

The Benefits of Implementing Drama-Based Instruction into Language Arts Lessons

by

Satya d'Amours
Bachelor of Education, University of Victoria, 2014

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In the Area of Language and Literacy

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

© Satya d'Amours, 2017
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This Project may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

Abstract

The purpose of this project was to explore various ways in which drama-based instruction can be implemented into language arts lessons in primary schools. Particular focus was placed on possible benefits in the areas of oral language, reading and writing skills within the context of an international school in Japan with an ethnically and culturally diverse student population. The literature reviewed included social constructivism, functions of language, multiliteracies and multimodality in order to examine the evidence supporting the implementation of such an approach to teaching and learning that meets the unique needs of the learners. In Chapter Three, I drew on my learning in Chapter Two in order to give examples of my plans to implement drama-based instruction into my language arts lessons with the goal of helping my students improve their oral language, reading and writing skills.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Background and Recent Experiences.....	1
Defining Drama-Based Instruction.....	2
Curricular Connections.....	3
Project Overview.....	4
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	5
Theoretical Framework.....	5
Sociocultural Theory.....	5
Conceptual Frameworks.....	7
Gee’s Discourse/discourse.....	7
Multiliteracies.....	9
Multimodality.....	11
Functions of Language.....	13
The Value of Integrating Drama in Primary Classes.....	16
Drama and Reading.....	19
Drama and Writing.....	23
Drama and Oral Discourse.....	25
Summary.....	28
Chapter 3: Application of Drama-based Instruction in my Classroom.....	29
Applying Theoretical Foundations.....	29
Sociocultural Theory.....	29
Multiliteracies and Multimodality.....	33

Functions of Language.....	35
Practical Applications.....	37
Oral Language Skills.....	37
Reading Skills.....	39
Writing Skills.....	40
Conclusion.....	43
References.....	44

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background and Recent Experiences

During my childhood and teenage years, I was actively involved in my drama classes at school. I especially enjoyed the feeling of vicariously experiencing someone else's emotions while expressing them in front of an audience. Since I was not a very confident writer, when participating in productions I especially enjoyed the freedom to use other modes of expression, such as voice, gesture and other body movements. Even after graduating from high school, I took part in a local theatre group in Victoria to pursue my passion. While I had already decided not to choose acting as a career, I still enjoyed the social and communicative aspect of being a part of a drama community. Looking back, I realize that when I participated in any activities at school related to drama or theatre, it was almost always in isolation from other subject areas. For example, I often took part in annual school-wide theatre productions, performed skits with other students at school festivals, or took drama classes as an elective. However, I recall only few incidents in which teachers integrated drama-based activities into subjects, such as language arts, math, social studies or science. While pursuing my Master of Education degree, I began to notice in readings that drama-based activities offer students valuable opportunities to engage in learning in various ways. Reflecting back on my own experiences growing up as a would-be writer who lacked confidence, I began to understand the reasons why I found drama to be such an empowering form of expression.

Recently, for the first time, I taught a transdisciplinary inquiry-based unit on dramatic expression to my Grade 1 students during which time I guided them in various drama activities. I was amazed by the impact drama had on my learners, especially on those who had previously tended to shy away from expressing themselves in front of an audience or others who had lacked the skills or confidence to communicate with others. Throughout the

unit, most of my students, including those who had previously been considered by teachers to have behavioural challenges, demonstrated clear signs of engagement while expressing themselves through multiple modalities. I believe this change resulted from the wide range of available designs, or more specifically, “found and findable resources for meaning: culture, context and purpose-specific patterns and conventions of meaning making” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 176). In other words, the variety of available designs through drama-based activities allowed my students to make meaning in new ways compared to previous lessons conducted without the use of drama.

From my own personal background combined with recent experiences, I decided to focus my Master of Education project on how teachers can integrate drama-based instruction into language arts lessons, and the benefits this approach may have on literacy skills for students in the primary grades.

Defining Drama-based Instruction

What is drama-based instruction? In order to answer this question, the concept of drama itself must first be defined. Edmiston (2007) explains that classroom drama is “the use of pretend play for curricular ends (Peter, 2003) that is shaped to create some dramatic form (O'Neill, 1995) where adults actively engage alongside students, both to socially imagine other spaces and worlds and to extend children's learning” (Heathcote, 1972) (p. 338). In this sense, drama-based instruction aligns well with social constructivist perspectives since it offers opportunities for students to create meaning through student-centred learning as they interact with the teacher and other students in the class. Keeping this definition in mind, drama-based instruction is an umbrella term which encompasses various approaches to integrating drama into teaching, such as process drama, story drama, creative drama and sociodrama. It is “an exploratory and experiential approach to learning that involves the interaction of mind and knowledge; sensory and kinesthetic experiences; evaluation and

decision making; understanding of the how, the why and why not of complex issues” (Sengun & Iskenderoglu, 2010, p. 1214).

Curricular Connections

In the International Baccalaureate Scope and Sequence document for the Primary Years Programme (International Baccalaureate, 2009), the power of communication through oral language for the purpose of developing ideas is highlighted. Specifically, it is stated in the document that “In an inquiry-based learning environment, oral language exposes the thinking of the learner. It is a means by which ‘inner speech’ (Vygotsky, 1999) can be communicated and shared to negotiate and construct meaning and develop deeper levels of understanding” (International Baccalaureate, 2009, p. 8). Curricular connections to drama are also evident in the document. For example, it is stated in the learning outcomes for phase 2 (Grades 1 and 2) that learners “use body language in mime and role play to communicate ideas and feelings visually” (International Baccalaureate, 2009, p. 13), and in phase 3 (Grades 3 and 4) that learners “participate in a variety of dramatic activities, for example, role play, puppet theatre, dramatization of familiar stories and poems” (p. 10). It is evident that drama is an integral part of this curriculum, and that the flexibility of a transdisciplinary program actually encourages teachers to integrate subjects such as drama into literacy instruction in order to improve skills such as reading, writing and oral communication. Such flexibility is especially important to have in my classroom environment since I currently work at an international school in Japan where students come from multiple ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In such a multilingual and multicultural learning environment, it is especially important that teachers provide the children various avenues through which they can communicate and express themselves effectively.

Project Overview

In Chapter 2, I begin by discussing drama-based instruction from the theoretical frameworks of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Smagorinsky, 2013), multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; New London Group, 1996), multimodality (Jewitt, 2009; Kress & Jewitt, 2003; Albers & Harste, 2007) and functions of language (Halliday, 1969; Gee, 2001). I then review the literature on the general benefits of integrating drama-based instruction into lessons in primary schools, such as its effects on the development of empathy in students, increased achievements in math, as well as the promotion of positive identity development for students with special needs (Adomat, 2012; Freebody, 2013; Edmiston, 2007). Afterwards, I proceed to reviewing the literature on how drama-based instruction influences learning in the area of language arts. In particular, I provide evidence on how teaching through drama can help students show development in their reading, oral language and writing skills (Harden, 2015; Rozansky & Santos, 2009; Ulas, 2008).

In Chapter 3, I discuss how drama-based learning could be used in primary classes with the goal of improving reading, writing and oral language skills. Based on the findings from the literature I reviewed in Chapter 2, I propose sample lessons along with accompanying resources for students and teachers to use for the lessons and for assessments. Ideally, this project will assist teachers who seldom teach through drama in developing an understanding of drama-based instruction, and offer examples of how drama-based lessons could be taught to students in primary schools.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

As described in Chapter 1, many curricular connections can be made in implementing drama-based instruction into various lessons. In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory, the conceptual frameworks of Gee's Discourse/discourse, multiliteracies, multimodality, and Halliday's functions of language. I present findings from various studies that have indicated several academic benefits as well as various social and emotional effects of integrating drama into primary schools. Drama-based instruction has also been found to enrich learning experiences for English Language Learners as well as for students who are considered to have special needs. Within the body of research concerning teaching through drama, I review the literature with regard to the value of integrating drama-based instruction into primary schools with particular emphasis on its beneficial effects on student reading, writing, and oral language skills. Incorporating drama into the core curriculum of primary schools offers the potential to significantly enhance and expand the overall learning experience of primary school students from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural theory.

The social and interactive nature of drama can be situated in the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory. Vygotsky (1978) posited that people gain understanding by co-creating information together in social contexts. Summarizing key ideas in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Smagorinsky (2007) explained how there is a strong link between both people's thinking and behaviour, and social environments. The way people think impacts their surroundings which they symbolically and physically create, while their thinking is also influenced by their environments.

A student's literacy development is highly influenced by the cultural and social contexts in which the child grows up (Davidson, 2010). Indeed, what a child learns and how he or she thinks is deeply affected by the social interactions which take place in various contexts with others who possess more knowledge (Davidson; Vygotsky, 1978). As a child learns to socialize with people within the family and community, factors such as societal values, beliefs, and practices influence perceptions and how he or she understands the world (Davidson, 2010). In other words, social groups develop unique ways to organize language which are particular to the contexts and environments in which they live.

But how do children become more knowledgeable and increase their skills within social groups? One of Vygotsky's most well-known constructs is his work regarding the zone of proximal development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky (1978), skills and tasks can be placed into the following categories: what a child can do independently, cannot complete even with support, and can complete with help and guidance. A task which a person is able to do with support is considered to be within the ZPD; therefore, with scaffolding, such a student will eventually learn to perform the task independently. According to Wagner (1998) "teacher-led drama in the classroom is a powerfully social act which engages the intellect and the emotions, it is an activity that actively engages children in learning in their ZPD" (p. 21). Some researchers even argue that by taking part in drama-based activities, children create ZPDs for each other because drama allows them to collaborate with each other as they take on the language and roles of adults (Macy, 2016). This mental shift into the adult world raises the children into a cognitive level which is above their actual level (Macy). In this sense, drama-based instruction can provide students with opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills within their ZPD as they work together in hypothetical situations and settings which resemble real life. Vygotsky emphasized that since learning is a social process, people increase their knowledge and understandings through external and internal dialogues with

others (Smagorinsky, 2007). In other words, even when a person is alone, the thinking process always consists of dialogues with others, even if the conversation actually took place in the distant past (Smagorinsky). Participation in drama-based activities that are within children's ZPDs can result in children constructing knowledge and understandings as they interact with their peers in unfamiliar situations created through drama.

Conceptual Frameworks

Gee's Discourse/discourse.

According to Gee (2015), "Discourse" with a capital "D" represents "saying (writing) – doing – being – valuing – believing combinations" (p. 6). "Discourses are ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes" (Gee, 2015, pp. 6-7). Since Discourses are learned through social interactions with people who have already achieved fluency, they cannot be mastered through overt instruction (Gee). The primary Discourse is learned through interactions at home and with peer groups, while secondary Discourses are acquired through social institutions outside of a home in more public settings, such as community groups, schools, organizations and businesses (Gee). Secondary Discourses can be further categorized into dominant Discourses – "secondary Discourses the mastery of which, at a particular place and time, brings within the (potential) acquisition of social 'goods' (money, prestige, status, etc.)" (Gee, 2015, p. 8), and non-dominant Discourses – "the mastery of which often brings solidarity with a particular social network, but not wider status and social goods in the society at large" (Gee, 2015, p. 8).

According to Gee (2015), students who are not fluent in a dominant Discourse in a particular school environment could be disadvantaged because it can often be challenging for people to fully master the use of a dominant Discourse, since the acquisition of a Discourse relies heavily on whether or not the individual has access to social institutions related to the

target Discourse. In schools where students come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, white middle class values often receive undue emphasis because they are considered the most valid and deserving of respect. (Smagorinsky, 2013). Such a narrow outlook from teachers and the rest of the school community can give rise to a condition known as dysphoria among students from non-dominant backgrounds, in which people feel inferior to others as a result of having being treated as inferiors, thereby resulting in negative feelings towards school in general. For such students, this negative pattern can lead to a vicious cycle of thoughts and emotions which can transform school into an alienating place.

Prior to and during the 1960s and 70s, educators took a deficit approach to education, in which the culture and language of people from low socioeconomic backgrounds as well as diverse ethnicities were considered inferior to the white, middle-class ways of living, and were therefore in need of assimilation to acquire the dominant Discourse (Paris, 2012). The 1970's and 80's saw a progressive shift during which time the "difference approaches" (Paris, 2012, p. 94) became the prominent view in which the culture, languages and literacies of ethnic minorities were perceived as equal to the dominant culture. Yet, even with this shift in perspective, the emphasis still remained on all students acquiring the dominant Discourse, regardless of their cultures or ways of living. Both the deficit approach and difference approaches led to students losing their language, culture and heritage in order to be successful in schools (Paris, 2012). From this sociocultural standpoint, "literacy practice(s)" rather than "literacy skill(s)" continue to develop in and outside of school throughout a person's life, since literacy is indeed a practice in which an individual engages with others in social contexts (Davidson, 2010, p. 250). In other words, there are various forms of literacy depending on a child's background and past social experiences. It is recommended that such differences be valued and celebrated rather than placing more importance in the literacy practices of dominant cultural groups over other culturally and socially diverse groups

(Davidson). Within the context of teaching through drama, teachers can provide the necessary scaffolding as students interact with each other through drama-based activities and work towards achieving fluency in a particular target Discourse. Furthermore, in order to value various forms of literacies and ways of representing and expressing meaning, teachers need to expand their definitions of what has traditionally been understood as literacy.

Multiliteracies.

The purpose of literacy instruction has changed in recent years (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Previously, in what the New London Group (1996) describes as the old economy, people were primarily trained to become workers within hierarchical command structures. The goal of literacy education was for teachers to transmit language rules to students so that they could eventually join workforces where they would be able to follow orders. Such an educational system often led to rote learning, in which students were merely viewed as empty vessels to be filled with the knowledge provided by the teachers. In the new economy, society is seen to be composed of various subcultures based on components such as generation, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or gender (New London Group). The different lifeworlds or “spaces for community life where local and specific meanings can be made” (New London Group, 1996, p. 70) leads to variations in speech in terms of intonation, grammar, gesture, and general ways of communicating and interacting with others. Such changes in modern society have led to workforces consisting of individuals who can think independently rather than simply follow orders. Stated differently, in contrast to hierarchical command structures which were prevalent in the old economy, modern workplaces require individuals from different lifeworlds to work as a team (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

The New London Group (1996) also developed a pedagogy of multiliteracies “based on the assumption that the human mind is embodied, situated, and social” (p. 82). According to the New London Group, multiliteracies pedagogy involves the complex integration of the

following four components: Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing and Transformed Practice. Situated Practice occurs when learning takes place towards a mastery of skills, knowledge or understanding through an immersion of a person into a community of capable learners who have multiple background knowledge and experiences. This sociocultural perspective is based on the concept that human knowledge is gained only upon the condition that an individual is placed in heavily contextualized experiences. Throughout Situated Practice, evaluation should be used to guide students to develop further as community members rather than as a form of judgement. Overt Instruction refers to the explicit instruction provided by community experts through scaffolded learning activities (New London Group). It includes the collaboration which takes place between the teacher and student in which the student works towards accomplishing a goal which the individual would find too challenging to reach without support while also enabling the student to become aware of what is being taught. The use of metalanguages – “languages of reflective generalization that describe the form, content, and function of the discourses of practice” (New London Group, 1996, p. 86) – is a defining feature of Overt Instruction. Evaluation in Overt Instruction should also be used to guide students towards the development of more complex and advanced thoughts and actions.

Ideally, the Critical Framing component enables students to “denaturalize” (New London Group, 1996, p. 86) from both the growing mastery acquired through Situated Practice as well as from the understanding gained through Overt Instruction in order to interpret and critique their new learning from both a personal and theoretical perspective. In other words, the new knowledge is taken out of its original discourse and placed into a wider context so that the student learns to critique, apply, and eventually innovate within both old and new communities. Moreover, Critical Framing forms the basis for Transformed Practice, the last component of the pedagogy of multiliteracies. Transformed Practice refers to the

process of practicing and assessing what has been learned by transforming new understandings and knowledge to design new meanings in new cultural contexts (New London Group). Throughout Transformed Practice, students work in a reflective manner to apply and revise their learning towards their own goals and values. Transformed Practice also allows opportunities for experts to conduct situated and contextualized assessments in order to evaluate if learners have truly understood the new knowledge.

Enacting a pedagogy of multiliteracies can enable learners to create meaning through a variety of available designs. In classes made up of students from various lifeworlds, it becomes increasingly important that learning is accessible for all learners and not only accessible to students who have acquired the dominant Discourse. Traditional forms of education which tend to limit literacy to written language lacks the flexibility needed in diverse work environments, thus limiting opportunities for individuals to construct meaning, think creatively and innovate (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). In the new economy, it is necessary for students to be exposed to and proficient in the use of other forms of literacy, especially those prevalent in the technologically rich Western world in which we live today. Consequently, there has been a need for language instruction to encompass diverse ways to construct as well as present knowledge and understanding through multiple modes of representation.

Multimodality.

Multimodality describes approaches which consider communication and representation to include not only language but a range of communicational forms, such as image, posture, gesture, and gaze, which all share an equal contribution to meaning (Jewitt, 2009). “The basic assumption that runs through multimodality is that meanings are made, distributed, received, interpreted and remade in interpretation through many representational and communicative modes – not just through language – whether as speech or as writing”

(Jewitt, 2009, p. 14). For example, while gaze, gesture and posture are often considered to support communication through speech, multimodal researchers assert that language is only one of many modes which can be used to create meaning (Jewitt, 2009). Moreover, according to a multimodality approach, modes are usually combined to create meaning and therefore rarely occur alone (Jewitt & Kress, 2003, p. 2). Each mode has its own set of semiotic resources for meaning-making, influencing the possibilities and constraints in communicating through the particular mode. Furthermore, modes are shaped through cultural, historical and social uses and are thus situated to specific contexts and circumstances. Therefore, the way teachers choose available modes of communication in class can greatly influence how learners understand certain concepts, thereby indicating the importance of teachers to not exclusively consider language as the primary mode of communication. According to Jewitt (2009), teachers should consider modes other than language, such as gesture, voice, and gaze, as resources for meaning-making. Moreover, multimodal meaning-making is considered to be social in nature, thus being influenced by the motivation and interests of the people involved. In such social contexts, learners build meaning through the process of interpreting signs by choosing, adapting and revising meaning.

In multimodal theory, Kress and Jewitt (2003) identify the following components as constituting the representation of meaning: materiality, framing, design, and function (Albers & Harste, 2007). *Materiality* refers to the materials used to represent meaning in terms of the qualities which are considered acceptable within a particular culture. *Framing* involves how elements of a visual composition work together, connect, or disconnect with each other. *Design* refers to the way people create their representations using the resources available at the time, and *production* describes “the creation and organization of the representation, the actual product or text (song, artwork, dance, play, photograph, webpage, and so on), as well as the technical skills (skills of the hand, eye, ear, body) used when working with media in

creating the text” (Albers & Harste, 2007, p. 14). When multimodal meaning-making is encouraged in classes, students can play with media and invent new ways to use familiar materials, such as photographs, video and other forms of visual texts (Albers & Harste).

In the context of a drama lesson, students learn to use space, voice, body language, posture, music gestures, and so on as they work and communicate with their peers in order to create new representations. Becoming fluent in understanding, interpreting and producing meaning through multiple modes of representation is valuable in today’s society, which often demands a variety of skills beyond that which is needed in traditional literacy such as reading and writing text. Using drama in flexible, collaborative and social learning environments can help students express themselves in new ways, as they communicate through multiple semiotic resources. Furthermore, as students produce language and gestures in the process of dramatic self-expression, various functions of language may be used.

Functions of language.

Contrary to popular belief that the primary purpose of language is to convey information, Halliday (1969) argues that human languages are used for many more functions. He explains that some students may struggle in school because they have not been sufficiently exposed to a particular function of language. As well, Halliday notes that in some classrooms students experience limited opportunities to produce or be exposed to language for different functions. The use of language during drama-based instruction can be supported by Halliday’s concept of the following functions of language: the instrumental model, regulatory model, interactional model, personal model, heuristic model, imaginative model, and representational model. In particular, since drama-based instruction encourages children to produce language in socially meaningful and imaginative contexts, the imaginative and interactional models are often used as students interact through drama with their peers. More specifically, the imaginative model of language can be seen as children produce language as

if they were in different contexts – speaking to people and characters with whom they would seldom interact in daily life. Moreover, the interactional model is used as students communicate with each another in social contexts.

Similarly, Gee (2001) argues that there are two primary functions in human languages: situated action and perspective taking. He explains that meaning in language is created based on the first function of language, situated action, which is experienced by people in the material and social world. According to this view, experiences which include perceptions, feelings and interactions are stored in the mind as something similar to dynamic images or movies rather than as abstract propositions or language. In this sense, what gives meaning to language are value-laden representations of experience; however, such so-called images or movies are not stored as language themselves but rather as emotions and attitudes which give meaning to language (Gee). The second function of language, perspective taking, is based on the idea that the combination of words and grammar is a means of expression of the perspectives held by the person producing the language. In this sense, no words are ever simply neutral, and they always embed the perspective which has been taken. Children learn how words and grammar can be used to express particular perspectives as they gradually realize through dialogues that others can have different perspectives from their own. Then, as children begin to imitate and simulate the perspective which has been taken by more developmentally advanced peers or adults, they start to internalize the intentions behind the spoken words (Gee). In drama, students take on the roles of different characters in a variety of situations, enabling them to vicariously experience how factors such as the plot and setting, as well as the personality and motivation of the characters, can influence the use of language. Through drama-based activities, students can make connections between the context of the scene and the language being used.

Cope and Kalantzis (2009) argue that there is no “standard” version of English because the language is influenced by various subcultural, ethnic, professional, and educational contexts to which the person belongs. The social and interactive nature of drama-based learning offers students various opportunities to interact with others through their familiar versions of English, while at the same time engaging them in talk through the imaginative function of hearing and producing language in unfamiliar contexts.

According to Barnes (2008), students in many traditional top-down school settings are taught with expectations for them to produce what he calls “final draft speech.” This tendency includes the goal of presenting polished ideas rather than allowing students to communicate their opinions as they naturally form. Such teachers may tend to over-correct students’ speech, indicating that talking for the purpose of presentation and evaluation is more valued than the process of students developing their own ideas. Such talk, coined by Barnes (2008) as “presentational talk,” is heavily influenced by the expectations of the audience, thus creating learning environments which are not conducive for children to develop independent thinking skills, since they are discouraged from articulating ideas as they naturally form. When a teacher expects students to constantly use presentational talk in class, the function of the talk serves as a tool by which the teacher evaluates the knowledge of students rather than as an opportunity for ideas to be shared and developed among children. In drama, it is important that students not feel pressured to always produce final-draft speech so that the function of dialogue among children can be to explore what is taking place within the world of drama.

In terms of the oral language which takes place in classrooms, dialogic talk – “where both teachers and students (make) substantial and significant contributions to classroom talk and to learning in general” (Edwards-Groves, Anstey, & Bull, 2013, p. 12) – can be achieved through the two following functions of talk produced by the teacher:

communal functions and epistemic functions (Rubin, 1990). Researchers have shown that it is more effective for language to be delivered using a communal, supportive and epistemic approach than for it to focus on the surface features of the language, such as the use of open questions (Boyd & Markarian, 2015). Moreover, when teachers and students engage in dialogic talk, this type of discourse can model and support thinking as well as inquiry so that learners are encouraged to contribute their ideas, thus leading to the active production and exchange of oral language (Boyd & Markarian). According to Rubin (1990), communal or relational functions build trusting relationships among the individuals participating in the oral discourse in which ideas and opinions are developed and shared. In drama-based lessons, including story drama or process drama, students may become more comfortable in working with each other as they engage in various trust-building activities. In contrast, the epistemic or cognitive functions represent individual perceptions of the world as knowledge. Drama-based instruction, an approach to learning which places value on the interactions and communication between students, engages students in exploratory talk in social environments to enable them to co-construct knowledge and understandings, thereby leading to the many benefits described in the following section.

The Value of Integrating Drama in Primary Classes

Although an extensive literature exists in which scholars acknowledge the value of integrating drama into various lessons, few researchers have investigated the benefits of teaching children in lower primary settings through drama-based instruction (Adomat, 2012). The term “drama-based instruction” is used as an umbrella term which encompasses various approaches to integrating drama into teaching, such as process drama, creative drama and sociodrama. It is “an exploratory and experiential approach to learning that involves the interaction of mind and knowledge; sensory and kinesthetic experiences; evaluation and

decision making; understanding of the how, the why and why not of complex issues” (Sengun & Iskenderoglu, 2010, p. 1214).

One benefit of integrating drama in primary grades is the development of empathy (McLennan, 2008). Sociodrama, a branch of drama-based instruction which gives opportunities for participants to explore social problems through acting out dramatic roles, can be used to help promote caring behaviour and to create nurturing learning environments (McLennan). This particular use of drama distinguishes itself from other forms of drama-based instruction, such as process drama or creative drama, since the students themselves decide on the issues to be explored through drama (McLennan). The participants are also in charge of deciding on the roles each student plays, which encourages them “to develop self-confidence and self-expression through risk-taking and exploration in activities that explore real life personal feelings and situations” (McLennan, 2008, p. 453). For example, students may choose to explore a situation in which bullying is taking place at school and investigate emotions which are invoked from the perspectives of the bully, the bullied and the bystanders. In such a way, sociodrama can be used as a tool to help students develop empathy by experiencing various social situations which they may otherwise not encounter, thereby providing opportunities for them to deeply consider cultural stereotypes as well as other social issues (Freebody, 2013).

For example, Joronen, Konu, Rankin and Astedt-Kurki (2011) conducted a study in order to evaluate the effects of implementing a drama program on incidents of bullying. The participants were 190 Grade 4 and 5 students recruited from two primary schools with similar demographics and socioeconomic backgrounds in southern Finland. Seventy percent of the students lived with both biological parents, and 98% of them were of Finnish heritage. In one school, a drama program was implemented in two classes, whereas two classes in the other school received no intervention. The drama program consisted of in-class drama sessions,

follow-up activities at home, and three parent information evenings regarding issues of social well-being which took place among the particular group of students. The foci of the drama program were to improve empathy, social competence, student-teacher interaction, parent-child interaction as well as the recognition of emotions and values. Home activities involved interactive activities between parents and children, such as the student interviewing the parent about bullying and school life during his or her childhood. Data were collected using a self-administrated anonymous questionnaire with an identifying code linking the pre-test and post-test data. The questionnaire included questions related to demographic variables, such as age, grade, gender and family structure, while parents provided additional information on their education. The questionnaires were administered during the classes at school. Data were analyzed first through statistical analysis of pre-test and post-test data using a software program. Then an evaluation was made of the differences between pre-test and post-test data, followed by using repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) to assess changes in social relationships in the classroom. The results indicated that the intervention group experienced significant improvement with regard to the social relationships in the class, while the control group showed little improvement. Moreover, according to the analysis of categorical data regarding bullying experiences based on answers to the questions, incidents of bullying decreased in the post-test as compared to the pre-test. Longitudinal studies need to take place to determine possible long-term effects of such programs, and since the measure of bullying focused on only behavioural change, further studies need to measure attitudes towards bullying as well as self-efficacy. However, results from the study indicated that applied drama and theatre methods in classrooms may lead to improvements in social relationships among children at school. The use of drama in schools has also been found to help students with special needs. Edmiston (2007) believes that drama leads to positive identity development, especially for students with special needs. From a social constructivist

perspective, “identities are formed as people consistently position others with more or less power, authority, and status” (Edmiston, 2007, p. 343). When children are treated by others as incompetent and/or disabled, they can develop negative self-images which correspond to their ideas of how they are viewed by others, also known as dysphoria (Edmiston; Smagorinsky, 2013). In contrast, when students are treated as competent individuals as they take part in drama, they can gradually position themselves with power and authority as they learn to use their imagination to foster perspectives and thinking habits of role models while undertaking tasks which they would not perform in their own lives (Edmiston). Thus, imaginative dramatic play is beneficial to students not only in mainstream classes but in creating inclusive and empowering learning communities as well.

Drama and Reading

Various researchers have highlighted the positive effects drama can have on reading achievements of students. According to O’Sullivan and McGonigle (2010), a national project in England called The Power of Reading (Centre for Literacy in Primary Education) has reported that drama-based teaching approaches can help to develop the enjoyment and overall comprehension skills of students. Rozansky and Santos (2009) also found that the use of drama leads to improvements in students’ ability to respond critically to texts. Specifically, findings from their study indicated that the use of image theatre – a drama-based teaching approach in which participants create sculptures using their own bodies – helped students in Grade 3 to look at the text from the viewpoints of multiple characters (Rozansky & Santos). Moreover, the results showed that students made use of reading strategies such as inferencing, aligning themselves with characters, and re-reading the text to find evidence for their claims or disagreements.

Wells and Sandretto (2016) also argue that the use of process drama can lead to deeper collaborative engagement and thinking about the text. They conducted a quantitative

research study in which two teachers from a primary school used process drama in their literacy programme. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of implementing process drama into literacy lessons. Specifically, the framework of the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1997) was employed. This model was created based on the premise that students should develop a toolkit of practices to use with a variety of text types. The participants were students in years 1-2 (children ages 5-6) and years 3-4 (children ages 7-8) at a rural school in New Zealand. During the first term of the school year, the teachers started the project by taking part in a drama class to experience participating in a process drama lesson. Both teachers attended a workshop where they were introduced to multiliteracies, the Four Resources Model, and process drama. During the second term, each teacher taught process drama based lessons which were appropriate to the students' age groups and interests. The researchers videotaped the lessons which were later watched by the teachers as they read through the lesson transcripts. This process of the teachers reflecting on their own lessons by using video tapes and transcripts took place twice, once in the second term and once in the third term. Data were collected from the teachers' initial and exit interviews, from the transcripts of lessons and meetings of the teachers and researchers, and from the researchers' field notes. All of the transcripts were imported into a qualitative data analysis tool for collaborative data analysis. Each researcher analyzed the data set and discussed key themes to answer the following question: What are some possible affordances of using process drama pedagogy in the literacy programme? Findings from the study indicated that the participation in process drama can help students to develop as text users, meaning makers and text analysts. In other words, the students demonstrated growth with regards to their abilities to consider the purpose and use of text as well as to comprehend and critically analyze what they read. In short, the findings indicated that the use of drama-based instruction offered multiple benefits for students to increase their overall reading skills.

Adomat (2010) also explored how a type of drama activity called performative responses can enable students to create and express meaning of stories through dramatic interpretations of texts through multiple modalities. During a six-month qualitative study, the researcher inquired into how this approach can help learners build literary understanding in creative and imaginative ways. The participants were eight students (five boys and three girls) in a Grade 2 class attending an elementary school in a rural area close to a city on the east coast of the United States. Every week, the students participated in a picture book read-aloud which was led by their classroom teacher. Data from 16 read-aloud sessions over six months were collected in the forms of videotapes, audiotapes and transcriptions. Oral responses were categorized using Sipe's five categories of literary understanding: analytical, intertextual, personal, transparent, and performative responses. Adomat developed the following subcategories for performative responses from the collected data: mime and gestures, sound effects and vocal intonations, characterizations and spontaneous dramatizations. Findings from the study indicated that most of the students showed more active participation in a small group discussion setting when compared to discussing responses as a whole class, in which case they tended to be more quiet. The study is significant because it demonstrated that performative responses can allow students to interact with stories in multimodal ways in which they "have agency in creating their own curriculum and in using texts as springboards for their own interpretive directions" (Adomat, 2010, p. 219). Moreover, the author provided evidence which may encourage teachers to avoid using I-R-E patterned dialogues in which the teacher *initiates* a question to which a student *responds*, followed by the teacher *evaluating* the response. In contrast, findings from the study offer evidence on how drama-based approaches, such as performative responses, can be used by teachers to encourage students to construct meaning through open-ended dialogues which bring together personal, social and cultural responses. Indeed, spontaneous

dramatizations can help learners increase their comprehension as they immerse themselves into the story while deepening their understanding of story elements, such as plot, characters, and mood.

Adomat (2012) also investigated how drama activities influenced the students' comprehension of stories. This seven-month qualitative study took place at an elementary school located in a suburban area of the United States. The participants were 10 students, eight European-American and two Latino children, from two Grade 1 classes who qualified for supplemental reading instruction. This study was situated in the following three drama approaches in education: the use of drama to learn about other subjects; process drama which utilizes various theatre techniques; and story drama, in which stories are used as an entrance to drama activities. The purpose of the study was to investigate how the implementation of drama influenced the literacy skills and engagement of young students. Process-oriented drama techniques such as tableaux, hotseating, and role play were used in small groups in order to help students explore the meaning of the stories. Data were collected through audiotapes, videotapes, transcripts, interviews with teachers, observations, and student reflections. Data analysis took place in the form of category coding of how children constructed literary understanding through drama using a constant comparative method. Results showed that children expressed their understanding of text using various modalities, such as language, gesture, movement, and intonation. The study was significant because the findings suggested that the use of drama-based activities can lead to increased comprehension skills so that students can gain various viewpoints of the characters through immersion in the stories. As the studies in this section demonstrate, the use of various drama-based strategies can lead to improved achievements in the overall reading skills of students.

Drama and Writing

In addition to the positive effects for reading comprehension skills, several benefits have been reported which indicate how the integration of drama improves students' writing skills. Firstly, the use of drama as a medium for students to create scripts for productions can help students consider the audience while crafting their stories (Lenters & Winters, 2013). Lenters and Winters believe that unlike other forms of writing, drama can help students consider the audience clearly, thereby increasing the enthusiasm the performing students feel towards having a successful production. Secondly, they note how the use of drama can influence how students view the function of the writing process. Specifically, in their opinion, it is quite common for teachers to instruct students to follow a structured writing process. Yet, the act of revising and editing the scripts as students act out the scenes through multimodal means, including oral, visual or gestural forms of communication, can help children gradually understand that the writing process seldom follows a linear process such as brainstorming, drafting and publishing. On the contrary, the act of composing can often be seen as a somewhat messy and cyclical process involving the repetition of various steps that may not follow any particular order.

The purpose of a study conducted by Anderson (2012) was to investigate the comparative impact of contextualized process drama experiences versus decontextualized language activities on students' written language ability. The participants were 16 Grade 4 students with learning disabilities and/or behaviour challenges attending an urban charter school in the United States. Over an 8-week period, the teacher led hour-long drama intervention sessions averaging twice a week, during which time students participated in both contextualized and decontextualized written language activities. The students' written language productivity was measured through an assessment of the written samples collected during the intervention period in terms of the number of total words (NTW), the number of

different words (UDW) and the number of utterances (NTT). Students' written language specificity was measured through semantic diversity. Quantitative and qualitative analyses took place in the form of coding for productivity and specificity of written language use. Findings from Anderson's study revealed an improvement in students' written language productivity and specificity when their writing was combined with contextualized dramatic arts activities as compared to the quality of their writing when combined with decontextualized language arts activities. The findings from the study are significant because they revealed the positive effects of integrating drama into written language instruction.

Dalby and Burton (2013) conducted a study to examine the impact that the "writing in role" drama-based strategy had on the writing skills of Year 4 students. The study took place in a poor socio-economic area in Stamford, Lincolnshire in the United Kingdom. Many students at the school were considered to have poor communication skills and thus in particular need of improvement in speaking and listening skills. Participants in the study were six students who were considered by teachers to be underachieving in a Year 4 class. The duration of the study or the implementation of the strategy was not provided. Purposive sampling was used in order to test intervention strategies against specific learning needs. Data were gathered through semi-structured group interviews to determine the students' views towards drama and writing before and after the intervention took place. Samples of the written pieces were also analyzed before and after the intervention to analyze the improvement of skills as well as changes in motivation and attitude. In addition, observations were made of the level of participation of students in the drama activities, creating a triangulation of data collection. Post-intervention interviews showed a dramatic increase in the motivation of students towards writing. The children also collaborated in order to create imaginative ideas for their writing. The data analysis revealed that the use of "writing in role" created opportunities for children to make connections between the dramatic experiences and

their own writing, aiding students in the development of characters as well as in the use of language. Recommendations included “writing in role” activities in writing lessons to provide learning activities through different modalities which increase motivation.

In addition to the findings from the studies mentioned above, having students take part in role-plays of various characters from stories prior to reading the text has also been found to help children “engage in attending, seeing, thinking and using language in ways that open up multiple connections with diverse texts (Grant, Hutchison, Hornsby, & Brooke, 2008, p. 69). According to Grant et al. (2008), student participation in drama-based activities before, instead of after reading the text, can help students make personal connections and empathize with characters in engaging ways so that the children can generate the language necessary in a playful manner to write in role. Branscombe (2015) described how the use of dramatic strategies such as tableau can also help students create a base on which to build ideas prior to beginning writing. Moreover, tableau as a structure is composed of elements of good stories, such as settings, characters, and events. Therefore, participating in tableaux helps students write detailed descriptions of settings and/or events, as well as write accounts as one of the characters which make up the tableau. In such a way, the use of tableau can also inspire imagination, leading to enhancement in the quality of writing (Branscombe). In connection with the writing skills is the oral discourse which takes place in most drama-based activities in lessons.

Drama and Oral Discourse

The use of drama in primary schools can help students develop their oral language skills. The ability to communicate effectively through speech is crucial to a child’s development, since it has lasting effects on language acquisition as well as permanence (Ulas, 2008). Oral language skills have also been found to lead to future reading ability as well as academic success and social skills (Spira, Bracken, & Fischel, 2005). What, then, constitutes

effective oral communication? Ulas (2008) explains that “speaking nicely, efficiently and articulately, as well as using effective voice projection” (p. 8) are the components of successful communication. Fluency – one aspect of oral communication – can be developed through the process of storytelling in the form of dramatic performances (Campbell & Hlusek, 2015). Rehearsals for performances involve repeated practice in speaking and listening skills which lead to increased fluency (Rasinski, 2012).

Ulas (2008) conducted a study that explored how the use of oral communication through drama activities can affect specific speaking skills. The participants in the 14-week long study were students in Grade 4 attending a primary school in the provincial center of Erzurum, Turkey. Using a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test-post-test control group, the students were organized into the following two groups: the control group in which 33 students experienced traditional education in connection to the curriculum; and the experimental group, in which 32 students participated in drama activities as part of the native language teaching courses at the school. Following data analysis using SPSS 10.0, tables and diagrams were used to illustrate the findings. A t-test was used to evaluate the differences between the means of the pre- and post-test levels of the experimental group. Findings from the study demonstrated a significant improvement in both the pronunciation and interpretation skills of the experimental group compared to those of the control group. Furthermore, the findings from the study suggested that student-centred experiential learning is a necessary component for improvement in oral communication skills.

Students who are English Language Learners can also experience many benefits by participating in drama-based activities. The literature indicates that while monolingual students benefit from practicing their oral language skills, English Language Learners require even more practice (Castro, Paez, Dickinson, & Frede, 2011). Greenfader, Brouillette and Farkas (2014) conducted a mixed-methods study that explored the effects of participation in

drama-based lessons on literacy skills of young English Language Learners. In this study, TAP (Teaching Artist Project), a 2-year K-2 program integrating drama/theatre and creative dance/movement into language arts lessons, was introduced into 30 San Diego schools. Participants were English Language Learners in Kindergarten and Grade 1 classes randomly chosen from schools in California associated with high poverty rates. The sample group, consisting of students from five treatment schools, was compared to the control group, made up of students attending similar schools. The sample group consisted of 902 students while the control group consisted of 4,338 students. During this year-long study, the students in the experimental group took part in weekly 50-minute drama-based lessons which were co-taught by the class teacher and a teaching artist. The lessons typically included the following components: warm-up, vocabulary, modeling, guided practice, and debriefing. All lessons integrated movement, gesture, and expression with English speaking and listening practice. Quantitative analysis was conducted as results from pre- and post-tests of the California English Language Development Tests (CELDT) were used to compare the schools in the respective groups with the key independent variable being whether the students participated in TAP. Findings indicated that students who participated in TAP experienced a significant impact in their development of oral language skills, especially among the students in Kindergarten. Moreover, although participation in TAP impacted English Language Learners the most, the project also benefited native English speakers as well. Most of the teachers participating in the study attributed the increased oral language skills to the body movements and gestures used in order to help students learn and remember newly introduced vocabulary. Specifically, students who were not yet fluent in English could infer the meaning of new words simply by observing their peers. An additional benefit was the increased engagement teachers noticed from all students, including those who were considered behavioural, and others who often shied away from expressing themselves in more teacher-led activities.

Moreover, the combination of verbal and nonverbal interactions being encouraged through creative drama activities enabled teachers to teach efficiently by providing feedback to many students all at once. In such a way, drama-based instruction not only helped native English speakers to improve their oral language skills, but could be especially influential when used for students who are English Language Learners, thus having the potential to benefit the oral communication skills of all learners in primary classrooms.

Summary

In conclusion, the literature reviewed in this section provides evidence on how the implementation of drama-based learning into various areas of a curriculum can benefit students in a primary school setting. I described how, according to the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory, the social nature of drama offers opportunities for students to collaboratively take part in drama activities in order to construct knowledge and understandings within their ZPDs. I reviewed Gee's Discourse/discourse, multiliteracies, multimodality, and Halliday's functions of language and explained how these conceptual frameworks that can be used in order to argue for the implementation of drama-based instruction in primary schools. In addition to the positive effects on emotional and social development of students, I described numerous studies from which the findings have demonstrated the benefits of using drama in classes on students' reading, writing, and oral language skills. In Chapter 3, in connection with my literature review and in relation to the theoretical foundations mentioned in Chapter 2, I explain my plans for implementing drama-based instruction into my teaching.

Chapter 3

Application of Drama-based Instruction in my Classroom

In this chapter, I explain my plans for implementing drama-based instruction into my teaching in connection with my literature review and in relation to the theoretical foundations mentioned in Chapter 2. I provide a rationale for my plans relative to the following theories: sociocultural theory, multiliteracies and functions of language. Finally, I describe practical strategies and tools that I plan to use which can easily be implemented across the curriculum with the goal of supporting the oral language, reading and writing skills among my culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse students at an international school.

Applying Theoretical Foundations

Sociocultural theory.

Vygotsky (1978) posits that learning takes place when individuals are placed in social contexts with others who possess more knowledge and deeper understanding. According to Vygotsky, as noted by Smagorinsky (2013), the act of speaking to others enables ideas to form. Therefore, the use of “final draft speech” (Barnes, 2008), or speech with no linguistic errors, should not always be expected in classrooms in which the ideas from learners are valued. Barnes (2008) argues that although there is a place in schools for the expectation of final draft speech, the over-emphasis on superficial features over ideas can actually decrease talk among students. Indeed, children should speak to learn rather than learn to speak. How then can teachers encourage children to produce language which may still be in the formative stage and thus incomplete? Learners must feel comfortable enough to be able to freely share their opinions and ideas in class, regardless of their language skills. In order to feel comfortable, I believe that the learners must feel a sense of belonging and security in their class community. For this purpose, I anticipate implementing the following drama-based activities at the beginning of my lessons in order to build a sense of a learning community.

First, it is recommended that a drama contract be created to help the community of learners to emotionally prepare themselves for their own participation in drama (Prendergast & Saxton, 2013). A drama contract clarifies the expectation that everyone will be working together and is expected to make contributions and responses. Furthermore, having such a contract establishes the types of demands which are made through drama activities, such as physical movement, oral communication, and cooperation. The process of creating and reviewing a contract can also create a safe place in which students can discuss issues or conflicts within the group, as well as reflect on their own work. Since the content of the contract is flexible, it is open to change as the group progresses through lessons. Central to a drama contract is also the process of building trust amongst the students. I would like to introduce the following trust and community-building activities designed for the beginning of units.

One such trust building activity is called “check in” (Dawson, n.d.). This activity is especially useful for the purpose of building a sense of community within the class. The learners begin by sitting in a circle along with the teacher who invites them to share how they are feeling, both emotionally and physically. The teacher may also ask the children to share what they are looking forward to in regards to their work together. In situations where time-constraints are an issue, students could also be invited to respond with gestures such as putting their thumbs up, sideways, or down to represent their overall mood. I believe that coming together as a class in such a way at the start of a lesson or even afterwards offers a time for students to deepen their bond and prepares them for subsequent tasks.

For the purpose of building trust, non-verbal communication skills, and awareness of the environment, I also anticipate having my students participate in an activity called “Columbian Hypnosis” (Dawson, n.d.). In this activity, the learners work in pairs and decide who is partner A and B. Partner A holds his or her hand about 15cm in front of partner B’s

face. Partner B is then required to follow partner A's hand wherever it goes while maintaining the same distance, as if he or she is being hypnotised. Afterwards, the partners switch roles. During this activity, the pairs must develop a sense of trust because the follower has no choice as to where his or her hand goes. A third activity I plan to implement for the purpose of team-building is called "trust walk" (Dawson, n.d.). The learners work in pairs and one student is required to close his or her eyes while being guided by the partner through a variety of obstacles. The "guide" can support the "follower" either verbally, physically, or through a combination of both approaches, and afterwards the roles are switched. This activity not only helps learners build trusting relationships but also increases spatial awareness of the environment in which the children will begin their drama work. There are many tasks which provide opportunities for students to mentally, emotionally and physically prepare themselves for drama-based learning, although some activities may not necessarily appear to be drama-based. However, it is essential that some community-building take place at the beginning of lessons and/or units, especially since entering the world of drama can be quite an emotional experience that requires children to engage in trust-related risks (Saxton & Miller, 2003).

Teachers must also be mindful that not all students will immediately feel comfortable within the learning community, and that some learners may need time to develop trusting relationships with their classmates. This notion is especially important in learning environments in which students from minorities must work towards mastering a Dominant discourse (Gee, 2015) alongside others who have already achieved fluency. Specifically, the ways people use language in order to interact and communicate with others are influenced by the cultures of the communities in which they affiliate, both past and present. For this reason, teachers should emphasize the value of open-mindedness so that all students feel their way of communicating is validated.

As a case in point, since the school in which I teach is an IB World School with students from diverse cultures, the open-minded, flexible framework of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IBPYP) is central to the delivery of the curriculum. According to the IBPYP, learners who exhibit open-mindedness are described as people who “understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience” (International Baccalaureate, 2009, p. 5). How can teachers ensure that students exhibit such a learner profile? Considering the cultural and ethnic diversity of the students at my international school, I plan to implement strategies supported by culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014) and in so doing connections are made between principles of learning and understanding of culture. Rather than regarding students from varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds as being culturally deficient, Ladson-Billings asserts that teachers must implement a variety of teaching strategies to ensure that lessons are student-centred. Instead of blaming students’ cultural, ethnic or linguistic backgrounds for their struggles at school, teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practices in considering what can be altered so that the unique strengths of all students are appreciated and valued. Based on this pedagogy, I plan to use books, videos and other teaching materials from a variety of cultures, especially those represented by the children in my class. Such international-mindedness (International Baccalaureate, 2009) becomes crucial in making the curriculum accessible for all learners, especially at a school with a multicultural and multilingual student population. Moreover, the resources I use in lessons should be representative of the differences in how people communicate with others, especially in terms of tonal and lexical differences. In such a learning environment, students from diverse backgrounds are more likely to feel comfortable in expressing themselves while others from

more dominant cultures have opportunities to develop an awareness of differences in the ways people interact within other cultures.

Multiliteracies and multimodality.

How can teachers ensure that students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds have opportunities to freely express themselves? Teaching through traditional forms of instruction tends to limit communication to written language (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). In contrast, the pedagogy of multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) enables students to construct meaning using multiple literacies and modalities. For example, as learners participate in drama-based activities, they are able to tell stories not only through written language but also by using their bodies to create movements and gestures, their voices to discuss and share ideas, and by expressing their thoughts through the use of various technological tools. Specifically, within the framework of story drama, students who work with the “teacher in role” (Saxton & Miller, 2003) may encounter a problem which must be solved. In this case, the children can be invited to solve the problem through collaboration and discussions as they work through a task requiring the use of various semiotic resources. For example, I may read aloud *The Snail and the Whale* (Donaldson & Scheffler, 2003), a storybook with a strong environmental message. The narrative begins with a snail and a whale who are travelling together through different parts of the world. Later in the story, the two characters encounter a problem when the whale can no longer swim freely in the ocean due to human influences. The loud noises created by people on speedboats cause the whale to lose its way by getting too close to the shore, rendering it incapable of returning to the ocean. In this scenario, the children could use their bodies to represent the feeling of the whale swimming freely in the ocean. Then, some children could create loud noises representing the people on speedboats while the “whales” explore how it feels when their habitat is affected. Students could later conduct research on how animal habitats are affected by human

influences and could create posters with the goal of persuading others to protect whales as well as other endangered species. In this kind of lesson, real-life issues become more relatable to learners through drama, enabling the students to think critically and take action aimed at making a difference on an issue. Such an approach allows students from diverse backgrounds to access learning, since the modes of communication are not limited to written or spoken forms of expression. In fact, the combined use of technological tools and drama invites students to engage in learning and form meaning through the use of a variety of modalities, including voice, gestures, body language, photographs, fonts, videos, words, and so on.

Such a drama-based approach to teaching also links to the four elements of the pedagogy of multiliteracies: Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing and Transformed Practice (New London Group, 1996). Specifically, Situated Practice takes place through the process of students adopting the roles of the snail and the whale while also taking on the perspective of the humans enjoying their time on speedboats. By immersing themselves in hypothetical situations through drama, students may understand the non-binary reality of such complex issues as well as the fact that sometimes sacrifices must be made for change to occur. Overt Instruction can be seen in the direct instruction I would offer as a teacher on specific skills, such as how to adjust tone and volume in voice while taking on the roles of certain characters, or how to use bodies in dynamic ways, all of which comprise skills necessary to realize the goal of increasing comprehension of literature through drama. Overt Instruction could also take place as I explicitly teach my students how to use applications such as Google Slides in order to create posters which convey persuasive messages. Critical Framing would provide opportunities for learners to assess themselves and their work, be it their skills in taking on the roles of characters or how they represented ideas in their posters. Students could use a set of criteria from a rubric or could provide feedback to

each other. Finally, Transformed Practice would take place as the children apply what they had learned from this lesson to other contexts. For example, through the exploration of the use of voice and body movements, students could demonstrate improvement in how they verbally communicate their ideas to others through presentations or discussions. Therefore, as students improve their skills in multiliteracies through exposure to the four elements, teachers could also be mindful of the functions of language to which the students should become familiar.

Functions of language.

Halliday (1969) asserts that children may struggle in school if they lack exposure to a particular function of language. For children to develop their literacy skills, it is essential that they are fully immersed in meaningful practices while being guided by experts (New London Group, 1996). How then can teachers plan drama-based lessons in a way that ensures students are exposed to functions of language with which they are unfamiliar or that offer them opportunities to use language for multiple functions? The New London Group (1996) posits that the affective and sociocultural needs of the learners must be considered. At my international school in Japan, students are from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and many speak English as an additional language. Moreover, about 60% of the student body consists of Japanese students who have either previously lived abroad or have attended a preschool and/or kindergarten in Japan where they were taught by native speakers of English. For this reason, although most of the students are able to communicate in English quite fluently, their identities tend to be deeply rooted in the Japanese culture. A major goal of my school is to foster international-minded people who, “recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.” (International Baccalaureate, 2009, p. 4). Thus, teachers must ensure that students are able to develop an understanding of various cultures rather than being limited to their own

perspectives. In this sense, in order to assist my students in developing their literacy skills, I anticipate placing an emphasis on the imaginative and interactional models of language during my drama-based lessons. For example, many learners are not used to developing opinions or sharing them with others. This tendency is partly due to the Japanese educational system and culture which tends to value maintaining group harmony over the exchange of possibly conflicting opinions. In order to help my students develop the oral language skills to form and share opinions through discussions, I plan to use drama to introduce dilemmas. For example, in my class I anticipate planning a lesson around a picture book called *The Big Orange Splot* (Pinkwater, 1977) which is about the protagonist, Mr. Plumbean, who lives on a street where everyone lives in houses with exactly the same design. When a seagull drops a can of bright orange paint on his roof, Mr. Plumbean encounters a dilemma. On the one hand, he could avoid expressing himself creatively by covering up the orange paint so that he and his house continue to fit in with the rest of the community. On the other hand, he could use this opportunity to decorate his house in a way he likes so that he expresses his individuality and identity, in which case he would risk being looked down upon by the other people who live on the street.

By first using the imaginative model in this scenario, children could be invited to take on the roles of the people who live on the street. Each of the students could even have their own identically looking miniature models of houses to make the situation more relatable. Next, the interactional model could be used as people turned and talked to their partners about how they felt at the beginning of the story compared to how their opinions may have gradually changed. They might also use the interactional/imaginative model during an activity called “hot seating” (Miller & Saxton, 2003, pp. 157-158) in which they ask questions to the teacher who takes on the role of a character, in this case Mr. Plumbean. In adopting the roles of the people on the street, the learners could also engage in discussions

with the goal of forming persuasive arguments to support their position. Through these activities, I would be able to target the functions of language for which my particular group of students requires the most exposure and practice.

Practical Applications

In this section I describe how I plan to integrate drama into my teaching through the structure of story drama. Story drama is a branch of drama education in which “literature is used as a ‘springboard’ for participants to explore BEYOND the actual text...story drama approach encourages teachers to use the issues, themes, characters, mood, conflict or spirit of the story as a beginning for dramatic exploration.” (Dawson, n.d.). Ideally, the collaborative nature of story drama invites learners to engage in dialogic talk (Barnes, 2008) as they work together to express themselves in order to deal with issues within stories without the pressure of being over-corrected for their mistakes. I therefore demonstrate how the integration of drama-based instruction in the form of story drama can support the development of oral language, reading and writing skills of my students.

Oral language skills.

The social and collaborative nature of drama-based activities provides many opportunities for children to produce as well as hear the English language. Moreover, drama activities are different from other class activities involving speaking and listening skills because they can enhance students’ ability to vicariously experience being in unfamiliar contexts. During this process, in order to ensure the children are successful in increasing their oral language skills, the process of scaffolding becomes crucial so that the students do not become confused about the setting, situation or characters as they engage in the world of story drama. In a study by Greenfader, Brouillett and Farkas (2014), lessons involving the following components – warm-up, vocabulary, modeling, guided practice, and debriefing resulted in increased oral language skills in both native English speakers and English

language Learners. In a similar manner to the scaffolding provided in their lesson format, I plan to pre-teach vocabulary words from the picture books which will come up during the drama activity and to provide the necessary explanations as needed. This way, I can encourage the learners to hear, understand and produce a particular form of language in meaningful ways while ensuring learners at varying English skills benefit from the lesson. Moreover, English Language Learners will be able to practice orally communicating with others using a secondary Discourse (Gee, 2015).

I also anticipate having my students take part in various role play activities in order to develop their understandings of unfamiliar ideas. Linking to the sociocultural theory, drama provides opportunities for students to develop knowledge and understandings of new ideas as they socialize with others (Vygotsky, 1978; Wagner, 1998). Moreover, as children take on the roles of adults and interact with one another within the world of drama, such a process can enable them to understand concepts which may have previously been too complex for them to understand without vicariously experiencing the events through drama (Macy, 2016). For example, I may show my students a photograph or a video which is linked to a particular current or historical event about which I would like them to develop an understanding. Upon researching the actual event and perhaps its historical significance, I would have them take on realistic roles of the people involved in order to recreate the scenes. This prior research and learning about the issue will help the children gain practice in using the relevant language while increasing their factual and conceptual understanding. Ideally, this approach will also assist children in developing empathy towards people involved in the significant event. In all of the activities mentioned in this section, I would encourage the children to spontaneously voice their ideas as they are formed. This way, the children will hopefully start to understand that they are not always expected to produce “final draft speech” (Barnes, 2008) and that talk can often be used as a tool to develop their thoughts as they interact with others.

Reading skills.

In my class, I plan to implement various drama strategies which hopefully will lead to increased reading comprehension. For example, as I read a story, I could use “hotseating” (Miller & Saxton, 2004) where I take on the role of a character to whom the students ask questions. This way, students can experience the feeling of having a conversation with the characters in the story by using both the imaginative and interactional model of language (Halliday, 1969), leading to the development of empathy and understanding of characters. Another strategy called “conscience alley” (Miller & Saxton, 2004) can help students increase their skills in perspective-taking. Specifically, this strategy would be used in order to help children develop an understanding of a character encountering a dilemma. In this exercise, the teacher or student who takes on the role of a character walks in the middle of the other learners who are standing in two rows, with one side representing one option and the other side representing the other. As the person playing the role of the character walks down the “alley,” all students are able to hear and think about the opposing views which may arise in the complex situation within the story. In this way, students can learn to understand the complexity of characters and issues found in stories, learning to act as meaning makers (Luke & Freebody, 1997) as they make connections between their own background knowledge and/or prior experiences and the story in order to make sense of the text.

Various versions of tableaux, or “a silent, human sculpture that is created by a group of participants” (Branscombe, 2015, p. 321), can also be used to enable students to represent an interpretation of what they have read. Also known as image theatre, having children use their own bodies to create sculptures as a way of interpreting stories has been shown to increase skills in inferring, developing understanding of characters, and re-reading text to find evidence for making claims (Rozansky & Santos, 2009). Tableau also enables students to collaboratively represent ideas using a range of modes such as, posture, gaze, images, body

language and gestures (Jewitt, 2009). Not only is the implementation of tableaux helpful to support children reading narratives but the strategy can also be a useful tool for students to share their interpretations of informational text. In particular, students may be able to determine the main idea of complex informational texts, and to creatively and collaboratively express their interpretations. I plan to encourage active listening by reading an action-packed story and requiring my students to recreate different scenes in groups while I count down from a certain number. Once the learners are in their positions, I will gently tap their shoulders to have them state their thoughts in the characters' roles – another strategy which can be used to increase the development of empathy towards characters (Miller & Saxton, 2004). The imaginative model of language (Halliday, 1969) would be used in this situation as well, as students speak as if they were the characters themselves who are experiencing the events of the story. Once my students are accustomed to creating tableaux, as a subsequent step, I would have them take part in “connecting images” (Dawson, n.d.), where the participants represent scenes from a story in sequence. In this more complex version, students will also be required to consider how to transition between the frozen images so that they can accurately represent their interpretations of what happens between major events within a plot. While doing so, learners would need to interpret what may not necessarily be clearly stated in the text, thus leading to an increased skill in making predictions and inferences based on their reading.

Writing skills.

One major benefit to teaching drama in conjunction with books is that this approach can be used not only to support reading comprehension skills but writing skills as well. Moreover, findings from a study previously mentioned in Chapter 2 indicated that teaching writing in combination with contextualized drama-based activities results in improvement in students' written language productivity as well as specificity, when compared to having

children work on written tasks after participating in decontextualized language arts activities (Anderson, 2012). In addition to the reading skills mentioned in the previous section, tableau can likewise be used in different ways to support the writing development of students. Firstly, it is quite common for some students who are considered by teachers to be reluctant writers to not be able to begin writing simply because they cannot come up with any good initial idea (Branscombe, 2015). The use of tableaux to represent scenarios before beginning to write can enable children to create a concrete reference point from which they can build ideas (Branscombe). Moreover, since a tableau can also embody the elements which are necessary components to a story, such as characters, a setting, and a plot, the students can use their experience in creating a tableau as a base from which they can explain such elements in more detail in their written work. I also anticipate implementing tableau into my lessons on informational writing. Specifically, the students could first read about a complex scientific phenomenon such as the eclipse. Afterwards, each participant could represent the sun, the moon, and the earth to help them understand the mechanism by which an eclipse takes place (Branscombe, 2015). As a result of representing the scientific process as a tableau, students would hopefully be able to produce a descriptive piece of writing which may have been more difficult without having physically represented the newly learned knowledge and understanding.

I also plan on using a variety of other drama-based strategies. In particular, I am eager to explore the writing in role strategy where students write from the perspective of a character. According to Dalby and Burton (2013), students who take part in writing in role activities make connections between the drama experiences and their own writing, leading to increased imagination and character development, as well as motivation towards writing. Many formats can be used for writing in role, including something familiar, such as a journal, letter or email; or something unfamiliar, such as a fictional biography, list, report, speech, song

competition, or even a transcript of an interview. In the case of the unfamiliar, however, prior to their participation in writing in role, I would need to explicitly teach students how to complete such unfamiliar formats. Writing in role can help students develop empathy as it requires them to put themselves into the characters' shoes rather than listening or reading a story as an outsider. Depending on the format or genre of the writing, students would gain practice in producing written text by utilizing various functions of language (Halliday, 1969).

Drama also “provides opportunities for collective writing, in which groups collaborate on a mutual enterprise – cooperating in collecting data, organizing information, revising and editing – to be used in the subsequent drama work” (Booth, 2001, p. 102). As students take on specific roles through drama and reflect on certain scenarios, they can compose written pieces in meaningful ways which link their own life experiences to the story itself (Booth). Moreover, the process of editing and revising also becomes meaningful as children work towards creating written pieces within a drama for a particular purpose as well as for an audience. For example, I could use the book *The Lorax* (Seuss, 1971), have the students take on the roles of the Brown Bar-ba-loots – the creatures native to the main setting of the story – and write persuasive letters to the Once-ler who continuously cuts down the truffula trees in their natural habitat. This activity could be done either individually, in small groups, or as a collective group. Once students have completed writing their pieces, I would have them speak one of their sentences or phrases aloud through an activity called “voice collage” (Miller & Saxton, 2004). This process gives an opportunity for the students to hear each other's ideas as they collaboratively create a collage using their voices. I would also write down what they have said so that they could see it for themselves. Lenters and Winters (2013) assert that dramatic experiences help students understand that the act of writing does not always follow a structured, linear process and can be quite messy at times. Working on improving the quality of their writing and sharing ideas through the experiences described

above, I hope that my students will understand that the act of planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing can be a more cyclical and flexible process for which the order can be adjusted to fit their own writing preferences.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I first reviewed the literature relating to the topic of drama-based instruction through the lenses of sociocultural theory, functions of language, and multiliteracies and multimodality. During this process, I explored the benefits of such an approach to education with a particular focus on the improvement of oral language, reading and writing skills. Afterwards, I illustrated various strategies which I plan to use with my students in the upcoming school year. As I implement the describe tools, I anticipate the children will gradually grow accustomed to participating in drama-based activities so that I can eventually use those tools not only within planned activities but throughout various subject areas. I hope to be able to implement drama across the curriculum, since literacy skills such as reading, writing, speaking and listening are used not exclusively in Language Arts classes but throughout the school day. Therefore, I anticipate the regular use of drama in my class will increase the opportunities for my students to develop their literacy skills within multiple areas of the daily timetable. Moreover, I look forward to seeing drama-based instruction in action within my teaching context, since the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the learners in my school would be able to especially benefit from the multimodal nature of the tasks involved. From a sociocultural standpoint, I hope that my overall teaching environment, including immersion in the meaningful use of language, will help my students to develop their language skills in engaging ways.

References

- Adomat, D. S. (2010). Dramatic interpretations: Performative responses of young children to picturebook read-alouds. *Children's Literature in Education, 41*(3), 207-221.
- Adomat, D. S. (2012). Drama's potential for deepening young children's understandings of stories. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 40*(6), 343-350.
- Albers, P., & Harste, J. C. (2007). The Arts, New Literacies, and Multimodality. *English Education, 40*(1), 6-20.
- Anderson, A. (2012). The influence of process drama on elementary students' written language. *Urban Education, 47*(5), 959-982.
- Barnes, D. (2008). Exploratory talk for learning. In N. Mercer & S. Hodgkinson (Eds.), *Exploratory talk in school* (pp. 1-15). London, UK: SAGE Publications, Ltd.
- Booth, D. (2001) *Reading & writing in the middle years*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers.
- Boyd, W. C., & Markarian, M. P. (2015). Dialogic teaching and dialogic stance: Moving beyond interactional form. *Research in the Teaching of English, 49*(3), 272-296.
- Branscombe, M. (2015). Showing, not telling: Tableau as an embodied text. *The Reading Teacher, 69*(3), 321-329.
- Campbell, T., & Hlusek, M. (2015). Storytelling for fluency and flair. *The Reading Teacher, 69*(2), 157-161.
- Castro, D. C., Paez, M. M., Dickinson, D. K., & Frede, E. (2011). Promoting language and literacy in young dual language learners: Research, Practice, and Policy. *Child Development Perspectives, 5*(1), 15-21.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2009). "Multiliteracies": New literacies, new learning. *Pedagogies: An International Journal, 4*(3), 164-195.

- Dalby, M., & Burton, N. (2013). What is the impact on six underachieving year 4 children's choice of language and development of character when 'writing in role'? *Education, 41*(1), 82-89.
- Davidson, K. (2010). The integration of cognitive and sociocultural theories of literacy development: Why? How?. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 56*(3), 246-256.
- Dawson, K. (n.d.). Drama-based instruction: Activating learning through the arts! Retrieved June 09, 2017, from <http://dbp.theatredance.utexas.edu/>
- Donoldson, J., & Scheffler, A. (2003). *The snail and the whale*. Macmillan Publishers.
- Edmiston, B. (2007). Mission to Mars: Using drama to make a more inclusive classroom for literacy learning. *Language Arts, 84*(4), 337-346.
- Edwards-Groves, C., Anstey, M., & Bull, G. (2013). *Classroom talk: Understanding dialogue, pedagogy, and practice*. Newton, NSW, AU: Primary English Teaching Association Australia.
- Freebody, K. (2013). Discourse in drama: Talk, role, and learning in drama education. *Drama Australia Journal, 37*(1), 65-75.
- Gee, J. P. (2001). Reading as situated language: A sociocognitive perspective. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 44*(8), 714-725.
- Gee, J. P. (2015). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Grant, A., Hutchison, A., Hornsby, D., & Brooke, S. (2008). Creative pedagogies: "Art-full" reading and writing. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 7*(1), 57-72.
- Greenfader, C. M., Brouillette, L., & Farkas, G. (2014). Effect of a performing arts program on the oral language skills of young English learners. *Reading Research Quarterly, 50*(2), 185-203.
- Halliday, M. (1969). Relevant models of language. *Educational Review, 22*(1), 26-37.

- International Baccalaureate. (2009). Making the PYP happen: A curriculum framework for international primary education. Retrieved from https://mtpyph.weebly.com/uploads/9/0/6/9/9069240/mtpyph_doc.pdf
- Joronen, K., Konu, A., Rankin, H. S., & Astedt-Kurki, P. (2011). An evaluation of a drama program to enhance social relationships and anti-bullying at elementary school: A controlled study. *Health Promotion International*, 27(1), 5-14.
- Kress, G., & Jewitt, C. (2003). Introduction. In C. Jewitt & G. Kress (Eds.) *Multi-modal literacy* (pp. 1-18). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Ladson-Billing, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74-84.
- Lenters, K., & Winters, K. (2013). Fracturing writing spaces: Multimodal storytelling ignites process writing. *The Reading Teacher*, 67(3), 227-237.
- Luke, A., & Freebody, P. (1997). Shaping the social practices of reading. In S. Muspratt, A. Luke, & P. Freebody (Eds.), *Constructing critical literacies: Teaching and learning textual practice* (pp. 185-225). St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.
- Macy, P. (2016). Bridging pedagogies: Drama, multiliteracies, and the zone of proximal development. *The Educational Forum*, 80(3), 310-323.
- McLennan, D. M. P. (2008). The benefits of using sociodrama in the elementary classroom: Promoting caring relationships among educators and students. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35(5), 451-456.
- Mills, K. A. (2009). Multiliteracies: Interrogating competing discourses. *Language and Education*, 23(2), 103-116.
- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60-92.

- O'Sullivan, O., & McGonigle, S. (2010). Transforming readers: Teachers and children in the centre for literacy in primary education Power of Reading project. *Literacy, 44*(2), 51-59.
- Paris, S. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher, 41*(3), 93-97.
- Pinkwater, D. (1977). *The big orange splot*. New York City, NY: Scholastic Inc.
- Prendergast, M. & Saxton, J. (2013). *Applied drama*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Rasinski, T. (2012). Why reading fluency should be hot!. *The Reading Teacher, 65*(8), 516-522.
- Rozansky, C. L., & Santos, C. (2009). Boal's image theatre creates a space for critical literacy in third-graders. *Reading Improvement, 46*(3), 178-188.
- Rubin, D. L. (1990). Introduction: Ways of talking about talking and learning. In S. Hynds & D. Rubin (Eds.), *Perspectives on talk & learning* (pp. 1-20). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Saxton, J. & Miller, J. (2004). *Into the story: Language in action through drama*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Sengun, Y., & Iskenderoglu, Y. (2010). A review of creative drama studies in math education: Aim, data collection, data analyses, sample and conclusions of studies. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences, 9*, 1214-1219.
- Seuss, D. (1971). *The Lorax*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Smagorinsky, P. (2007). Vygotsky and the social dynamics of classrooms. *The English Journal, 97*(2), 61-66.
- Smagorinsky, P. (2013). What does Vygotsky provide for the 21st-century language arts teacher? *Language Arts, 90*(3), 192-204.

- Spira, E. G., Bracken, S. S., & Fischel, J. E. (2005). Predicting improvement after first-grade reading difficulties: The effects of oral language, emergent literacy, and behavior skills. *Developmental Psychology, 41*(1), 225-234.
- Ulas, A. H. (2008). Effects of creative, educational drama activities on developing oral skills in primary school children. *American Journal of Applied Sciences, 5*(7), 876-880.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wagner, B. J. (1998). *Educational drama and language arts: What research shows*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Wells, T., & Sandretto, S. (2016). "I'm on a journey I never thought I'd be on": Using process drama pedagogy for the literacy programme. *Pedagogies: An International Journal, 12*(2), 1-16.