C: So, you won't come next day (*Arms crossed*). You are fired!
13. S: No! Boss! (*Reaching out hands*)

The dramatic body language was remarkable, for example, holding nose and walking away to suggest the stinky smell from Strickland's clothes (Turn 3 & 7), or crossing arms and stepping back to indicate rejection (Turn 11 & 12). Besides that, they also made use of visual deixis by gesturing to the objects

(clothes and paintings) along with their verbal utterances such as “Look at his painting” (Turn 1 & 2) to orient the listeners’ attention.

Some paralinguistic strategies were also noticeable. For example, Student A purposefully prolonged the length of the vowels of “so...” and “sme...ll” to express strong loathness and disdain (Turn 1 & 3). Discourse markers, both verbal and visual, were utilised as well when Student A and C used “and” to indicate a parallel meaning (Turn 3 & 6); and Student S and C used “so” to suggest the relation of cause and effect between what has been said and what is to be said (Turn 11 & 12). Self-repair and elaboration were prominent with Student C as he started a new clause “It’s not decent when you...” when he found it difficult to continue with “It’s very...” and then explained why he did not want Strickland to come the next day. We could also notice his use of stabilizing sounds such as “um” to buy more time for thinking, and signal that he was not finished yet (Turn 10). Change of intonation was a shared strategy among all participants in this conversation as the underlined phrases point out. For instance, Student B placed the intonational prominence, and a rising pitch, on “cloth” and “dirty” (Turn 2), and Student S on “what” (Turn 11), to indicate the key information and also the speakers’ attitude.

Similar to Kao and O’Neill’s (1998) finding, the participants’ native language also played a role in maintaining the communication. For example, the discourse “So you want me do what?” (Turn 11) is a direct translation from Chinese, meaning “So what do you want?” and the same with “You won’t come tomorrow” (Turn 12), meaning “You do not need to come tomorrow.” Besides the syntactic influence from Chinese language, they also took the semantic meaning of Chinese and created new phrases such as “You get me to lose”, meaning that “You embarrassed me” (Turn 10). However, in resemblance to Kao and O’Neill’s (1998) observation, these directly translated phrases were readily comprehensible by the participants. Though they were able to sustain the conversation, Kao and O’Neill (1998) warned that it might not be a good sign in the long run, since this might create “classroom pidgin” (p. 108). Therefore, in the future praxis, I need to be attentive to such mistakes

and feedback the right expressions within the right context in time during the reflection sessions.

In other groups, strategies such as modality were used to strike a productive relationship in order to get what the speaker wanted. For example, Group 1 presented the conversation between Strickland and the customers:

1. A: Excuse me, Mr. Strickland. Can you draw a picture for me?
(*Hands cupped in front*)
2. S: No. (*No eye contact*)
3. A: Oh, come on, Mr. Strickland. I will pay you a million dollars. Will you draw a picture for me?
4. S: I don't care (*word by word*). Just (*pause*) go.
5. A Oh... so pity! (*Run away, with hands hiding face*)

Student A addressed the interlocutor's name "Mr. Strickland" each time, and used verbal modalities such as "Come on!" and non-verbal ones (hands cupped together, a typical wishing gesture by girls) in order not to be refused. However, as Student A (Girl 9) reported during the interview, when she was declined her request twice, she actually felt so sad that she simply wanted to speak more to change his mind, and the difference from the role plays she participated in her regular English classes was her emotional reaction.

The discourse of "Can you draw a painting for me?" presents totally disparate meanings in a CLT communication setting and a drama situation. In a CLT situational conversation, the answer is usually rigidly written, such as "Sure, what do you want?" for students to practise how to deal with a customer. In a drama activity, however, it was to generate a desired result, and the response of the interlocutor was not predictable, which, when it went against the wish of the speaker, might create strong feelings in the speaker and hence make it matter to them (Wagner, 1998).

Conclusion

The analysis of classroom interaction, both in teacher-student and student-student relationships, has shown an overall characteristic of a horizontal and ensemble relationship among the participants, which was particularly salient among adult learners who have more life experience and their own moral standards. Moreover, the exploration of the affective elements has suggested a general emotional response at both *imaginary* and also *realistic* levels. Furthermore, examination of the language produced in different drama units also indicates that the drama work, by and large, created opportunities for various registers to take place, and promoted genuine communication through encouraging participants to make use of body language and other communication strategies.

However, it should be noted that I was not trying to propose that this one single workshop could work to improve students' English speaking, and make them effective English speakers, for language learning is a long, continuing process. It was only to take a close look at the prominent issues that arose in the practice of teaching English through process drama in a Chinese tertiary context, and identify problems that may provide ideas and further inquiries for future practices.

For example, with adult learners who are more critical toward new things, it is even more crucial to make the learning environment learner-centred and engage them both emotionally and cognitively by selecting relevant themes to work on in the future. In terms of the language part, I was more attentive to the drama effect than the language produced by the participants in the session, and consequently I failed to notice and feedback the right intonation and vocabulary to the participants. Meanwhile, in the analysis of the findings, more questions that are worth researching rose as well. For instance, does the language teacher have to be a good actor in order to offer creative physicalisation, or does the quality of acting matter in the evaluation of language performance, particularly in a rhetoric setting?

As a first attempt to teach English through drama, and also the first attempt to research this pedagogy in a Chinese tertiary context, the findings generated might not be applicable in other teaching practices. But the value here is that, it provides insights for my future practice, and may be of reference for others who are also interested in this field.

Note

- 1 This paper emerged from my MA dissertation at the University of Warwick, with Professor Joe Winston as my supervisor.

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此為上文摘要中譯

過程戲劇對有效英語口語表達的 個案研究

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摘要

本文為作者在中國一間高校內，以過程戲劇用於英語作為第二語言的英語教學的個案研究；工作坊改編自英國小說《月亮與六便士》，研究目的是探索戲劇展開對參與者進行有效英語口語表達的影響。作者嘗試分析該案例中的突出現象，同時反思自己執行過程中的不足，為此後的教學提供參考。作者梳理了戲劇及語言習得的社會符號建構理論，為將過程戲劇應用到英語作為第二語言的高校英語課堂提供基礎理論。文章介紹了教案故事及研究方法，並結合相關理論，從教師及學生雙方的角度對資料做三方面分析：課堂關係、情緒喚醒與語言產出，以及英語口語表達，並提出了一些在以後的教學中須改進之處，以及可繼續研究的問題。

關鍵字：過程戲劇；建構理論；情緒喚醒；肢體語言；文本分析

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