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# **USING PARTICIPATORY DRAMA TO TEACH CHINESE STORIES IN BRITISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

**by**

**Chia-Yu, LO**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of Warwick, Institute of Education

June 2013

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Using Participatory Drama to Teach Chinese Stories in British Primary Schools by Chia-Yu (Ofelia), Lo**

This study explores how British children make sense of traditional Chinese stories through participatory drama, by means of physical and verbal responses. The author conducted her fieldwork through teaching identical drama schemes within two demographically and ethnically distinctive primary schools.

The key underpinning methodological approach within the study is ethnographic case studies. The field work lasted one term in each school, with between 13 to 15 hours of teaching time per group. The methods for collecting data included the pre-questionnaire and interviews with children, as well as the following: drama conventions such as forum theatre and still images, visual and image evidence captured by video camera and photography, children's writing and drawing, a post-evaluation sheet, interviews with teachers, participant observations and field notes.

The analysis of qualitative data is presented in two interwoven threads. One thread follows the logic of the ethnographic approach to present the findings of each scheme of work in both schools, in chronological order. The other thread is a thematic analysis, based on grounded theory. These methods may be seen to be integral and complementary to one another.

In essence, the author suggests that drama education is a practical model for the pursuit of cosmopolitan education within the modern globalised world. Some limitations and constraints in the research are nonetheless discussed, and pertinent alternatives and improvements are presented. Suggestions for future researchers who wish to conduct similar research projects are provided, and the potential for this research to be extended on a larger scale is indicated.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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My appreciation also goes to my senior compatriot Li-Yu (Sabina), Chang, who is a Warwick graduated PhD and now an associate professor in the National Tainan University, Taiwan. I am grateful to have had her moral support and to have benefited from her generously shared knowledge of research and teaching.

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Last but not the least, I would like to thank my family, particularly my parents, who encouraged me to pursue my higher education in the UK and who offered their whole-hearted support, in many forms.

NOTE: Paragraphs from pages 37-39 and 44 to 47 of Chapter 2 originally appeared in an article I co-authored with Joe Winston and Xiaodi Wang: '*Being in the State of Crossing*': *Drama Education and Transnational Space* in *The Journal of Drama and Theatre Education in Asia*, vol.1, no.1, July 2010.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Chia Yu, Lo

4<sup>th</sup> , June, 2013

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

The initial idea for this research project derived from an unsuccessful single drama activity that I was involved in when conducting fieldwork for my Masters research at Warwick in 2008 with a group of Year 5 children in a primary school near Coventry. In one particular activity, I played the role of a mother singing a lullaby in the Taiwanese dialect intended to create a dramatic moment of tenderness and love. The children's responses surprised me in a negative way. I had hoped that they would appreciate the solemn, quiet atmosphere; instead they whispered, giggled and exchanged glances with one another. My dramatic expectations had not been fulfilled in ways I had failed to anticipate and that left me surprised and disappointed.

Why had this happened? Had the children felt uneasiness or embarrassment? Was it my own language that had amused them? What if I had hummed the melody rather than sing the lyrics, would it have made any difference? Beyond the completion of my Masters dissertation these questions still preoccupied me and eventually led to a larger question: how could I find an apt participatory way of doing drama to introduce Chinese cultural elements through appropriate stories with classes of British children? With this initial

inquiry in mind, I started this research project with a selection of traditional Chinese stories that I could play with. Since then I have begun to see the issue as, subtle, complex and problematic in ways that I hope this thesis will illustrate. It has also illuminated incidents further in my past, from other inter-cultural programmes I had been involved in before my Masters programme.

Some years ago I accompanied a Taiwanese children's theatre company to Spain as a Spanish interpreter as part of an international puppetry festival. One of my tasks was to be on stage at the beginning of their production to tell a local audience a brief synopsis of the story, as the whole play was conducted in Mandarin Chinese. The audience's age was from 9 to 14. The style of the play was intended to present a feel of ancient China through its use of costume and props. The story told of a Chinese man who became a Water Ghost when he drowned and how he eventually rose in status to become a God of the Underworld due to his benevolence to human beings – a very familiar story to anyone raised in Taiwan but one that I could imagine might seem very strange to a Catholic Spanish audience whose beliefs do not include reincarnation or polytheism. I wondered to what extent my introduction would make the story accessible to them or whether they would be only left with a sense of exoticism, gazing with little comprehension at cultural objects such as adorable puppets

and 'oriental' costumes.

The theatre company, too, had evidently thought about this but one incident in the play appalled me in the way that it tried to establish some human connection with the audience. In one scene a mother figure was holding a baby boy to her chest. The baby, a plastic doll, had a mechanism that could sprinkle water up in the air to simulate urinating. Feigning surprise and embarrassment, the actor playing the mother deliberately walked to the front of the stage so that this 'urine' could shoot as far as it could into the audience, whose raucous response was obviously what the company had been searching for – some sign, at least, that they were being entertained. I was pained by this. Interestingly I had seen the show in Taiwan in a primary school and there the scene had not offended me. But now it was exposed as a cheap theatrical trick, a crude use of crude humour, patronising in its assumption that this was the only way to get children, especially 'foreign' children, to respond at a human level to the story. It also seemed to demonstrate the limitations of the company's cross-cultural thinking and aesthetic ambitions.

Years later, having read literature on Orientalism, cultural imperialism, post-colonialism and intercultural performance (Afzal-Khan, 1997; Bhabha,

1994; Bharucha, 1993; Chrisman, 2003; Dasgupta, 1991; Fischer-Lichte, 1996; Gainor, 1995; R. Knowles, 2010; Martin, 2004; Mnouchkine, 1996; Pavis, 1996; Peters, 1995; Said, 1978; Schechner, 1990; Tomlinson, 1991), I have come to understand my unsettled reactions in a more level-headed way. In the eyes of the Spanish audience, our presence in their socio-cultural context on a theatrical stage, suggested a place 'where the image - missing person, invisible eye, oriental stereotype – is confronted with its difference, its Other' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 46). The visual confrontation of otherness in theatrical form is visceral and direct, projected by appearances and cultural artifacts. Such tangible and discernible differences have their beauty but also encompass dangers which may override cultural values embedded in traditional stories, the kind of values that are much subtler and more delicate than those we grasp through a sudden, visual impact. Moreover, movements and gestures on stage are juxtaposed to denotative and connotative meanings, which go beyond our common social lives. In the above mentioned story, 'shooting urine' might have served the company's intention, to establish quickly a human connection with otherness, but it was also ethically problematic as it did nothing to illuminate the culturally specific performative, representational and dramatic dimensions of the play. In the end, this young audience was probably left with an

impression of Chinese culture as oriental, strange and unfathomable.

These internal conflicts from my past definitely set up a certain mind-set when embarking on my doctoral research. They reminded me of the complex ethical issues and potential challenges I needed to keep in mind as I searched for creative yet engaging ways to introduce traditional stories from my own culture to British children. If cultural differences are a discernible gap that can impede people from understanding one another, I wanted to explore ways in which stories might help bridge them, not reaffirm how odd or strange the people who told them were in the eyes of the children I worked with. Perhaps sharing stories cannot lead us to cross the divides between us, but perhaps they might reduce the distances and also create a joyful learning environment. Not joy in terms of the cheap laughter I had witnessed with the Spanish audience, but a more subtle kind of joy, aesthetically based and culturally rich.

I did believe that forms of communication are key when approaching cross-cultural exchange and that participatory drama could provide a pedagogical form that I could make good use of; and that storytelling as a form of research could shed light on the creative processes of my project in practice. Therefore, I chose to apply participatory drama approaches (Dickinson,

Neelands, & Shenton Primary School, 2006; Neelands, 1990, 2000, 2004a; Winston, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2005, 2010; Winston & Tandy, 2001) and storytelling strategies to explore the values embedded in a selection of Chinese traditional tales (Alfreds, 1979; Baker & Greene, 1977; Barton & Booth, 1990; Booth, 1994b; Booth & Barton, 2000; Wilson, 2006; Zeece, 1997). Being a teacher-artist in this project, I would not be the stereotypical, invisible and missing Oriental, aligned with Homi Bhabha's definition of the 'Other' (1994, p. 46). Instead, I could open up a new communicative trajectory, from the East to the West, which the concept of transnationalism can help us theorise (Ritzer, 2010; Vertovec, 2009). I will elaborate on this and other pertinent theoretical sources in the next chapter but some initial explanations will be useful here.

### **1.1 Stories as Sources of Cross-Cultural Communication**

My location in British classrooms and my relationship with the schoolchildren who worked in them I see as a form of transnational interconnection between East and West, Chinese and British cultures. Importantly, the concept of *transnational* culture is different from both cultural homogenisation and cultural colonization (Hannerz, 1996). It is not about imposing one's own values as superior than those of another and my project

did not seek in any sense to convert children's own cultural values into different values that had been specified in advance (Ritzer, 2010). This intention clarifies my own project as one of interchange. I did not aim to take any superior position from a cultural point of view, nor to convert children into 'thinking as the Chinese do'. My understanding of the learning process began from a recognition that most of the children I worked with had grown up in a richly multicultural Britain. Some, particularly British south Asian children, would have already been working on levels of what Jackson and Nesbitt have termed 'multiple cultural competence' (1993; 1998) and would have experienced hybrid cultural values in their daily lives.

The idea of hybridisation, however, is itself complex and problematic. It might suggest a world of 'multiplicity, merging, and confusion in all its guises' (Clingman, 2009, p. 6). Views of the hybrid as a space of the perpetual "in-between" might hint at a state of messy, incomprehensible and unclear values. I needed, too, to acknowledge that Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity works mainly from a perspective of hybrid identities being present in one country or state as 'fixed identifications' (1994, p. 4) and are not theorized in terms of any cross-border state. As an educationalist, confusion does not stand well as a stated aim! Nevertheless, the connotative meaning of confusion may

allow for another interpretation: confusion, which consists of the prefix *con---with--*, and the root *fusion ---* amalgamation, merging, suggesting, therefore, the possibility of a positive perspective rather than one replete with negative meanings. To draw from Stephen Clingman, who has theorized transnational values in fiction, we might say that the boundaries between two different cultures, in this case, Chinese and British, undeniably exist (Clingman, 2009); but rather than seeing such boundaries as impenetrable barriers, we can see them in conceptually spatial terms, as offering opportunities for navigating along and between them (Winston, Lo, & Wang, 2010).

I chose stories to work with for many reasons explained by numerous theorists. Stories, we are told by Halliday, provide appropriate and purposely composed narrative structures which are powerful socializing agents (1978). According to Stephens & McCallum, they also contain 'invisible ideologies, systems, and assumptions which operate globally in a society to order knowledge and experiences' (1998, p. 3); that is to say, written stories in their narratives convey particular meanings in particular cultural and historical contexts (Bruner & Haste, 1987) and transmit to their readers implicitly the embedded cultural ideas, values and beliefs of different social groups and peoples (Inglis, 2005; Withington, 1996). Through stories, we are told, children

learn how the social world operates in many different settings, as they provide accounts of abundant human experiences in many diverse contexts. (W. R. Fisher, 1984; M. Knowles & Malmkjær, 1996; Ota, 2000; Trzebínski, 2005). In this way, they can be seen as a form of aesthetic exchange to help develop empathy and understanding across diversity (Barton & Booth, 1990; Noddings, 1991; Ward, 1985). Furthermore, stories stimulate children to reflect on how they might act within strongly contextualised situations, extending their imaginative capabilities to connect with lives and experiences they might otherwise never come across (Kirkwood, 1985). Reading and listening to stories from other cultures have thus been presented as potent means to raise children's cultural awareness and to build up their understanding of different cultures (Clayton & Herxheimer, 2004; Lenox, 2000; Levin, 2007; Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2008; Mathis, 2001; Norton, 1990; York, 2008).

In my project, I drew from Clingman's ideas on transnational fiction (2009). According to him, literature presents us with cultural artefacts (i.e. stories) that can transport us to different times and different places (Clingman, 2009, pp. 10-11). By immersing ourselves in such works, we can experience different people's ways of being and of seeing as we live through the tale's narrative in our imaginations. This process of reading does more than entertain; it nurtures

a reader's identity through the innate process of thinking, of reconsidering the relationship between themselves and others and thence their relations with the world (Clingman, 2009, pp. 10-16). As he suggests, stories that work in this manner, 'become not only a mode of exploring the world but also a *kind* of world to be explored (Clingman, 2009, p. 11)'.

## **1.2 Exploring Stories Through Educational Drama**

Stories are not seen by everyone as universally positive in educational terms and many critics have pointed to what they see as forms of ideological conditioning embedded within them (Tatar, 1992, 1999; Trifonas, 2009; Zipes, 1983, 1992, 1995, 2006). Some have pointed, in particular, to the ways in which traditional stories and folk tales have been used for outmoded didactic purposes in order to convey sexist or morally dubious ideas (Hourihan, 1997, p. 4; Pounds, 2010). Yet these ideological undercurrents emerge from particular historical times, from specific political and social struggles which may have influenced particular writers' works. These inherited values, sometimes contradictory due to numerous retellings across time, have nevertheless been seen by Winston as opportunities for the teacher, as potential sources for drama to rework them in a new light, perhaps making them more relevant to the

values of our own time. (Hourihan, 1997; Winston, 1995; Winston, et al., 2010).

Drama education, it has been argued, has a particular contribution to make because of its potential for re-scrutinising literary works from a critical distance (Barton & Booth, 1990; Booth, 1994a; Dickinson, et al., 2006; Neelands, 2004a, 2004b; Winston, 1995, 1997, 1998; Winston, et al., 2010; Winston & Tandy, 2001). 'Drama', according to Booth, 'helps children wander in the story garden, reconstructing symbols, images and narrative sequences through action' (1994a, pp. 40-41). When working with good stories through participatory drama activities, intrinsic values of the stories can be unearthed to be re-examined by both teachers and children (Winston, 1998, 2010). Such is to bring an element of uncertainty into the story, to enable subjunctive experiences which, according to Winston, invite participants 'to reconstruct what might have happened, opening up rather than closing down possibilities' (1998, p. 25). In this way, not only can children come to explore a story's possibilities, but also to learn different dramatic forms through which they can create and represent it (Booth, 1994a, p. 41). Moreover, participants' responses and interpretations can be enriched by their own cultural and ethnic backgrounds when they are encouraged to bring their own cultural understandings to bear when playing with the possibilities of the story world

(Winston, 2004, pp. 131-139).

My project, then, was intended to add a further layer of transnational potential to Clingman's ideas, which concentrate upon written forms of *literary* fiction. By using participatory pedagogy, children, I hoped, would actually dialogue with characters, and, in actively imagining different cultural settings, they would be offered opportunities to physicalize, to use their bodies in ways of presenting their work that was significantly different from ways they used their bodies in their natural behavior. That is to say, if the novel makes clear the transnational linkages between living and doing, location and being (Clingman, 2009, p. 234); then story drama could bring these interconnections alive, making them actively playful and thus more accessible to children; and, through performance, children could engage with the transnational on a further cultural level.

My own relation and location within the project would offer an additional *performative* layer resulting from my being *present* and *with* children during these experiences. When I performed stories with children, I would draw from Chinese artistic forms but the performing body that children would see would not only be that of a person with a self-evident Chinese ethnic background;

they would also see a person carrying strong, embodied, cultural signifiers as she interacted with them. The ways in which I express pleasure, annoyance, surprise, shock and other emotions in my everyday cultural performance are also subtly distinct from those of Europeans. So, adapting Schechner (2003), I use the term 'me - me/not-me' to describe the dual cultural signifier of both *being* and also *representing* in front of children.

An important question for me to address is what impact such embodied performance values would have on children. Would different children copy them, adopt them, change them or simply ignore them? Most interestingly, would some not only adapt them but also use them in a hybrid form, in some way mingling them with their own embodied ways of performing meaning? In my drama classes, children would be given the opportunity to straddle between social and imagined realities, being themselves and playing at being 'other', creating a *fictional* space and time inside an *actual* space and time (Booth, 1985; Neelands, 1992; O'Neill, 1985). This condition, what Boal calls metaxis (1995), seemed to me to present an ideal, liminal space for the kind of inter-cultural, transnational possibilities of exploring the boundaries of story that I was interested in.

### **1.3 The Need for This Research in Drama Education**

The research project I did, that is to use Chinese stories to teach British primary school children through participatory drama, has little relevant literature made public. In the field, researchers who work with similar aged children have been developing extensively other specific research foci. Moral education is one (Edmiston, 2000; Winston, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2000), children's cognitive and emotional development is another (Creech & Bhavnagri, 2002), English as second language learning through story drama is yet another (L.-Y. Chang, 2009, 2011; L.-Y. Chang & Winston, 2011). One recently published research project pays attention to special needs children (Carleton, 2012). Another emphasizes social development and problem-solving skills. (Cockett, 1997).

Broadening the literature search to related fields, some research reports touch sporadically on my research focus when looking into children's responses to stories and how these reflect their own cultural beliefs, moral understandings, moral development and personal moral choices (Liu, 2005; Ota, 2000; Sanchez, 2005; Swanepoel, 1995; Yim, Lee, & Ebbeck, 2009). Yet, most of the teaching pedagogies are far removed from drama or dramatic activities and are more conventional and discussion based, involving reading and dialogic learning through talk alone. The report written by Sanchez, who

advocates the importance of using storytelling strategies to explore the complexity, multi-dimensionality and humanity of story plots and characters, is the example that resonates most closely with my project; yet, the context is very different and based in the USA (2005). The research carried out by Yim, Lee and Ebbeck, who select traditional Chinese stories, is another example that has a similar choice regarding the teaching material of my project. Yet their target students were ethnic Chinese children living in Hong Kong, which means that to a large degree, these children did not have to acquire basic Chinese cultural knowledge as the British children needed to in my own case (2009). Another research project carried out by Wilhelm was to use drama to teach stories, yet his research focus was with an older age group who had low motivation, low academic achievement and only basic reading ability (1995). In sum, the fact that there is little literature extant on the use of Chinese stories to teach primary school children in the UK through participatory drama demonstrates a gap which my own research intends to address.

## 1.4 Dissertation Structure

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The second chapter is entitled *Proposing Cosmopolitan Learning Experience Through Drama*. Here I look at some of the key theoretical areas that have shaped the thinking behind this research, in particular those connected with the philosophy of cosmopolitanism, a key ethical foundation for the principles that drove it. I lay out my argument to explain why these areas are relevant to my concerns and, I hope, of relevance to drama educators in the contemporary world. The next chapter is devoted to my research methodology. In the first part I consider the epistemological considerations that underpin problems and possibilities for educational research in general and explain those which have influenced my own approach and why. I then put forward the case for my own choice of research paradigm and detail the principles and practicalities of the specific research methods I used which include: questionnaire, participant observation, videotaping and photography, interviews, visual and image research methods, and drama pedagogy as a research tool. I then outline the strategies I used to analyze the data before moving on the most significant part of the thesis, the discussion and analysis of my findings. Here I begin with a preliminary discussion of the two demographically different schools so as to contextualise their distinctive

backgrounds. I provide a synopsis of each of the stories I used with some analysis of the values within the story that made it interesting for me to explore with these children. An account of the drama lessons themselves can be found in the appendices. The findings from both research sites are presented in chronological order, in terms of the schemes as they were taught, starting with school A before moving on to school B. Key themes that emerged from the fieldwork are discussed under subheadings. This analysis and discussion of the data is informed by further theoretical considerations around topics such as identity, reader response theory, gender and post colonialism, areas that emanated from a careful consideration of the data itself. In the final chapter I consider the limitations and constraints of the project, making suggestions for researchers who might wish to work on a similar topic, and I expound upon what I have learned myself from this project as an ethnically Chinese teacher-artist.

### **1.5 Conclusion**

In this introduction, I have explained my own personal interests for conducting this research. I have elaborated upon the ethical concerns that underpinned it and have explained why I chose Chinese traditional stories as my subject matter, and how storytelling and participatory drama provided me

with possibilities to enable British children playfully to explore these stories and to engage with values intrinsic to them. I further elaborated upon issues relating to myself, an ethnically Chinese teacher-artist, working with these stories through drama with British children. This kind of transnational learning from the East is significant yet, I believe, has not yet been explored extensively. Hopefully this thesis will make a small contribution to filling this gap.

## CHAPTER 2: PROPOSING COSMOPOLITAN LEARNING EXPERIENCE THROUGH DRAMA EDUCATION

### 2.1 Introduction

Globalisation is one of the key words used popularly to describe and define our era. Revolutions in transport and in particular communication, the worldwide accessibility of the internet, the high density of international trading, the increases in population movement, and all of these factors mean that information that was once remote is now obtainable at the press of a button (Featherstone, 1990; Nederveen Pieterse, 2009; Tomlinson, 1999); and that people and cultures who were once segregated or distant are increasingly brought together. Globalisation, however, has its critics as well as its enthusiasts (U. Beck, 2000; Ritzer, 2010; Tomlinson, 1999).

Terms such as globalisation and culture are problematic and complex *per se*. Yet, in this chapter, rather than seeking to explore exhaustively the nuances of those terms, I am more interested in concentrating my argument on ethical concerns inspired by the philosophy of cosmopolitanism, which has come to underpin my research project. Moreover, rather than looking squarely into economic and political issues that globalisation tends to be associated with, I

will focus on cultural aspects of globalization and the ethical concerns that it has given rise to. I begin this chapter by discussing some negative outcomes of globalisation related to issues of cultural difference before going on to reframe my argument within that other related theoretical paradigm, cosmopolitanism. I will explain why the ethics of cosmopolitanism are of contemporary importance and will examine cosmopolitan approaches to learning. Finally, I will argue that drama education is apt to play an essential role in cosmopolitan learning and will explain why.

## **2.2 Culture is one of Key Issues in Globalisation**

Culture is heavily implicated in globalisation and plays a key role in its onward progress (Martell, 2010, p. 5; Nederveen Pieterse, 2009; Tomlinson, 1999; Wise, 2008). Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize winner, a cultural and economic theorist, makes the point that social changes can only really be understood when cultural issues are taken fully into account (2007, p. 108). One of the attacks leveled at globalisation has been that its impact exclusively favours Western countries (Tomlinson, 1991). Until very recently, the argument goes, it is the West that has exported its politics, its economic systems to the rest of the world and it is the West that has imposed its culture on less

developed countries, including those of the East. As a medium of political control it might be seen as a means of fostering cultural colonisation leading to cultural homogenisation, uniformity under the pre-eminence of one particular culture (Hannerz, 1992, p. 218; Ritzer, 2010, p. 69). Cultural colonisation goes hand in hand therefore with economic and political colonisation.

Nevertheless, the absolutism of this viewpoint has been challenged as historically simplistic (Martell, 2010, p. 49). As far back as the fourteenth century, Western Europe was tempted to trade with the Far East and particularly with China, which had a highly developed civilization and was at the time a centre of prosperity. Western traders sailed far to reach China in order to bring exotic herbs and exquisite silks back home (Gregory, 2002). This is the remote past, of course, when the term globalisation had not been invented, but the fact is that many inventions from China, such as gun-powder and printing, were introduced back to Europe through travel and trade (Sen, 2007, pp. 126-127). Along with this trade came cross-cultural exchanges of an artistic kind. In the eighteenth century, for example, some European artists were influenced by Chinese paintings and the hybrid style of 'Chinoiserie' blossomed and became a representational style of design (Mungello, 1999, pp. 106-110). In other words, two-way cultural exchanges have always accompanied

economic exchange and, as Sen points out: 'these global interrelations have often been very productive in the advancement of different countries in the world' (2007, p. 126).

### **2.3 The Positive Potential that underlies Negative Globalisation**

Cross-Cultural interactions have been drastically increasing in various forms due to globalisation in positive as well as negative ways. 'Negative globalization' is, as Bauman sums up, 'a selective globalization of trade and capital, surveillance and information, violence and weapons, crime and terrorism' (2007, p. 7). He contends that a synthetic, collective negative attitude germinates in local communities when they perceive 'otherness' or 'strangeness' in those who are from far (Bauman, 2008, p. 35). Fear tends to grow and smoulder in communities where locals and otherness coexist (Bauman, 1997, 2007, 2010, pp. 157-162). One of the ideological fears is cultural homogeneity (Martell, 2010, pp. 2-5). As individual cultures can hardly resist being assimilated into a powerful mainstream, the consequence is a loss of individual cultural identity (Martell, 2010). Multiculturalism has been a longstanding term that has influenced policy makers in Britain with its overtones of tolerance and diversity. This term 'multiculturalism', however, has become synonymous with ideas of separation and entrenchment between

different ethnic groups who, although they might coexist peacefully side by side, may not interact with one another (Martell, 2010, p. 97; Modood, 2007). The term is sometimes inter-changeable with pluralism, as both share a similar attitude to diversity; that is, they are more concerned 'to protect and perpetuate the cultures of groups that are already well established' (Hollinger, 2002). Consequently, a potential response arises when local cultures resist globalisation by demarcating their own cultural traditions from others in order to guard their own authenticity (Held & MacGrew, 2007; Nederveen Pieterse, 2009; Pleyers, 2010, pp. 185-191; Ritzer, 2010; Tomlinson, 1999), which is also known as localization (Hines, 2000).

In the world of theatre, Rebellato has particularly criticized a form of homogenization that he calls 'McTheatre' (2009, pp. 39-46), a term drawn from Mcdonaldization (Ritzer, 1998) and which refers to how internationally successful shows such as *The Lion King* and *The Phantom of the Opera* have been exported around the globe. This kind of theatre is intended to ensure that qualities of production are standardised in order to guarantee that audiences can experience the authenticity of the original production. Nevertheless, Rebellato objects to such productions and likens them to 'a packed ready meal' in order to emphasise how such commercialism saps theatre of its aliveness

and immediacy, key aspects of any cultural experience that can be termed 'authentic' (2009, p. 44).

Another controversial outcome of cultural globalisation is hybridisation. Hybridisation denotes a comparatively more positive attitude towards cultural differences. It not only welcomes diversity but also embraces any possibility of mixing cultures (Martell, 2010, p. 97; Ritzer, 2010, p. 255). To Bauman, hybridity would be taken as a conscious choice after testing and retesting in realistic circumstances, as to him, it is seen as a 'given, non-negotiable need' (2007, p. 86). These scholars imply that cultural differences are not to be seen as barricades that divide people, rather, they can be seen as resources to help cultures nourish one another. Such an attitude chimes with a cosmopolitan approach to diversity as theorised by Appiah (2007), Rizvi (2008), and Rebellato (2009) - an attitude that embraces local traditions as rich sources in a diverse world. This is different from *localization* (Hines, 2000), which sees cultures and their resources as irreducibly local, in need of protection. The stance of cosmopolitanism is more in favour of cultural hybridisation, 'global heterogenization rather than homogenization' (Ritzer, 2010, p. 255) and as Hollinger states, although cosmopolitans respect tradition, they make attempts to create something new based on it (2002, p. 231). In such ways, it seeks to

promote an equality of recognition between different ethnic groups and can be seen to encourage integration among them in a variety of social contexts, including schools (Modood, 2007; G. S. Morrison, 2009).

Theories of hybrid culture centre upon issues related to incorporating fragments of different cultures into innovative forms, but none of this process proceeds in a calculated way, especially in an art field (Schechner, 2006, p. 304). Hybridity, then, can be seen as a dynamic process one of continuous renewal that tends to give birth to new cultural movements (C. K. Bun, 2003; Pleyers, 2010). The musical *Britain's Got Bhangra* ("Warwick Art Centre," 2011) is an example of a hybrid theatrical production that reflects on the current socio-cultural milieu of Britain, hybrid in the way it incorporated the northern Indian folk music and dance tradition known as *Bhangara* with some of the most currently representative genres of Western pop music such as DJ remix and R & B. The script playfully incorporated a range of cross-cultural exchanges related to British and Indian culture on issues as diverse as the weather, language and issues of immigration - all topics that members of the British South Asian community will come across in their daily lives. It is a good example of how hybridization reflects and responds to a contemporary socio-cultural environment thus relating closely to ordinary people's lives and

making culture relevant to a new generation.

While celebrating the richness that cultural hybridity generates, theories of cultural hybridization, however, can tend to attempt to dilute tensions by being naively blind to differences (hooks, 2003; Ritzer, 2010, p. 255). Ang reminds us not to be dazzled by hybridity as hybridity is more than fusion and synthesis (2001). She claims:

‘hybridity is (...) also about friction and tension, about ambivalence and incommensurability, about the contestations and interrogations that go hand in hand with the heterogeneity, diversity and multiplicity we have to deal with as we live together-in-difference’ (2001, p. 200).

Pleyers also makes the point that we should not only praise fusion and thus neglect differences, which may generate tensions that discomfort people (2010, p. 193). In addition, Bauman also claims that mixophobia and mixophilia coexist in communities as well as in each individual, and this uneasiness of coexistence may cause people anxiety and fear. Such sprawling negative emotion may, eventually, urge them to take defensive action against it (2007, 2010, pp. 157-162). Yet such tension has an edge of positivity to it, of the kind that inspires us to look deeper and try to further our understanding, to discuss it, or find creative ways to hybridize with it (Appiah, 2007; Pleyers, 2010; Sennett, 2012). These ideas will be elaborated later.

Homogeneity and heterogeneity constitute the polarised tensions of hybridity, reminding us that issues of cultural difference are complex and cannot be overcome by simplistic utopian imaginings. In this project, however, influenced by the perspective of cosmopolitan ethics, I see cultural differences as sources of creative tension rather than as sources of conflict. By creative tension here I mean the kind of tension that can nourish rather than stifle cultural production in a globalised world. Moreover, I will focus my discussion on the transformative power of cultural differences within the concept of transnationalism. According to Ritzer, transnationalism results from: 'processes that interconnect individuals and social groups across specific geo-political borders, especially those associated with two, or more, nation-states (2010, p. 2). This social-cultural phenomenon is tightly linked to globalisation and indicates an active and fluid intermingling of cultures (Martell, 2010, p. 5). To some cultural theorists, culture is not a monolithic and independent entity, rather it has a trait of malleability that can be fused, blended and mixed with other cultures (Featherstone, 1990; Hofmeister & Breitenstein, 2008; Nederveen Pieterse, 2009; Tomlinson, 1999). From this perspective, to quote Ritzer, 'the focus is on the integration of global processes with various local realities to produce new and distinctive hybrid forms that indicate continued

global heterogenization rather than homogenization' (2010, p. 255).

Driven by the abovementioned idea, I like to think that British and Chinese cultural differences need not be dominated by tensions, rather that they can be played out in a borderland, along their boundaries, in vigorous and playful ways. The liminal space where this can happen, I will argue, can be provided by drama, where the boundaries between differences can be re-negotiated and reconfigured (Delanty, 2009, p. 7). This is what I mean by a transnational space, one where we navigate around and between cultural difference, both using and at the same time developing a cosmopolitan imagination (ibid, p. 6). This kind of imagination takes place when new social relationships gestate between self and others, and flow openly between them. This creates a point of departure to expand people's imaginative territory. The important thing is that we need not seek to cross the boundaries that mark the differences; nor should we strive to penetrate deep within the borders of another's cultural identity as this seems to be too idealistic and quixotic. Rather, it is 'being in the space of crossing' that matters (Clingman, 2009, pp. 24-25). This space of crossing is what Clingman defines as a transnational space, one in which we are welcome to 'navigate the boundaries' that separate us, to explore, play with, reflect upon and discuss cultural differences. In my project, I strove to do this through the process of

educational drama (Winston, et al., 2010).

## **2.4 The Ethical View of Cosmopolitanism and its Implications**

Cosmopolitanism is a philosophy that has been applied in political, economic and cultural discourses proposing ways that humans can learn to get along with one another despite their cultural differences, both at an individual and institutional level. (Brown & Held, 2010; Chan, 1997, 2003, 2005; Dobson, 2005, 2006; Dower, 2010; Gronseth, 2011; Held, 2010). It is a very practical ethical philosophy, focusing on 'what people do and say to positively engage with 'the otherness of the other and the oneness of the world' (Gronseth, 2011, p. 2), concerned with states of mind and ways of living in a globally connected modern society (Hannerz, 1990; Turner, 2002). Cosmopolitans see these as teachable, as competences that can be learned and developed, competences based on 'tolerance and openness towards 'other' cultures and value-systems' (Gronseth, 2011, p. 3). The competence that chimes with intercultural communication, which has openness as a prerequisite, is one's strong positive motivation, so as to acquire sufficient intercultural knowledge, and one's skills in relating to and interpreting others to explore and to discover different others and then to interact with them with ease (Michael Byram, Nichols, & Stevens,

2001; Lustig & Koester, 2010; Neuliep, 2006). Some cultural theories stress the need for people to learn how to become global citizens (Dower, 2002; Noddings, 2005), as 'we are all members of a common humanity' (Dobson, 2006). Nevertheless, a number of questions need to be asked, for instance, *why should we care for strangers who live far from us? Or if we care for any of them, should I care as much as I care for my own family members, or as little as I do for a slight acquaintance?* Such questions that relate as much to human geography as they do to morality have no easy answers (Cloke, Crang, & Goodwin, 2004), but there is one thematic core underlying these questions: *our relation with strangers*. Here, strangeness is understood as generated and even intensified through remoteness, through the distances between social actors (Marotta, 2010, p. 107).

The other perspective of cosmopolitanism is also worth mentioning which emphasizes *social distance* as much as *geographical distance* and which points to social class as significant (Bauman, 1998; Linklater, 2010). The argument goes that some particular professions and well-to-do people have more chances to travel abroad. Such a privilege not only influences their concept of distance between *near* and *far away* but also provides them with opportunities to interact with locals who are culturally different from themselves.

Given these experiences, the socially privileged tend to be more cosmopolitan than people of the lower social classes who cannot afford to pay for similar experiences (Bauman, 1998).

This argument seems to suggest that the shorter the physical distance between people and foreign cultures, the closer the human relationship. But this is not necessarily the case. As Gronseth states, ‘the fact that some mobile people are being more exposed and aware of ‘other’ cultures and value-systems does not necessarily mean that the conditions for positive interaction and engagement with others are created *a priori*’ (2011, p. 8). Hence, we can challenge this assumption by asking: *is our relation with strangers changed to any great extent through the physical distances between us?* Marotta rebuts this argument simply by stating that ‘strangeness (...) exists when those who are physically close are *socially and culturally distant*’ (2010, p. 107, my italics).

Social and geographical distances are by no means conterminous with empathetic distance; that is, with our capacity to care for others. As long ago as the eighteenth century, the highly influential philosopher and founder of modern economics, Adam Smith, made this very point in *The Theory of Moral*

*Sentiments* (1976, ed. by Raphael, D.D. and Macfie, A.L.) and his words are worth quoting at length here:

‘Let us suppose that the great empire of China, with all its myriads of inhabitants, was suddenly swallowed up by an earthquake, and let us consider how a man of humanity in Europe, who had no sort of connexion with that part of the world, would be affected upon receiving intelligence of this dreadful calamity. He would, I imagine, first of all, express very strongly his sorrow for the misfortune of that unhappy people, he would make many melancholy reflections upon the precariousness of human life, and the vanity of all the labours of man, which could thus be annihilated in a moment’ (Smith, 1976, p. 136ed. by Raphael, D.D. and Macfie, A.L.).

Smith is saying here that two complete strangers who live in two different continents, China and Europe, are still capable of sympathizing with one another when one is faced with a natural calamity. Here, human sentiment is capable of transcending any physical distance that there might be. (Forman-Barzilai, 2005, 2010, p. 160). Smith elaborated further what this European man would do with regard to cultural associations and concerns:

‘He would too, perhaps, if he was a man of speculation, enter into many reasonings concerning the effects which this disaster might produce upon the commerce of Europe, and the trade and business of the world in general’ (Smith, 1976, p. 136, ed by Raphael, D.D. and Macfie, A.L.).

Smith is demonstrating here how any reasonably intelligent man could see that the misfortunes of others might well impact on himself, emphasizing in this way

how we should see our lives as interconnected with those of people from other countries and other cultures. The media these days carries out an informative function by disseminating catastrophic news, such as Hurricane Sandy in the USA, a nuclear power plant explosion in Japan, an earthquake in Turkey, a famine in Africa. Such disasters are transmitted with immediacy on to TV screens in our living rooms. In such cases, large geographical and social distances do not impede our empathic responses to others who live on the far side of the world. In Beck's words, this is one example of 'cosmopolitan empathy...that the spaces of our emotional imagination have expanded in a transnational sense' (2006, p. 6).

Similarly, it does not follow that shorter physical and social distances will guarantee any more positive moral responsiveness to others. In some cases, people may be more mistrustful or resentful of others precisely because they live close by (Gronseth, 2011, p. 8). In all too many cases, tensions might ensue and spill over into violence when two ethnic communities live side by side (Sen, 2007). This has happened in recent years in Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia and Myanmar, to name just four countries. People of minority races find themselves resented particularly when economic times are hard, as at present. I can testify from my own personal experience that ethnic minorities

can be targeted for racial abuse; last year, while out jogging, a car slowed down and a man shouted at me through the window, swearing and telling me in no uncertain terms to go back to my own country. Geographical proximity to someone from a different culture certainly had not imbued him with a benign cosmopolitan attitude. This unwelcoming rejection epitomizes, nonetheless, a natural human reaction when people are physically close to unfamiliarity (Bauman, 1997, 2007, 2008). The presence of strangers can imply a certain degree of threat if not promise, and can give rise to fear and anxiety rather than respect and curiosity. This kind of fear generates from unknown and uncertain embodied otherness, and anxiety can be exacerbated even further when cohabitation is perceived as an unavoidable social fact in the modern world (Bauman, 2007, 2008).

If proximity does not guarantee positive relationships with strangers, what then? Forman-Barzilai points out that cultural and historical dimensions of experience are integral to our human capacity to understand and relate to others (2010, p. 139); and that these are the most complex to unravel (ibid, p. 160). Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* can help to illuminate this point, and again, he is worth quoting at length:

'In China if a lady's foot is so large as to be fit to walk upon, she is

regarded as a monster of ugliness. (...) Europeans are astonished at the absurd barbarity of this practice, to which some missionaries have imputed the singular stupidity of those nations among whom it prevails. When they condemn those savages, they do not reflect that the ladies in Europe had, till within these very few years, been endeavouring, for near a century past, to squeeze the beautiful roundness of their natural shape into a square form of the same kind' (Smith, 1976, p. 199ed. by Raphael D.D. and Macfie, A.L.).

The missionaries react with hostility when unable to make a cross cultural connection. To them, another culture's aesthetic, in this case, their way of 'shaping beauty of appearance' was condemned as barbaric and savage behaviour. This example comes from the eighteenth century, but still serves to illustrate issues of cultural and historical bias. It exemplifies, according to Forman-Barzilai: 'how deeply entrenched our perspectives really are, how difficult it is to cultivate a critical distance from ourselves, and to approach others without historical bias' (ibid, p. 161).

The implication here is that such cultural bias militates against our feeling sympathy for others different from ourselves. Yet bias can work the other way, too; it can blur our judgment through human affection. Affection implies a close physical and social distance with maximum familiarity, but may well reduce criticality (Forman-Barzilai, 2010, p. 153). Such 'affective bias', then may influence social interaction but such sympathy is the kind that is habitually

regenerated, the kind that is integral to our human mechanism, rather than our organism (ibid, pp. 152-165).

Recognising cultural and historical differences from a critical perspective is part of the call of cosmopolitanism, and has become a need with the intensified migration rate and high level of mobility of global citizens in a modern society such as Britain (U. Beck, 2006; Nussbaum, 2010). It involves both a pragmatic and an ethical response. Bauman has persistently pointed out in his series of publications that sharing social space with otherness and living in proximity with it are not personal choices these days but an inevitable outcome propelled by economic and political developments (Bauman, 1997, 2007, 2008, 2010). It is time to shift views of differences usually perceived as forms of division, barricade or boundary into views that welcome *mélange*, fusion and hybridity (U. Beck, 2006). Otherwise, our society may well become 'a homogeneous, territorially isolated environment', which, in down-spiral, would become an incubation of 'mixophobia's lifebelt and source of nourishment' (Bauman, 2010, p. 159).

Thus the question that we ought to pose in the present is no longer the proposition that I started with --- 'why do we have got to care about strangers',

but, '*how to live with alterity*' (Bauman, 1997, p. 30, my italics). We need to seek a *modus vivendi* with strangers and, in order to make a reality of such a cosmopolitan vision, raising people's curiosity towards different forms of otherness can be seen as a first tentative step.

Kwame Anthony Appiah's ideas about cosmopolitan curiosity and the conversations this disposition can engender are particularly useful to my project. Whilst accepting the fact that people increasingly confront differences of all kinds in their day to day lives, Appiah is concerned to undermine the idea that common human understandings are therefore unattainable, that we are inevitably condemned to a world of mutual mistrust and incomprehension. Such negativity is incubated in a soil in which germinate uncertainty and a fear of the unpredictability of the unfathomable other (Bauman, 2007, 2008). In attempting to redraw the imaginary boundaries that inscribe how people of different cultures approach one another, Appiah uses the philosophical stance of cosmopolitanism to re-imagine our common humanity, to think optimistically about how we can fashion a way to live peacefully with one another, to find shared values in a nonetheless complex world. Central to this, he suggests, is the significance of stories and, in particular, of talking about and evaluating stories. This, he argues, is a key way in which we align our responses to the

world: 'It keeps our language of evaluation honed, ready to do its work in our lives. And that work ... is first *to help us act together*' (2007, p. 30, my italics). Although, of course, different cultures share different stories it is important for us to hear and think about a range of such stories as they can introduce new ideas to us, new ways of thinking about the world: for what it is reasonable for us to think in our daily lives, he suggests, depends upon ideas we already have or have been introduced to. It is an 'intercultural attitude' that Appiah implies here: that is to have a state of mind characterised by willingness, openness and curiosity, one that can lead to more positive human reactions towards people who have different cultural beliefs, values, or behaviours (Michael Byram, et al., 2001, p. 5; Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 70; Neuliep, 2006, p. 459). He uses the term *conversation* as a metaphor for engaging with the ideas of others in a non-coercive manner and sees storytelling and art as practices that can both stimulate conversation and that can, in themselves, constitute such conversations. He is worth quoting here at length.

'Conversations across boundaries of identity – whether national, religious or something else – begin with the sort of imaginative engagement you get when you read a novel or watch a movie or attend to a work of art that speaks from some place other than your own. So I'm using the word conversation not only for literal talk but also as a metaphor for engagement with the experience and ideas of others. And I stress the role of the imagination here because the encounters, properly conducted, are valuable in themselves. Conversation doesn't have to

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lead to consensus about anything, especially not values; it's enough that it helps people get used to one another' (2007, p. 85).

If the vocabulary Appiah uses – of boundaries, identity, stories and encounters – resonates with those implicit in Clingman's metaphor of navigation, then so too does his emphasis on cosmopolitan curiosity as a virtue, as a disposition that encourages us to find out about those ideas and values we share but also 'to be able to enjoy discovering things that we do not yet share.' In this way we can learn from one another or 'simply be intrigued by alternative ways of thinking, feeling, acting' (2007, p. 97).

Having conversations is a common social exchange between people. It is a point of departure to start understanding others and to make oneself understood. A cosmopolitan ethic is anchored on such a foundation, seeing conversations as holding out the promise of dialogical exchange between people of one culture and another (Appiah, 2007; Noddings, 1995a; Sennett, 2012, pp. 14-22). This sort of interaction with a culturally different person is defined as intercultural communication (Lustig & Koester, 2010; Neuliep, 2006). Cosmopolitans advocate that, although different cultures have their own ways of thinking and believing, they still can find a common vocabulary of values through conversation (Appiah, 2007, p. 57). And the more they practice such

conversations, the more common ground they will touch upon (Sennett, 2012, p. 19). Taking Appiah's contention that stories are ways in which these 'conversations across identities' can take place, the implication is that the more stories they share from other cultures, the more people have the chance to get used to one another. This in turn can be seen to increase their intercultural communicative competence.

Fundamentally, people who are involved in dialogical conversations have to be attentive and responsive to others (Sennett, 2012, p. 14). It is a mutual, receptive and reflective exchange for whoever takes part *in* and *during* a conversation (Noddings, 1995a). The level of engagement of each individual may vary, yet the skill of listening, suggests Sennett, is one of the most essential of all (Sennett, 2012, pp. 18-19). Being able to listen is *a priori* to being able to become engrossed in conversations. Listening is not only a sign of caring for other people, as Noddings suggests (1995a); for Sennett it is more about social grace, the kind of quality that helps us get along with one another without necessarily getting too close: 'The good listener has to respond to intent, to suggestion', he writes; and most importantly, he has to keep the conversation going (2012, p. 18).

It is notable that the cosmopolitan view on dialogue and conversation does not necessarily aim to reach any decisive conclusion or contain any significant message. The emphasis rather is on the process and Appiah is very clear that enjoyment is central to this. The particularities of different cultures are what Appiah calls 'thick values', and these he states are worth sharing with others, even though they may not be agreed with by others (2007, p. 47). That is why he sees art of all kinds, including stories and theatre, as important forms this conversation can take as they work through pleasure and not didacticism. Disagreement nonetheless is something that has to be valued consciously, because disagreements can enrich the quality of a conversation and a true conversation can be inclusive of them. Most importantly, they keep people talking (Sennett, 2012, p. 16). Conversations, dialogues of this kind are not debates intended to win people over to a particular opinion or ideological standpoint. What matters is that people involved in the conversation expand their understanding of one another through exploring rather than evading differences. The very act of the conversation is one that emphasizes connectivity despite difference (Noddings, 1995a; Sennett, 2012, p. 19).

Such a reciprocal exchange requires people to both speak and listen and, as Sennett stresses, it is empathy rather than sympathy that matters (Sennett,

2012, pp. 21-22). With sympathetic listening, the aim is to recognize differences and then identify through imaginative engagement in order to feel for culturally different others, to embrace their pain (ibid, p. 21). Empathetic listening, on the other hand, is a 'cooler' skill according to Sennett, one in which curiosity figures more strongly, 'conveying "I am attending closely to you" rather than "I know just how you feel"' (ibid). Such a manner of interaction can reflect and foster cosmopolitan curiosity (Appiah, 2007, p. 97), and tentatively, can attune learning in a more cultural specific way by framing it in relational and situational contexts (Cooper, Calloway-Thomas, & Simonds, 2007, p. 7; Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 69). In effect, cosmopolitan dialogues are like any other ordinary conversation: people may run the risk of misunderstanding one another but this is a risk that can be managed. 'Though no shared agreements may be reached, through the process of exchange people may become more aware of their own views and expand their understanding of one another' (Sennett, 2012, p. 19). A competent intercultural communicator, therefore, is one who can transform a negative exchange into his or her own knowledge bank, which may enhance their ability to relate or interpret similar events in the future (Michael Byram, et al., 2001, p. 6; Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 152).

Therefore, cosmopolitanism aims to embrace cultural differences with

sophistication, with openness, and with a willingness to engage with fresh perspectives on the world (Appiah, 2007; Hansen, 2010; Reid & Sriprakash, 2012; Rizvi, 2009; Saito, 2010). With such an ethical attitude, students can engage in the kind of learning that allows them to experiment while encouraging them to communicate (Korne, Byram, & Fleming, 2007; Sennett, 2012, pp. 13-14). This kind of learning focuses on the process of what Rizvi calls 'varied situatedness' (2009). Cosmopolitanism is thus an earthy and practical philosophy, not alienated from the concerns of modern society. This research project set out to explore whether, through drama education, people who start from different cultural trajectories can move into a transnational space to connect with difference whilst also having the chance to situate their knowledge in line with cultural practices so as to position themselves in relation to a bigger world (Rizvi, 2009). This, I believe, is a project in line with the cosmopolitan worldview.

## **2.5 Drama Education, a Model through which to Pursue Cosmopolitan Learning**

Many drama educators have for some time advocated that the need for intercultural awareness is more important than ever in their work (Donelan, 2004; Winston, et al., 2010). They believe that to be able to interact readily with

people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds is and will remain an urgent learning need for the current generation and beyond. They also affirm that drama education has its essential role to play in any project for cosmopolitan learning (Donelan, 1999, 2002, 2004, 2010; Fleming, 2003, 2006; Winston, et al., 2010).

A drama space is where participants can enact, interact, and create their own socio-cultural encounters based on their shared cultural knowledge. Bringing in different stories from different cultures is a way to use fiction as a foundation for participants to explore, discover and search for connectivity in the specific ways that drama enables. First and foremost we need to consider how drama spatialises stories and what that implies.

The noun 'space' – as opposed to 'place' – is ever present in drama teaching; 'find a space'; 'work in your own space'; 'walk through the space'; 'share the space equally' – such phrases may well trip off the tongue of the drama teacher several times a lesson. Space, not place, because space is conceptually fluid and ill-defined, open and yet to be imagined as something more specific. Space is the raw material of the drama classroom and Doreen Massey has theorised it in ways that help us appreciate the boundaries that

exist within it, many of them invisible, but most of them dependent upon the students who populate it at any one time.

First of all, she insists that space is not superficial, not depthless, and this depth is intrinsically related to the narrative trajectories of those who are sharing it. 'Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories so far', she suggests (2005, p. 9). Such an imaginative act will have political ramifications as it will 'force into the imagination a fuller recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell' (ibid, p. 11). This defines space as relational, rather than empty and suggests that it cannot be uprooted from time, cannot be de-historicised, cannot be seen to have any 'timeless authenticity'. 'The specificities of space are a product of interrelations – connections and disconnections – and their (combinatory) effects' (ibid, p. 67). As Nicholson has pointed out, this view of space undermines the common conception of the drama studio as an empty, liberated space within which we can remove ourselves from the political realities of the outside world in order to gain authentic understandings (Nicholson, 2009, pp. 60-61). Its real emancipatory – or educational – potential lies elsewhere, in what Massey refers to as the 'spatialisation of stories' that it enables. Her own reference point is the Eurocentric accounts of the fall of the

Aztec Empire, where the dynamic flow of agency is always seen as issuing from Europe outwards. 'Spatialising that story,' she insists, 'enables an understanding of its positionality, its geographical embeddedness; an understanding of the spatiality of the production of knowledge itself' (2005, p. 63). In other words, there is more than one story to be told, and none should assume any easy authority over the other. Hence the need for us to re-imagine stories as *encounters*, as *processes*, not as closed, discrete artefacts but as open-ended, capable of releasing our imaginations into more open attitudes of being (ibid, p. 58). This is where Massey's ethical theory of space chimes readily with Clingman's definition of navigation as dependent upon a state of preparedness.

'It means accepting placement as *displacement*, position as *disposition*, not through coercion of others or by others of ourselves but through 'disposition' as an affect of the self, as a kind of approach' (2009, p. 25).

It is this ethical disposition that, according to Clingman, is an intrinsic part of transnational fiction and it pertains to form as much as it does to content, what he describes as 'a way of being and seeing' *in relation to* the fiction rather than a feature of the kind of story being told. It is this issue of *form* that takes us back to the drama classroom.

When Massey writes of spatialising stories, she has in mind our

re-conceiving them in terms of their geographical origins, as we have seen. But the drama classroom is a place where, in a more literal sense, fictional stories are spatialised as a matter of course. Whether devised, improvised, created from scripts or other textual sources, they are played out in space in embodied form by the players themselves. This carries with it the potential for stories to be opened up for investigation, to be treated as malleable processes rather than static artefacts. If approached as a democratic, group task, players must of necessity navigate their way through one another's understandings and responses to the story. Thus the process of dramatisation can become a journey into a space of crossing, where different imaginations come into creative contact with one another. The more varied the geographical and cultural backgrounds of the players, the greater the difference in imaginative responses is likely to be; yet it is this very difference that can be conceptualised as having positive, heterogeneous, creative potential. If, as Clingman emphasises, 'navigation occurs not despite but because of the boundary' (2009, p. 21), then what matters is that the drama classroom becomes a secure enough *place* for the players to perceive *displacement* as an acceptable disposition, as the very grounds for creative response.

As well as space, drama practitioners make use of another quality that the

liveness of drama brings to stories – that of presence (Schechner, 2003). As a presence in the classroom, my ethnicity is apparent whatever social or fictional role I play, a dual cultural signifier of *being* and *representing* in front of children. In a British school, I am seen as a legitimate stranger, physically close to the participants in the drama class and able to bring cultural and historical elements directly into play when taking on a role from a Chinese story. Drama conventions such as Teacher in Role or Forum Theatre can be set up so as to frame the drama in a transnational space, through which both participants and practitioners can navigate in order to share different cultural values and ideas; new ways of thinking may be introduced or challenged, or met-up with in and through dramatic situations (Winston, et al., 2010, p. 15). Within such a space, both practitioners and participants can become ‘intercultural speakers’, able to establish relationships between their own and other cultures so as to bridge differences by exploring, explaining, and bearing witness to them (Mike Byram & Zarate, 1994, from Fleming, 2006). Dramatic engagement is not restricted to verbal expression, of course. It is an embodied experience, including gesture, facial expression and other forms of body language. Learning something of another cultural performing arts tradition will be one way of cultivating intercultural awareness (Fleming, 2003, p. 88). The point is not, however,

simply about learning with an open-mind about the traditional artistic values of other cultures. In a transnational space, participants are also welcome to contribute their own cultural input and are encouraged to bring forms together so as to create a hybrid performance (Clingman, 2009, p. 11). This is, I am arguing, an important aspect of cosmopolitan learning; that the participants are taught in a non-coercive manner, encouraged to be open to cultural difference, to experience it and experiment with it (Clingman, 2009, pp. 24-25; Hollinger, 2002, p. 231; Winston, et al., 2010, p. 15). They are 'actors', in Held's term, with 'human agency', who have the ability to act, 'the ability not just to accept but to shape human community in the context of the choices of others' (2010, p. 70). This is how drama practitioners can grapple with the idea of cosmopolitan education and deliberately make cultural learning more explicit, more conscious and more structured and enjoyable. Such a process of dramatisation, according to Winston, Lo, and Wang, 'can become a journey into a space of crossing, where different imaginations come into creative contact with one another' (2010, p. 14).

## **2.6 Coda: responding to Žižek's criticism of Cosmopolitanism**

The contemporary political philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, would very likely be critical of my project and has written in a sceptical voice about cosmopolitanism

in a number of articles (Žižek 1997; Žižek, 2005, 2006; Žižek 2012). He does not deny that modern technology has shrunk our social distance with others across the globe. However, he sees the news we are being exposed to globally as, in the main, horrifying or catastrophic, usually involving death and casualties, such as the recent Boston Marathon bombings, the earthquake in the Sichuan province in China, or violence in the Islamic world. He suggests that the relentlessness of this agenda tends to overwhelm people, leaving them with the feeling that there is little pragmatic help ordinary outsiders can offer. Feelings of sympathy, of outrage will inevitably give way to a sense of paralysis, and ordinary people are thus cast as, 'immobilized fascinated spectators' (Žižek, 2005). He also argues that cosmopolitanism is little more than a new price tag on an old brand, a way that capitalism re-addresses the ideology of Western cultural imperialism with a fancier name so as to attract more 'buyers' into its agendas. The fact remains that the less wealthy, less powerful nations are exploited as markets by the more powerful nations and, for him, cosmopolitanism is merely a sweet coating over a hidden political agenda of racism, a market slogan for voracious and racist capitalists to present a friendly but false gesture of generosity, their acceptance of cultural differences masking the higher social and political rankings they claim for themselves. This

'privileged *empty point of universality*' (Žižek, 2006, p. 171, his italics) empowers them to choose according to their own preferences (Žižek 1997; Žižek, 2006). In his words, with cosmopolitanism, 'respect for the Other's specificity is the very form of asserting one's own superiority' (2006, p. 171).

In his recent publication *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (Žižek 2012), Žižek uses the example of the mass shooting in Oslo in 2011 by Anders Behring Breivik to argue that such bloodshed is not due to any lack of tolerance of cultural difference; rather, the reason that Breivik committed the massacre was caused by what he saw as too much tolerance from his own compatriots. Breivik's targets were not Muslim, not the different others, but those of his own kind, white Norwegians, born and raised in his own country (Žižek 2012, p. 45). His point suggests that tolerance can lead to extreme violence on the very people who advocate and share cosmopolitan values.

Seen in Žižek's terms, then, my project, pursuing cosmopolitan learning through Chinese stories with British pupils, could be criticized for having darker political implications, with a hidden racist and capitalist sting in its tale. The capitalist taste for consumption in a cosmopolitan society might be leading me to sell my own cultural heritage, Chinese culture, as a minority culture in British

society. A cynical commentator might express their skepticism by saying that I am taking advantage of the liberal West's fondness for exoticism, for different others, and have used this fondness to strengthen my sales pitch to British education. I might be attacked for subconsciously pursuing a capitalist ideology that not only upholds the goal of turning my own culture into a profitable commodity for myself, in a way that is both self-exploitative and self-condemning, as it devalues my own social identity by self-consciously positioning myself as 'minority' (Žižek, 2006). If such an argument were to be put to me, I would strongly refute it, however, by returning to the principles at the heart of my project, to those that drove and sustained it.

Being an ethnically Chinese teacher-artist and teaching Chinese stories to British children provided both parties, strangers in each others' eyes, with a 'context dependency', to quote Skirbiš and Woodward, as 'cosmopolitan openness has a performative dimension' (2011, p. 65). It provided both of us with an opportunity to transform into 'actors who mobilize particular ways of seeing' (ibid) and being with others. This was not a one-way sales project, exporting Chinese values to British children. There was no hidden racist agenda, no sense in which I positioned myself as superior, other than by co-opting the necessary authority of the teacher's role. I was not assuming any

absolute attitudes with regard to tolerance or intolerance of difference; rather, difference was envisioned as '*a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like dialectic*' (Audre, 2006, p. 2496). It was my intention to ignite children's genuine curiosity when framing this cross-cultural learning in a drama space, harnessing their willingness to engage with, and as, a different other into a transnational, liminal space where curiosity was promoted as a cultural virtue; a place where playful drama pedagogy could be actualized to inspire a desire to interact with cultural difference. To use Audre Lorde's phrase, I hoped that difference could 'become unthreatening' (2006, p. 2496). This might also be seen as one possible response to the kind of 'positive universalistic project' Žižek would like to see, something to be genuinely shared by all who took part (2012, p. 46).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed how the perspectives of cosmopolitanism have influenced this thesis, and I have also argued that this ethical view has become essential to contemporary society. I have elaborated on the positive values of cosmopolitan learning proposed it for its ethical as well as its practical potential. Playing along the boundaries of difference is at the core of my

research and drama education, I have suggested, is a model for doing this.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Epistemological Paradigm**

There is no simple or single way to define knowledge with a capital 'K' (Brook & Stainton, 2000; Hamlyn, 1971; Lehrer, 1990). In the history of western thought there has been no agreement on this topic, which can be traced back to Ancient Greece (R. N. Beck, 1979; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The debate from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century was between rationalism and empiricism. While the former view is that genuine knowledge is found through reasoning, the latter relies on a person's experiences (Brook & Stainton, 2000, p. 3.; Hamlyn, 1990). Immanuel Kant proposed that this traditional, long lasting dispute had to be ended and championed a resolution of the impasse by unifying British empiricism and continental rationalism. His main argument was that, without experiences, theories are meaningless; without reasoning, subjectivity can result in what has been done in practice losing validity (Lacey, 1996). Later in the nineteenth century, positivism was used for the first time as a philosophical position by the French philosopher, Auguste Comte. He argued that by observing human behaviours based on sense experiences, and then giving scientific descriptions by reasoning rather than speculation and supposition, one can pursue real knowledge (R. N. Beck,

1979; Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 9).

In the twentieth century research world, the epistemological inquiry of what can be counted as knowledge is shaped by different research worldviews (Lincoln & Guba, 2000b). A worldview, as a set of belief systems, 'guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways' (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107). Five key epistemological models are listed below in table 1 (Lincoln & Guba, 2000b, p. 168). The columns from left to right are chronological (Lincoln & Guba, 2000b).

Table 1: Epistemology of Five Models

Models	<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Postpositivism</b>	<b>Critical Theory et al.</b>	<b>Constructivism</b>	<b>Participatory</b>
Epistemology	Dualist/objectivist; Findings true	Modified dualist/objectivist; Critical tradition/community; findings probably true	Transactional/subjectivist; value-mediated findings	Transactional/subjectivist; created findings	Critical subjectivity in participatory transaction with cosmos; extended epistemology of experiential, propositional, and practical knowing; cocreated findings

### **3.2 Research Paradigm of My Project**

My research project is thus situated within the interpretative paradigm which encompasses social constructivism, the participatory approach and also educational complex theory. As Nelson and co-authors observe, this choice 'is pragmatic, strategic and self-reflexive' (1992, p. 2). It lends itself, more importantly, to 'new forms as different tools, methods, and techniques' which 'are added to the puzzle' (Norman K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, p. 3).

My research design and rationale use a qualitative methodology and an interpretative approach. In the research literature, qualitative research (QUAL) (N.K. Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) is often seen as opposed to quantitative research (QUANT) (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002) within a dualistic framework (Norman K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The major comparisons between QUAL and QUANT are that the first is subjective and interpretative, and aims to discover what happened and what was happening during the research process in a naturalistic social setting and then to report findings in the form of words. In contrast, QUANT is objective and numerical, and aims to provide proof with evidence in a controlled environment and to report the result using numbers (Norman K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). However, some theorists claim that QUANT and

QUAL approaches should no longer be regarded as disconnected. Instead, there is potential to combine the two methodologies so that researchers can extract more credible evidence and also understand more fully their research problems (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Such is to advocate a 'mixed methods' approach.

The underpinning ontological and etymological views of mixed methods accords with the 'pragmatist paradigm' (R. B. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This claims that research methods have to be practical and pragmatic so as to support researchers' needs on site to collect data (R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The concern, nevertheless, is the risk that mixed methods may simply be regarded as a panacea (Symonds & Gorard, 2010). Combining QUANT and QUAL can be a necessity, but only in such projects in which both sets of data are necessary to answer their research questions to the fullest extent (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 23; Symonds & Gorard, 2010). According to Creswell and Tashakkori, there are four realms of mixed methods. With subtleties they are differentiated by the design combining methods, methodology, paradigms and practices (2007). Greene indicates four different domains of mixed methods research but with different criteria to categorise

them (Greene, 2008). Among the four domains, the first captures my attention, focussing as it does on ontology, which is the nature of the world, and on epistemology, which is how we understand and research the world.

This domain of mixed methods from Greene (Greene, 2008), instead of looking for formulae of combinations, as Creswell and Tashakkori do, places more emphasis on searching for a converged and compatible philosophical rationale between qualitative and quantitative research methods. This also implies that the researcher can take an active position to find out the most appropriate research design in order to pursue his or her own research interests. Hammersley remarks that 'individual researchers should be free to identify the most productive areas of inquiry and to determine the most effective means for investigating them' (2005, p. 144).

The abovementioned domain inspires me to re-think the associated and literal meanings of mixed methods, and to consider what methods can be mixed in mainly qualitative research in order to maximise the effectiveness of my research design. Also, could the concept of 'mixed methods' be borrowed, using more than one qualitative research method? What term should be used to refer to such qualitative mixed research so as not to confuse readers and prevent them from understanding my approach?

My methodology draws from two qualitative approaches – case study and ethnography. This combination I regard as a creative one as it provided me with the flexibility which I needed in the complex, multiple role of actor-teacher-researcher.

Here I will draw on the concept of *bricolage* to conceptualise the rationale for this approach (Norman K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, pp. 3-4) which is a logical function of the human mind, as initially suggested by Lévi-Strauss (1966). *Bricolage* is done by a *bricoleur*, who uses a box of fixed yet heterogeneous tools to complete massively diverse tasks (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17). In a research context, the researcher works as a *bricoleur* to carry out research by using multiple methodological approaches (Norman K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, pp. 3-4). As Kincheloe states:

‘In this context, the bricolage is concerned not only with divergent methods of inquiry but with diverse theoretical and philosophical understandings of the various elements encountered in the act of research’ (2001).

Ontologically, the *bricoleur* is aware of the complexity of reality and its deep social structure on a daily basis (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004, p. 4). Unlike the positivist, the *bricoleur* believes realities are constructed not fixed. Furthermore, a *bricoleur* understands that reality is not in a single dimension and it cannot be represented as one single reality, but is multiple (Law, 2004, p. 69). As realities

are constructed, they can be re-conceived and changed. Research can help us bring about such changes but only if we can capture and understand the diverse ways it is constructed (Law, 2004, p. 69).

Moreover, the multiplicity of realities implies that the *bricoleur* is actively involved in the process of creating and recreating them (Kincheloe, 2001; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004, p. 3; Law, 2004, p. 43). This is to say that we as researchers 'actively construct our research methods from the tools at hand rather than passively receiving the 'correct', universally applicable methodologies' (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 3). This involvement is an intellectual activity for researchers (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004, p. 3) and is necessary to counter their taken for granted understandings shaped by their prior experiences (Hatton, 1988) as part of research methods. They defamiliarise the means they have known so as not only to identify subtle differences between them, but also to learn from those differences, drawing upon 'the power of the confrontation (...) to expand the researcher's interpretive horizons' (Kincheloe, 2001). To borrow the analogy from Law (2004) of seeing researchers as puzzle solvers in social studies, this is to perceive that 'the world presents empirical and theoretical puzzles that can be solved by applying, adapting, and extending the paradigm' (2004, p. 43). However, researchers

have to be aware of not merely accumulating 'methodological pluralism at face value', as Hammersley points out (2007). Each qualitative approach has 'its own unique set of quality criteria' (Hammersley, 2007), which researchers must investigate individually to maximise the value of combining qualitative approaches.

To conclude, *bricolage* is a pragmatic approach in my project. This approach empowers me to take the initiative in my research design on sites 'focusing on the clarification of his or her position in the web of reality (...) and the ways they shape the production and interpretation of knowledge (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004, p. 2). Also, *bricolage* is a solution which provides me with the flexibility and adaptability to change, add, or modify accordingly on the two sites I carried out my fieldwork.

### **3.3 Case Study**

#### *3.3.1 Definitions of Case Study*

A case study in qualitative research is defined as a research strategy (Norman K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a; Yin, 2003) or approach (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Simons, 2009), or as a choice the researcher makes on which to focus their study for the time being (Stake, 1995, 2005b). A single case or bounded system (Creswell, 2007) can refer to a more complex entity (such as a phenomenon, an incident, a group, an institution, a nation); as well as a

simpler one (an individual, a policy, a programme) (Gray, 2009, p. 170; Stake, 2005b). Each case is investigated focussing on selected topics in depth (Roger Gomm, Martyn Hammersley, & Peter Foster, 2000; Patton, 2002, p. 447; Simons, 2009) and looking into their complexity is, as Simons has claimed, the purpose of a case study (2009, p. 21).

The chosen case will occur in a social and natural situation. The views of participants will be collected as data (Gall, et al., 1996, p. 545). The researcher must be ready to allow the events and situations that form the substance of a case study to speak for themselves (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 254) and should also listen to what participants like to tell her (Roger Gomm, et al., 2000, p. 3). The *emic* perspective, (Stake, 1995) or insider's view (Gall, et al., 1996, p. 13) is one of the ways around which to construct a study. Another approach applies an *etic* perspective, with which the researcher posits themselves as an outsider (Gall, et al., 1996, p. 13; Stake, 1995).

### *3.3.2 Strength of Case Study: Uniqueness*

In a case study, the researcher decides what the case is that they wish to understand and what they are interested in. Each case is special and has its own attributes of uniqueness. These may be related, for example, to participants' backgrounds, taking into account a variety of socio-cultural factors,

including relevant economic, ethnic, historical, or political, data, physical abilities and aesthetic preferences (Stake, 1998, p. 91). The specificity of these contexts strengthens the study's particular contribution to knowledge and it is therefore what is exceptional which makes a case worthy of being studied (Stake, 1998, 2005a), as '[o]ne selects a case study approach because one wishes to understand the particular in depth' (Merriam, 1988, p. 173). Nevertheless, this is not to say that case study researchers neglect that which is common with other cases, yet it is an emphasis on the uncommon, on the specific that often characterises the end product of the study (Stake, 2008, p. 125).

### 3.3.3 *Limitations*

Case study research, however, like all research designs has its limitations (Simons, 2009, p. 262). To quote Simons: 'Case studies are "too subjective"; you cannot generalize from a case study; you cannot generate theory in case study research; case studies are not useful in policy-making' (2009, pp. 162-170). These issues however are '*myths in case study research*' (2009, p. 162), as Simons explicitly states. To recognise the contributions they can make and how to avoid bias and limit shortcomings (Simons, 2009, p. 163) are far more crucial than to fall into either-or dualism in qualitative research (Fay, 1996, p. 241). Furthermore, there are those who do indeed think that we can

generalise from case studies as we shall now explore.

#### *3.3.4 Typicality, an Alternative Perspective for Generalisation*

Generalisation is an issue which case study researchers have always found it necessary to dwell upon (Roger Gomm, et al., 2000). Some researchers consider that generalisation is merely a digression from what social science has to focus on (Lincoln & Guba, 2000a; Stake, 2000); Donmoyer (2000), for example, has suggested the usefulness of Piaget's schema theory, and how it suggests that we learn cognitively from assimilation, accommodation, integration and differentiation of knowledge. This he claims can help us re-consider what generalisability in a case study might consist of (Piaget, 1971, quoted from Donmoyer). Others point out how traditional ways of talking and thinking about generalisability are obsolete and must be altered for the purposes of the research community. Schofield has proposed increasing the importance of generalisability within research design by posing correlated questions which cover the typicality of the chosen cases, the more common themes to be explored on chosen sites and their future development and how the phenomena appear in research locations and situations (2000). Gomma, Hammersley and Foster (2000) have argued that generalisation is naturally embedded within and across cases. They have suggested that, rather than

perceiving generalisation as a research design problem, it should be seen as pertaining to the general relevance of the findings to the research projects themselves.

Stenhouse (1987) argued that cases should be selected as representative samples for study. He suggested that an educational researcher is analogous to an archaeologist, with selected cases mirroring archaeological digs. What these two fields have in common is that they both cast light on how we understand the world by discovering specific cases. This should not be confused with 'sampling', which is not the purpose of a case study (Thomas, 2011, p. 62). Sampling selects from a large population to observe 'by a process which gives every possible sample the same chance of selection' (Stuart, 1984, p. 4) 'so that one may estimate something about the whole population' (Thompson, 2002, p. 1). Case study, by contrast, looks into cases in depth, chosen for their chance of offering representative data of a certain type of case.

In order to increase the applicability of the research, the concept of typicality is useful to guide a general research design (Schofield, 2000). The usefulness of a research exercise will increase, as Schofield stated, 'if the search for typicality is combined with (...) a reliance on the kind of thick description emphasized by Greertz' (1993, p. 78). Thick description aims to

capture the meanings people bring to their interactive experiences (Norman K. Denzin, 1989, p. 159; Geertz, 1993). Geertz suggested viewing human behaviours as cultural symbols which are interpreted without detaching them from social interactions and cultural contexts (1993). Thus, a thick description produces a thick interpretation (Norman K. Denzin, 1989, pp. 159-160).

### *3.3.5 Quality of Case Study*

Readability is one of the benchmarks to be taken into consideration when judging the quality of a case study report (Merriam, 1988, p. 33; Yin, 2003, p. 11). Merriam and Yin both mention that without a suitable and systematic writing structure, a report may contain too lengthy a description and thus become unreadable (Merriam, 1988, p. 33; Yin, 2003, p. 11). There are diverse styles of reporting a case study (Merriam, 1988, p. 193). The choice of style is governed by the researcher's purpose(s) (Creswell, 2007, p. 197) as well as her target audiences' interest(s) (Merriam, 1988, p. 194). In an educational report, the three most important components are to describe, to explain and to explore (Merriam, 1988, p. 29). A good report will always have some description. As I am influenced by ethnographic approaches, I will use more exploratory than explanatory narrations.

### 3.3.6 *Triangulation*

The concept of triangulation can be understood to have developed in three stages from the 1970s up to now (Simons, 2009). In the early stage, it was seen as a way of cross-checking data or teasing out arguments from various angles (Simons, 2009, pp. 129-130). It then came to be used as a concept to underpin a rationale for mixed methods research (Creswell, 2009), and more recently it is seen as a method to explore different perspectives in order to construct valid meanings (Simons, 2009, p. 131). The significance of triangulation is not necessarily to seek a convergence of meaning; it may well clarify where divergences of meaning occur (Mathison, 1988).

There are four types of triangulation, according to Denzin: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation (1989). Data triangulation is the process by which researchers collect as much data as possible on the same phenomenon over a period of time, or in multiple sites, or with people who are from different levels of organisation, for instance individuals, groups and departments (Norman K. Denzin, 1989, p. 237; Gray, 2009, p. 193). Time, space and personal triangulation are the subtypes of data triangulation which correspond to these three observational units. Their focus is to observe and recognise the

relationships between these units of analysis and persons who are involved in the case (1989, p. 237). *Investigator* triangulation refers to more than one researcher looking at the same issues through systematic comparison in order to minimise biases which might be generated by a single researcher (Flick, 2002, p. 226; Gray, 2009, p. 193; Stake, 1995, p. 113). *Theory* triangulation uses multiple perspectives and theoretical frames to approach data in order to extend known knowledge and offer alternative knowledge (Flick, 2002, p. 227; Stake, 1995, p. 113). *Methodological* triangulation can be sub-categorised into *within* method and *between* method triangulation (Norman K. Denzin, 1989, pp. 243-244). Within method triangulation allows for multiple perspectives through one single method, whereas between method triangulation uses dissimilar methods to collect data (Norman K. Denzin, 1989, pp. 243-244; Flick, 2002, p. 227; Gray, 2009, p. 193). The common purpose of these two different research strategies is to 'compare results to lend validity to research' (Dunne, Pryor, & Yates, 2005, p. 51).

Of these four, the most common type applied to case studies is data triangulation, in which the researcher corroborates multiple data which may have been acquired through multiple methods (Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Yin also points out that the ability to make use of a variety of data

resources can be a unique strength of the case study method (2003, p. 8) as these can add 'richness to the description' (Simons, 2009, p. 130) and help with cross checking the issues (Simons, 2009, pp. 129-130; Stake, 1995). The rigor, breadth, and depth of an investigation are added to by the combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, different perspectives and observers in a single study (Norman K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, p. 4).

Hence, triangulation 'helps to identify different realities' (Stake, 2008, p. 133) by increasing the breadth, complexity, richness, and depth of the inquiry (Flick, 2002, p. 229). Moreover, triangulation is seen to be the research strategy to produce fully rounded interpretative research (Norman K. Denzin, 1989, p. 246; Flick, 2002, p. 227), which contributes 'to the search for additional interpretations more than the confirmation of a single meaning' (Flick, 1992). Therefore, triangulation need not be seen as a way to validate the research outcomes or procedures but more as an alternative to validation (Norman K. Denzin, 1989, p. 246; Norman K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, p. 4; Flick, 2002, p. 227).

### *3.3.7 Intrinsic, Instrumental and Collective Case Study*

There are different ways in which we can construct a typology of case studies (Thomas, 2011, p. 91) but one of the most commonly used has been

provided by Stake (1995). An *intrinsic* case study is carried out because researchers have a clear aim as to what they wish to understand and to learn about the chosen case (Stake, 1995, 2008). In an *instrumental* case study, researchers approach the case with no set idea as to what the investigation will teach them. The issues here are seen to emerge during the investigation itself (Simons, 2009; Stake, 2008). A *collective* case study (Stake, 1995, pp. 3-4) or multiple case study (Yin, 2003) is research extended from an instrumental study (Stake, 2008, p. 123). Thus, different perspectives and insights are collected on the same issues (Creswell, 2007, p. 74; Simons, 2009, p. 21). This is approached with particular questions in mind that these cases are meant to inform in some way. There are particular themes or issues that are known to be as yet untested.

Researchers choose to study multiple (collective) cases for the purpose of augmenting the scope of the research inquiry or hypothesis (Yin, 2003, p. 47), which will be guided by their own research agenda. The collective case study can consist of two or more cases in single or multi-sites (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). In my case, I chose to work with two classes of Year 5 children in two contrasting schools. One school consisted predominantly of white British children, the other was a multi-ethnic school.

The overall advantage of conducting a collective case study is that the data should be robust when compared to a single case study (Yin, 2003, p. 46). In general, consistent and replicable procedures taking place in multiple cases increase the reliability of the research (Gall, et al., 1996, p. 572). In addition, it is 'to test the generalizability of themes and patterns' (Gall, et al., 1996, p. 544), and this relates to our earlier discussion of typicality. The disadvantage, however, is that it is not always possible, for practical reasons, to apply the same research design to each case (Yin, 2003, p. 47). Thus the researcher has to be flexible in her methods of data collection so as to adapt to whatever the given social setting has to offer. Another disadvantage is the extensive time and energy required to undertake such a study (Yin, 2003, p. 47) and consequently the potentially very large quantity of raw data.

### *3.3.8 Educational Case Study*

'Systematic inquiry made public' is how Stenhouse defined research in education (1987). He claimed that the primary research purpose in the field is to understand the world in which we live so as to enable us to act upon our understandings, as '[k]nowledge about education turns out to be bound to particular action-contexts' (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 43). This involves two levels of interrelated knowledge: first of all, practical knowledge of what the

actions we take in the world are; and secondly, explanatory knowledge to help understand why those actions are being taken (Stenhouse, 1987, p. 74). Carr and Kemmis also share a similar argument to the above claiming that 'educational acts are social acts, which are reflexive, historically located, and embedded in particular intellectual and social contexts' (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 44). Hence, knowledge in education is integrated, practical and explanatory knowledge in social and historical contexts, and the teacher should be the primary consumer of educational research. Moreover, the purpose of research is to improve the teacher's repertoire of practices (Skilbeck, 1983).

### *3.3.9 Case Study in Drama (in) Education*

The case study as both methodology and method has been applied internationally in drama (in) education (O'Toole, 2006; Winston, 2006) particularly in the last two decades. Such research is widely spread in various areas, and includes collaborative projects between education and the theatre industry (Chinyowa, 2007), policy making related to drama curriculum (Greenwood, 2009), focused participatory theatre research (Young, 2004), and research aimed at integrating theory and practice in drama teaching (McCammon, Miller, & Norris, 1997).

O'Toole states that the core characteristic of case study, its focus on

particular situations, is suitable for research in drama education as drama does precisely this in its content (2006, p. 46). In participatory drama (Neelands, 1990, 2000), students investigate in role specific, particular, strongly contextualised situations. Moreover, Winston states that case study research is a powerful approach for discovering knowledge through drama education (2006, p. 44). Such knowledge does not have to reach a consensus yet may challenge an established view; it may also bring new insights to a situation which people are accustomed to and take for granted (Winston, 2006, p. 44). Drama education has developed ways to construct and reconstruct reality captured in multiple forms and viewed from multiple perspectives (Winston, 2006).

### **3.4 Ethnography**

#### *3.4.1 Definitions of Ethnography*

Ethnographic research is a sub-category of anthropology (Gall, et al., 1996, p. 607; Zaharlick, 1992). Anthropology studies people's cultures and ways of life in holistic and comparative ways. The concept of culture refers to 'the total way of life shared by a group of people'. Sharing culture therefore is attributed to groups rather than individuals. Moreover, 'culture is socially learned' (Zaharlick, 1992, p. 117). This is to say that customary traditions and

cultural knowledge are passed on from one generation to the next. However, it is not to say that culture is static; in contrast, culture is moving and fluid. It changes over time through borrowing or invention (Barnett, 1953; Shade, 1997). This idea of culture is of particular relevance to my own research, as indicated in the last chapter.

Taking an etymological view to look at the word 'ethnography', it can be divided into its prefix *ethnos*, meaning 'a people' in Greek, and the word root *-graph*, as written, write or draw. Ethnography, therefore, is a 'study of peoples' through descriptive forms (Thomas, 2011, p. 124; Zaharlick, 1992, p. 118). The scope of ethnography can be large or small, macro or micro, depending upon how long a researcher spends with a social group in their natural setting. In a micro study, ethnographers have specific focuses to look into informed by their own hypothetical perspectives of the social setting they are investigating (Gray, 2009, p. 170). The time dimension of the research can be synchronic, to describe people's ways of life at one specific time and place, or diachronic, to study changes of behaviour over a period of time in a broader social-cultural context (Zaharlick, 1992, p. 118).

Murchison provides a succinct definition of ethnography: 'Ethnography is a research strategy that allows researchers to *explore* and examine the

*cultures* and societies that are a fundamental part of the *human experience*<sup>1</sup> (2010, p. 4). There are three distinctive features of ethnography: firstly, to describe 'a culture as its members see it' (Gall, et al., 1996, p. 608); to study human interactions through an exploratory approach (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 3); and lastly, to research by taking a view as an insider, engaging personally with people in a research site (Davies, 2008, p. 81). These three key features lead directly to the following section.

#### *3.4.2 Strengths and Characteristics*

Ethnography has a significant overlap with other qualitative research approaches such as case study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 1), which also adopts an interpretative paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Thomas, 2011). Briefly, it is a view of anti-positivism not to follow principles of causal relationship and universal laws. Ethnographers, therefore, believe that one cannot seek mechanical ways to explain human behaviour (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, pp. 7-8) since human actions are by nature in a process of construction and reconstruction, continuously changing based on how people interpret the situations in which they live (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 8).

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<sup>1</sup> *Italics* by dissertation author.

#### 3.4.2.1 Culture, a topic to be studied

Firstly, the meaning of 'culture' has to be clarified. It is not to see culture as coterminous with national identity or ethnicity but as 'something researchers attribute to a group when looking for patterns of their social world (Creswell, 2007, p. 71)'. Each group of people is determined by 'how their behaviour reflects the values, beliefs, customs, taboos and other aspects', which are often intangible or invisible 'as a hidden part of an iceberg' yet can be made intelligible through systematic research (Fennes & Hapgood, 1997, pp. 13-15).

Ethnographers select 'certain aspects of human culture as central to understanding life in a particular society' (Gall, et al., 1996, p. 609). Human actions are one of these. Human behaviours, physical movements, consist of sequences of actions (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 88), which are overt and only comprehensible by investigating and then interpreting them (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 88). Ethnography therefore is a 'plausible way to study social and cultural phenomena (...) in action' as Murchison has claimed (2010, p. 4).

#### 3.4.2.2 Explorative approach

The basis from which the ethnographer commences her research is exploration. The researcher will use the question '*how*' to investigate views people take in certain situations, also to understand what shapes their

perspectives (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 3). Their research inquiries are progressively emergent rather than fixed from the outset (Creswell, 2007, p. 39). This exploratory character also means that to decide 'whom to interview, when, and where, will have to be developed over time' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 4). Moreover, the researcher has to allow the research results to emerge over a prolonged time period (Murchison, 2010, pp. 13-15).

#### 3.4.2.3 Emic approach: participant observation

There are four suggested approaches to conducting field work for ethnography, according to Gold. They are 'complete observation, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant and complete participant' (Gold, 1958). Among the four, participant as observer or the widely-used term participant observation (Davies, 2008, p. 82) is the most common approach to research in a community over a period of time (Gold, 1958). This explains why ethnography and participant observation are often used interchangeably in certain cases (Delamont, 2002).

Participant observation involves the two actions, participation and observation (Davies, 2008). Ethnographers usually spend a significant amount of time with people as participants, which will facilitate observation of particular behaviours and incidents as an insider (Murchison, 2010, p. 81).

Ethnographers can make their own judgments on whether they like to participate more and observe less or vice versa (Gold, 1958), which depends on their research needs and the actual situations they are investigating. Hammersley and Atkinson argue that participant observation is a must-have technique for people who conduct social research, since one has to take 'a mode of being-in-the-world' in order to study the world one lives in (2007, p. 11).

Moreover, this approach enables researchers to follow up any particular human actions emerging from sites, with which they may expand their research inquiry. Furthermore, it may require researchers to conduct either additional informal or formal interviews with particular participants (Davies, 2008, p. 81) according to the needs of the research project. In addition, another advantage of participant observation is that it enables the researcher to experience 'a set of shared cultural memories' (Davies, 2008, p. 87) and to share experiences (Murchison, 2010, p. 81) with the group they are researching. This can help with interpretation and can inform specific research methods, such as interviews, as it can help deepen or further probe an interview conversation.

### *3.4.3 Limitations*

The dual researcher role 'participant (as) observer' which the researcher

plays (Gold, 1958; Murchison, 2010) has advantages as mentioned above, but also limitations, which are already implicitly revealed in the compound nouns. In theory, an ethnographer attempts to be 'a subjective participant in the lives of those under study, as well as an objective observer of those lives' (Angrosino, 2007, p. 15). This ideal balance elicits two issues that need to be taken into consideration in any research design: first, how to deal with the possible research bias generated from being a subjective participant; second, how in the research to resolve the tension between subjective participation and objective observation?

The issue of subjectivity has been discussed earlier in both the introduction and case study sections. To briefly recap, social science using an interpretative paradigm constructs knowledge through inter-subjectivity and, methodologically, triangulation as a research strategy enriches the in-depth understanding of research topics and provides an alternative to validity. In the next paragraph, I will now further discuss the issue of field relationships between researcher and researched.

Gold suggested that participant observation is the approach which can minimise the concerns of ethics and validity because of the mutual awareness of field relationships established from the outset (Gold, 1958). Nevertheless,

there is a danger of jeopardising the relationship if the ethnographer develops an emotional involvement with participants whom he or she comes to see as friends (Gold, 1958; Tedlock, 2000, p. 465). According to Gold, the tension lies between researcher and informants in two layers of relationship. One is that the researcher relies heavily on identified informants in order to tease out responses, which, however, can cause informants to hold back and consequently the researcher may lose spontaneous responses. Another is that if the researcher works at a specific research site, an informant may have an emotional attachment which may distract the researcher while observing and participating (Gold, 1958). Another limitation relates to the ethnographer who is the research instrument and concentrates on site attentively looking for details, since this 'can be draining physically, mentally, and emotionally' (Murchison, 2010, p. 15).

#### *3.4.4 Ethnography for Education*

Ethnography as a research approach for education became common in the 1970s (Hammersley, 1990, p. 93). Most classroom ethnography would be classified as micro ethnography (Gumperz, 1981). Classroom interactions are essential for comprehending the meanings of the activities that students take part in (Gumperz, 1981). Moreover, in order more fully to understand them,

researchers have to be aware that working in a mixed ethnicity class has to take into consideration the possibility of cultural influences (Gumperz, 1981). Macro-ethnography tends to look at issues holistically in a larger picture (Lutz, 1981) such as aiming to help educators understand more about the culture of schools and about the total context of schooling so that they can be in a better position to improve educational practice (Zaharlick, 1992, p. 22). Both scales of ethnography in education aim to 'search for meaning' (Lutz, 1981, p. 55).

Ethnography in education searches not only for uniqueness but also for generalisation (Pole & Morrison, 2003). The concept of generalization in this case, nevertheless, is not the same as what positivists see as statistical and numerical generalisation; rather it is 'fuzzy generalisation' (Bassegy, 1999). That is to say, for example, that even though teachers might follow exactly the same lesson plans with two similar classes, there will always be some uncertainty and the possibility of needing to make changes (Bassegy, 1999, p. 55). The concept of 'what happened here may happen in other places' (Bassegy, 1999, p. 55) implies that the 'unknown area' will be revealed only once the teacher puts work into practice.

Using ethnography in educational settings, with respect to data collection, means to take an emic approach, to talk to people, and to follow up and gather

written documents. All of these will allow researchers to collect a large amount of useful data, yet it may not be sufficient without the aid of visual ethnography to supplement written texts (Harrison, 1996, quoted from Pole & Morrison, 2003, p. 119). In addition, the educational ethnographer also attempts to observe contexts with the eye of an outsider in order to select the most fruitful data. On site, ethnographers have to de-familiarise what they are used to seeing and to hearing, yet they must listen to and watch what is happening (O'Toole, 2006, p. 40) so as to reconstruct knowledge from their accumulated research.

#### *3.4.5 The Ethnographic Approach in My Project in Drama (in) Education*

Ethnography as a methodological approach has been applied gradually in drama education for at least a decade (O'Toole, 2006). Gallagher has stated that 'ethnography is critical in drama research because it can capture the process of classroom action and the spontaneity of reflection' (2000, pp. 13-14).

Gallagher, who took critical ethnography as a research approach, was embedded in a school for three years with teenagers investigating specific social issues within teen culture through theatre (2007). Donelan's project, searched into intercultural performance framed in an educational setting and

she found that by using ethnography as a research approach she was able to look into how young people understand other cultures through cross-cultural languages and embodied experiences (2002).

Ethnography influenced my approach towards the written story texts and dramatised texts I prepared for my lessons. That is, I re-examined each story from a broader socio-cultural context. Take one example from my schemes of work, the story *Liang and the Magic Paintbrush*. I will later explain in my analysis the two polar interpretations that come to fore due to readers' own socio, cultural and political milieu. Moreover, ethnography also influenced my performance as an actor-teacher using Chinese opera, for example using female stereotypical hand gestures and gaits to suggest the traits of character; or transforming cultural behaviours into contextualised performative elements in my drama lessons, such as, the stylised prostration of subjects in front of the Chinese emperor. Furthermore, there were both diachronic and synchronic aspects to my research with the classes I worked with. Diachronically I observed children who took part in a linear progression which linked together the different schemes of work running in the same order in two different classes respectively. Synchronically I observed the verbal responses or actions children took at given moments in the activities.

### **3.5 Research Methods**

My research methods design is informed by two cycles of inquiry (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003, p. 12), in which I gathered data from two different classes in two different school settings. Since I was working with two groups of children in two culturally and ethnically distinct schools, I worked as a practitioner who needed a certain amount of flexibility to adapt research methods to take into account both the class situation and the school timetable. At the same time, I had to take children's learning needs and competences into consideration as a teacher. These factors influenced me to take a slightly modified approach to some of the research methods in the second cycle. The following discussions are divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the conceptual rationales for the different methods. The second part is about how I applied research methods in practice in the two cycles. In practice, I am going to explain the ways in which my first cycle of teaching and researching informed me and then how I made adjustments to both aspects in the second cycle of research.

#### *3.5.1 Questionnaires*

The questionnaire is a research tool which uses a set of itemised questions to gather responses from individuals within a large group of people

(Gillham, 2007, p. 2; Oppenheim, 1992, p. 100). The data are analysed statistically to provide quantifiable evidence. The researcher who designs the questionnaire has to bear in mind how to link the research questions with the questionnaire questions (Robson, 2011, p. 253). This design process requires the researcher's intellectual efforts (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 101) and a significant amount of time to deconstruct through sufficient reading and then to reconstruct the ideas into specific key issues (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 100), as 'to lay down such detailed specifications in itemized particularity for an entire research project is not an easy task' (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 101).

The techniques of questionnaire design vary (Gillham, 2007; Oppenheim, 1966, 1992) and the content of questions can be designed for seeking either factual or non-factual information (Oppenheim, 1966, pp. 53-54, 1992, p. 143). Non-factual questions lead to the design of different scaling models of attitudinal measurement (Oppenheim, 1992, pp. 150-173), and questions can be open or closed (Gray, 2009, pp. 41-42; Oppenheim, 1966). The researcher, nevertheless, has to select the most appropriate design (Gillham, 2007, p. 37) so as to cover research issues relevant to his or her own project (Gray, 2009, p. 346), and a questionnaire can only be applied when it fits in with the objectives of the research (Gray, 2009, p. 338).

The researcher also has to think about how to organise the questions and take into account the instructions (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 141), layout, sequence (Gillham, 2007, p. 39) and exact wording of the questions (Oppenheim, 1966, pp. 49-80; Robson, 2011, p. 254). Furthermore, the size of the research group and the age of the respondents (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 101) are also factors which the researcher has to take into consideration during the design process. These two factors will affect the language the questionnaire uses, the numbers and pages the questionnaire consists of, and how to administer the questionnaire (Oppenheim, 1966, 1992). To summarise, questionnaire design not only involves how it works but also how it looks (Gillham, 2007, p. 37).

There are pros and cons to using a questionnaire as a research tool. One of the pros is to enable the researcher to collect a significant amount of data from many people (Gray, 2009, p. 338) in a short amount of time. Also, the analysis of structured (Gillham, 2007, p. 2) or closed questions (Gray, 2009, p. 338) is relatively simple, and consequently, the time spent on analysis is relatively short (Gray, 2009, p. 338). Furthermore, a standardised questionnaire minimises personal perspectives as well as biases (Gillham, 2007, pp. 7-8), and questions should be understood in the same way (Gillham, 2007, pp. 7-8), although the researcher should still be aware that there is a chance of

questions being misunderstood (Gillham, 2007, p. 10).

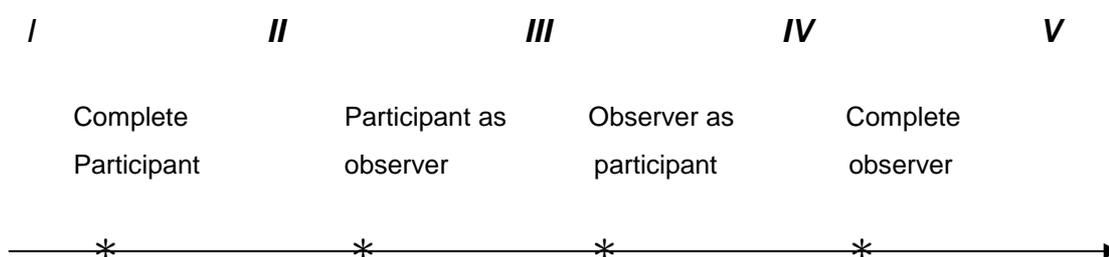
The questionnaire relies on asking printed questions on paper, but this can turn out to be one of its weaknesses (Gillham, 2007, p. 2). Some respondents may prefer to answer questions by talking them through and interacting with another person (Gray, 2009, p. 339). Apart from that, the capability to fill in a questionnaire requires certain literacy skills, namely reading and language comprehension. This means that people who have less literacy competence will have more difficulty answering written questions (Gillham, 2007, p. 13). Furthermore, in the case of a group-administered questionnaire (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 36, 1992, p. 103), there is a chance that respondents talk and discuss the contents of questions, or copy each other's answers, or change the order of answering questions (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 36). This disordering of the logical development of a questionnaire carries the risk of contaminating the credibility and reliability of data (Gillham, 2007, p. 12).

### *3.5.2 Participant Observation: Observation and Participation*

Participant observation is synonymous with fieldwork in qualitative research, particularly in child-centred research projects (Clark, 2011, p. 19). This data collection method (Bruyn, 1966, p. 16) refers jointly to 'observer as participant' and 'participant as observer' (Gold, 1958). The researcher who is

working in the field engages in both participation and observation simultaneously (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 92; Davies, 2008, pp. 77-82; Gold, 1958; Wellington, 1996, p. 43). The degree of engagement of two research techniques varies, depending on the needs of the research design and actual research scenarios.

The distinction between 'observer as participant' and the 'participant as observer' is not precisely defined; for instance, the time the researcher spends on site cannot be exactly measured. Yet the major distinction between them is whether the researcher chooses to focus more on observation or on participation. Most of the time, however, it may not be possible to pinpoint the difference. The following spectrum (Wellington, 1996, p. 43), nevertheless, suggests a solution by means of visual demonstration. The following discussion elaborates the complexity this method involves:



(The spectrum of participation and observation: adapted from Wellington, J. J. (1996). *Methods and Issues in Educational Research*. Sheffield: USDE, p. 43.)

The asterisks on this horizontal line indicate respectively the starting point

of four different research activities, from the left side to the right, which are 'complete participant', 'participant as observer', 'observer as participant' and 'complete observer' (Gold, 1958; Junker, 1960). The Roman numbers II, III, and IV represent a wider spectrum covered from one asterisk to the adjacent one and reflect the overlapping area between two research activities. In other words, the researcher's focus can shift between any of the areas covered.

The researcher who applies participant observation thus shifts between one end of the spectrum (participation) to the other end (observation) along the three segments of the spectrum covered by II to IV. The fluidity of the researcher's dual position, however, creates a challenge: the tension the researcher encounters is both physical and emotional being a detached researcher as an outsider, and being a disclosed participant and having personal involvement with the researched as an insider (Gillham, 2005, p. 43; Spradley, 1980, p. 58).

Another two challenges researchers have are at the two ends of the spectrum. On the diagram above, V covers the spectrum from the point of complete observation, commencing with 'overt observation', and gradually pointing towards 'covert observation' (Gray, 2009, p. 398). The former is the researcher who takes the position of each and every research action being

transparent whereas the other uses, for example, filming equipment to hide behind facilities in order to cover up the actual observation taking place (Junker, 1960). These two approaches impact on the interaction between researcher and researched (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2002, p. 145). This will then lead to the issue of validity of data (Gray, 2009, p. 398). Also, ethical issues may arise if the researcher applies covert observation.

The area / on the diagram indicates different degrees of participation implying a series of correlated challenges to the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 92; Junker, 1960). The researcher may use different labels to justify his or her own presence as volunteer (Lareau, 1989), teaching assistant or helper in the primary school setting, each of which will give children particular perceptions towards the adults in the classroom (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 92). Moreover, once the researcher decides to take part in any of the activities which children do on site, they will have to face a dilemma if they adopt the role of teacher. Would it be acceptable to do what children do in the activity with them? Should the researcher act and talk like a teacher when joining activities with children (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 92)? The scale of challenges, nevertheless, doubles when the researcher herself also teaches young children in classroom situations (Clark, 2011, p. 50).

Nevertheless, no matter which social identities the researcher chooses to apply, particularly in the primary school classroom environment, one of the objectives of doing so is to use the chosen role to adopt a specific approach in order to fulfil the research agenda. A different level of participation can help the researcher to apply a different intensity of observation (Davies, 2008, p. 81). To a researcher, the significant advantages of applying participant observation are being able to select what to observe and what is worth following up (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2002).

Decision making on data selection while applying participant observation is a challenge in qualitative research (L. R. Fisher, 1994; Gubrium & Sankar, 1994, p. 3). The researcher has the sensitivity of an artist (Gubrium & Sankar, 1994, p. 3) to create his or her own filtering system (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2002, pp. 145-146) which filters according to three criteria, that is: 'how much data to collect, how much to report, and how to present narrative findings' (Gubrium & Sankar, 1994, p. 3). In the following discussion, the focus is going to be on the first how-to, which is the essential first stage in participant observation.

It is not possible to observe everything (Gray, 2009, p. 413) and to talk to everyone on the research site (Davies, 2008, p. 81; Gillham, 2005, p. 40). Therefore, it is important to the researcher to focus on specific activities or

human behaviour (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 88), and on things which engage her research interests. Then gradually the researcher can move on to the stage of being able to identify key informants (Davies, 2008, p. 81; Gillham, 2005, p. 40) or critical incidents and events (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 404). In other words, the researcher narrows down the range of evidence which will be useful to answer the research questions. However, to be able to do so, the researcher still needs to observe the social setting starting with a wide range in the early stages of the participant observation process (Spradley, 1980, p. 56).

Identifying critical incidents, even those which have only occurred once, is vital to the qualitative researcher (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 404), since each incident may contain rich and insightful data (Wragg, 1999). The researcher can then either interview people involved in the incidents to question their motivations later on, or identify related informants who are more knowledgeable about the subjects the researcher is investigating, or apply extensive observation (Eder & Fingerson, 2003, p. 40) to keep a continuing record on certain participants. Conducting follow-up interviews, therefore, is a way to complement participant observation (Eder & Fingerson, 2003), by which the researcher can apply focused observation as the next step, and then later on select what to observe (Spradley, 1980, pp. 100-111).

Keeping field notes can enable the researcher to track what happened on the research sites at the time (Gray, 2009, p. 403). It is not usually recommended for the fieldworker to hold notepad and pen all the time in front of the people being researched, since this gesture can be perceived as intimidating and threatening. Therefore, the researcher will either jot down brief notes and then type them up in more detail onto their computer (Gray, 2009, pp. 406-407) or alternatively will memorise as many details as possible. Sometimes, what has been recorded can even be considered by other people as an unnecessary triviality, yet 'a wide observational focus leads to some of the most important data' (Spradley, 1980, p. 56).

Once the researcher leaves the research site, more precise observation notes have to be jotted down as soon as possible (Gray, 2009, p. 403). The researcher may well use a word processor to keep notes in electronic format for the purpose of filing. This sequence of note recording will aid her to consolidate the quality of the notes. Moreover, by systematically keeping files in digital format, it is easier to retrieve the documents later on. There are two different types of field note content, descriptive and reflective (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 120). Descriptive observation focuses on place, time, setting, people's conversation and interaction, and also the sequence of actions which took

place on site (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 120; Gray, 2009, p. 403). Reflective observation is subjective and is a fairly personal self-scrutiny covering feelings, emotions, prejudices, mistakes, likes and dislikes, and speculations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 122). Reflective notes aid researchers to focus on what can be done in the near future in similar situations so as to improve practices the next time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 122).

### *3.5.3 Interview*

Interviewing is a conversation between two people or more in which one plays the role of researcher (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 2). This is one of the essential methods for collecting data in a case study (Yin, 2003, p. 92) in order to enable the researcher to obtain views of 'multiple realities' (Stake, 1995, p. 64) drawn from the perceptions of different interviewees. It is also the method to explore through conversation people's beliefs, tacit perceptions, attitudes and understandings (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 15). Another advantage of the interview is to offer an alternative means of expression apart from reading and writing for those who are less able to communicate by conventional literacy skills for various reasons, such as low academic achievement, disability, their young age, or their being an additional language user (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Gray, 2009, p. 371).

The formality and record keeping used in an interview can be subdivided into informal chats using informal discourse and formally arranged interviews with a more sophisticated language level (Burgess & Ruddock, 1993, p. 91). On some occasions, the researcher may sift useful information from an informal conversation and then expand it to a formal interview in the near future with certain chosen informants (Burgess & Ruddock, 1993, p. 91). In this way, the researcher is able to research in depth on the site with people who engage in the research project at various levels.

The structure of a formal interview is sub-categorised into structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Gray, 2009, p. 369). The researcher has to be aware of the objectives and the aims of the interview so as to make appropriate adjustments when posing questions. The different structures of interview require the researcher to be aware of the preparations before the actual interviews take place, namely the types of questions, the duration of the interview, the power dynamics between interviewer and interviewees, and a wide spectrum of possible interview outcomes.

The accessibility of interviewees in terms of venue, space, time, and relationship-building is another key concern to the researcher while conducting interviews (Measor, 1985, pp. 56-57), and deals with the practicability of the

research and can be variable case by case. With regard to building relationships, this touches upon work ethics, and will be of most concern (Measor, 1985, p. 72) when any sensitive subjects are mentioned on research sites, or in some cases, when a respondent decides to address topics covertly (Adler & Adler, 2003). All these can intensify the professional relationship during the research project, but can run the risk of failure to complete the data collection.

Interviewing different populations requires different research methods and ethical issues to be taken into consideration (Arksey & Knight, 1999, pp. 115-125). Children, who form the group I will focus on in the discussion, used to be under-represented in social science research. The core argument against research with children is that their cognitive development has not yet provided them with sufficient maturity, and consequently their competence to express ideas and thoughts is limited (Piaget, 1929). Nevertheless, there are research reports showing that children are able to provide credible data if the researcher is aware of the ethical issues generated from the social-cultural perspective on power relationships between adult and child. The concern can be minimized by designing different interview approaches (Mahon, Glendinning, Clarke, & Craig, 1996; Morrow & Richards, 1996).

Avoiding a de-contextualised interview but creating a natural interview context is a fundamental consideration when working with children (Eder & Fingerson, 2001, pp. 183-184, 2003, p. 35). Listening and being attentive to the words and the way of speaking children have during the interview is also essential to the researcher (Eder & Fingerson, 2001, pp. 197-198). As all these are how the researcher can augment the depth of the analysis (Eder & Fingerson, 2001, pp. 197-198). Some other considerations are linked to pragmatic aspects like language level, the composition and number of interviewees and interview settings (Christensen & James, 2000; Lewis, 1992; Mahon, et al., 1996; Morrow & Richards, 1996). These factors need to be taken into the researcher's consideration during the data collection process.

#### *3.5.4 Pedagogical Research Tools*

Pedagogy demonstrates how valid knowledge transmits in educational settings (Bernstein, 1973, p. 228) in structured ways (Maybin, Mercer, & Stierer, 1992). One of the research methods I had was using pedagogical research tools to collect data. In my schemes of work, these particular research tools can be sub-categorised into four different aspects framed in my teaching structures: visual aids used to scaffold my lessons (Arizpe & Styles, 2003; Newby, 2010, pp. 352-353; Piper & Frankham, 2007; Thomson, 2008), the drama

conventions I applied (Cahill, 2006, 2011; O'Toole, 2006, p. 110), homework in written texts and drawings which I instructed children to complete, and combining drama conventions with class surveys. These four aspects also converged into a common goal of experiencing art in educational settings yet in different forms.

### **3.6 My Research Design in Practice**

#### *3.6.1 Drama Space*

A sufficiently sizeable empty space is the ideal working place preferred by drama practitioners. In school A, the class teacher booked their studio hall which has a covered carpeted floor with full ceiling lights. On one side of the wall hangs a projection screen which I could easily manoeuvre when I needed to. Two adjacent classrooms are located at one side of the hall, and another classroom is located at the corner of the hall. The hall was regularly used for year 4 assembly before my drama sessions started.

The space I used in school B was a completely different working environment and was actually year five's working classroom, where class tables, chairs, the teacher's and the TA's own working spaces, their PCs, a mobile white board, projector and screen, and the class board were all crammed into it. In order to create enough space for drama, I normally had to

utilise efficiently the fifteen minutes break time while the whole class were in the playground in order to stack away the tables and chairs, and then to make sure that the recording equipment was set up and that the props were displayed in an obvious place and at a reachable distance.

### *3.6.2 Context and Participants*

#### *3.6.2.1 School A, Year 5*

School A is situated in a rural area of Coventry in the West Midlands in the UK. Pupils are predominately British white middle class children. Children's art works are exhibited fully on two sides of the corridors and on the walls wherever you go in the school. There is a well-equipped studio where children and teachers produce their own radio programme and broadcast it during the lunch break. At a corner of a corridor, there are several bean bags lying around which have been set up deliberately there as a social area for children to sit on when they have their break. There are also sets of tables and chairs located in a spacious corridor, separated by book shelves in order to provide children with an extra working space when they have to work in small groups. The class I worked with had thirty pupils. Most of them were white British but three were ethnically East Asian. The drama experiences they had had in previous years were few and amounted to hot-seating associated with stories told in literacy

lessons. The class teacher systematically typed weekly lesson plans, which listed briefly the objectives she wished to achieve and which students she had to focus on.

#### 3.6.2.2 School B, Year 5

School B is a fairly small primary school located in the Northern area of Coventry in the UK. There is one class for each year group. The school is distinctively ethnically diverse, both staff and children. Social-economically, the school catchment area is one of the five most deprived areas nationally, according to the head teacher. Resources children can access from their families are limited. More than one member of school staff said that children seldom take a local bus to visit the city centre, and if they do, on average this might happen just once during the summer holidays.

A high rate of mobility among children is another feature of the school. The head teacher said that some children came for a term or half a term and then left for unknown reasons. Due to the mixed linguistic competence in school, the curriculum the school applies is inclined to teach children's basic learning needs separately from the national curriculum. In school, multicultural traditions and values are celebrated through varying school activities. These include Diwali, and the Indian and Chinese New Years, and for the latter

parents were invited to go to school to make Chinese food and for the children to taste some Chinese delicacies. The children had a Bollywood dance competition and at the end of year they performed Cinderella in the Christmas season.

In terms of the particular group I worked with, the number of pupils started with twenty-eight, after two sessions of teaching a new child joined in, and at the very end of the period, one child transferred to an adjacent school. The majority of children were first generation recent arrivals from Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Bangladesh, Somalia and Russia, and very few of them were white British. Islam was the most commonly practised religion in the community, but a few practised Sikhism, Hinduism or Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

The spoken languages were various. Some spoke their mother tongue in their families and learned English in school as an additional language; some were bilingual and had attended British schools since early childhood. Some had little or no competence in English when they had started the school year. Therefore, the timetable was structured loosely for literacy and numeracy as class teachers would make decisions on the spot depending on children's learning needs.

### 3.6.3 Questionnaire Design

The data I collected via this research tool aimed to inform my understanding of what kind of knowledge about Chinese culture the children had before I actually taught them. One problematic point that has to be considered is that *culture* is a problematic word (Payne, 1951, p. 235), as each individual may interpret it differently. Nevertheless, *culture* here in my questionnaire particularly refers to a way of thinking, of speaking, and of behaving, and which I deliberately made clear in the questions. In order to minimise the possibility of misunderstanding, I also explained to children the meaning of culture in this context when I administered the questionnaire in person. The questionnaire sample is on the next page. The questionnaire for school A does not include the section of ethnicity, otherwise the rest of questionnaires I conducted in school A and school B are identical.

### **The Example of the Pre Questionnaire**

**is listed on the next page**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you: Boy/Girl (Circle what YOU think You ARE. )

Christian      Muslim      Hindu      Buddhist      British      English  
Pakistani      Bangladeshi      Indian      African      Russian      Other \_\_\_\_\_

*This questionnaire will help me to understand about what you know about Chinese people. It is NOT a test! There is no right or wrong answer. Just be honest and tell me what YOU think.*

★ Circle the number accordingly

- |   | NOT TRUE  | VERY TRUE |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| 1. I think that Chinese people only eat rice.   | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. I think that most Chinese people can do Kung Fu.   | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. I think that there is no difference between British culture and Chinese culture.                             | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. I think that Chinese people have different ways of living from us.   | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. I think that children who are from China at my age probably play different games from me.                    | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Chinese people have the same way of <b>thinking</b> as British people.                                       | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. Chinese people have the same way of <b>speaking</b> as British people.                                       | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Chinese people have the same way of <b>behaving</b> as British people.                                       | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. I like listening to stories.   | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. I think that through listening to stories from other countries I can understand other people's way of life. | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |

★ Circle YES or NO accordingly

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| 11. Do you like listening to stories from other countries?   | Y N |
| 12. Do you think that Chinese people eat rice with most of their meals?  | Y N |
| 13. Do you think that Chinese people have their own culture?   | Y N |
| 14. Do you think that reading stories from other cultures helps you to understand other people's ways of thinking? | Y N |
| 15. Do you think that British children will like Chinese stories?  | Y N |

### 3.6.3.1 Layout

On one A4 size, three different sections were laid out in one single questionnaire. From the top, the first part consists of factual questions and instructions. The factual questions ask each child's name and gender. The instructions are framed in a box in order to highlight the fact that this is NOT a test. The Likert scale questions comprise the second section. The third part focuses on closed questions.

The design of the questionnaire did not apply an anonymous approach in the traditional way, instead I asked each respondent to fill in their name. The reason was for future reference if I spotted any interesting child's verbal and behavioural responses, then I could track back to see if there were any correlations between different forms of data. One of the factual questions, such as asking gender, was superfluous, since this information could be gathered fairly simply once I was familiar with the children.

### 3.6.3.2 Sequence, organization and language of questions

There are fifteen questions in total on each questionnaire sheet, which include 10 items of attitudinal questions in the form of a rating scale and five items of attitudinal questions in closed form (Oppenheim, 1966, 1992). The questions are written using simple wording in fairly short sentences (Payne,

1951, p. 234). The scale measures four different categories of attitudinal questions. Questions 1 and 2 measure respondents' opinions towards stereotypes, such as 'Chinese people only eat rice' and 'most Chinese people can do Kung Fu'. Questions 3 to 8 measure respondents' own awareness of cultural differences about their own culture and Chinese culture. The sequence in these six items applies a 'funnel approach', which means to ask questions from a broader context and then gradually narrow down to more specific questions (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 38, 1992, p. 110).

For instance, question 3 asks respondents to think from a broader cultural context to make a comparison. The next question is then worded in a way which has a similar idea to the prior question yet more specific. Question 5 pins down a particular experience – game playing –, which children can associate relatively easily with their existing experiences. Questions 6 to 8 nail down people's ways of life into specific phases as ways of thinking, speaking and behaving. Moreover, these three aspects are highlighted boldly to emphasise the subtleties of the differences. Question 9 gauges the children's scale of preference towards stories. Question 10, in particular, reflects on one of my own project aims (Gray, 2009, p. 339), which is to understand to what extent children learn about Chinese culture in Chinese stories through drama.

The first 10 items are scored on a five-point Likert-scale (Friborg, Martinussen, & Rosenvinge, 2006). The higher scores represent the higher level of agreement respondents have. The wording uses *not true* and *very true* but not *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree* since these two groups of wording suggest two different things to respondents in a slightly different way (Gillham, 2007, p. 12). My design aimed to gather how knowledgeable children felt they were about the culture and to find their preferential attitude to stories, rather than ask them their personal beliefs about each statement.

The last five questions, 11 to 15, are closed questions. This part of the design is correlated to the previous section. The content of questions is similar to the previous ones but are being asked in another form. They all start with the structural pattern 'do you think...'. This design aims to cross check the data coming from the previous section in order to solidify the reliability of the data. The reasons to do cross-checking are that firstly, wording in a slightly different way may lead to radical changes in people's responses (Gillham, 2007, p. 12), thus this design is intended to strengthen the validity and reliability of the data. Secondly, children as questionnaire respondents might circle answers in haste, or not think through it, or copy answers from other children, or answer questions after discussion with children sitting beside them. All these will risk

producing unreliable data, and thus, having questions to cross check data is advisable.

I administered a pre-questionnaire to two classes of children in classroom settings, which I refer to as case A and case B respectively. In both cases their class tables and chairs were arranged in a way to encourage working in small groups. The size of groups varied, ranging from 4 to 6 children. The criteria to group them depended on the children's learning competence. I conducted a group-administered questionnaire (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 36) in both classroom situations, however, it ran the risk that children might not follow the logical order of the questions, (Gillham, 2007, p. 12) when sitting closely one to the other. Thus, in order to minimise the possibility of contaminating data, I instructed children to answer on their own and emphasised that there were no right or wrong answers.

#### 3.6.3.3 Pre-Questionnaire with Group B

Different school and class cultures have different concerns when it comes to the same approach for administration. This is what I am going to elaborate on in the second cycle of the research project. The children in case B were multi-ethnic with very varied English linguistic abilities. The questionnaire design was amended slightly due to the ethnic diversity of the school culture. In

the factual question section on the questionnaire sheet, I added a group of words in the categorisations of religions and ethnicities. Children could circle them accordingly. I also designed the underlining blank space with the word *other* to indicate to them to fill in any religion or ethnicity which were not listed on the sheet, if applicable.

On the actual day I administered the questionnaire, several unpredicted situations occurred. The following is one excerpt quoted from my field notes taken on the day. The students' names are anonymised because of ethical concerns, and I use letters to represent each child's identity. The content of my personal notes has been edited into a reader-friendly version.

*Students A, L and E's questionnaires won't be valid. E asked my support to read out loud the sentences one by one. The syntax which is slightly complicated makes difficult for her to comprehend (e.g. question 3). A and L came to sit with us after I went through two questions with E. The student A sat to the other end of the table and didn't pay attention to my coaching but circled the numbers on the sheet on a whim. The student L noticed, and said: you answered it without reading them first!*

Getting language support from adult teachers is common when conducting a group-administered questionnaire (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 36). In this case, there were two adults in the classroom, the class teacher and myself. The class teacher was also present assisting a couple of children to fill in the questionnaire. However, based on the excerpt, the numbers of children who

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needed support were beyond what I could handle, and their linguistic competence was below average. Ideally, Students **A**, **L** and **E** all needed one-on-one support. Nevertheless, the real situation did not allow the class teacher and myself to spend much more time on the questionnaire, especially since the next activity the children had was to queue for school lunch in the hall.

The following is another excerpt emphasising the high unpredictability of this particularly classroom situation.

*When I went through questions with two girls, the other more capable children finished filling in and handed to me in person, so I was not able to concentrate on reading questions to the girls I assisted.*

The dynamic level in this classroom was intense and high. Children moved around and whenever they could chatted with their peers while the class teacher and I were all busy assisting their peers and could not spare energy to discipline them.

In addition, their low literacy ability definitely affected the credibility and validity of the questionnaire. Also, other influential factors include the actual length of time the researcher can have to administer the questionnaire. As in case B, I had fairly limited amount of time to complete the questionnaire so as

not to delay their lunch break.

#### 3.6.3.4 Post Evaluation Sheet with Group A

I devised a post evaluation sheet for the drama scheme *Liang and His Magic Paint Brush*. This design aims to find out children's moral reasoning and moral attitudes about the two moral dilemmas that they had experience in two sets of forum theatre. This method was not conducted with group B due to their actual language competence. The first section of the sheet was statements that are in the semantic differential form, the second section is open questions. The example is in the next page.

**The Example of the Post Evaluation Sheet**

**is listed on the next page**

Evaluation Sheet: Liang and the Magic Paint Brush

Name:

*This evaluation sheet will help me to understand what you have learned about the story with me. It is NOT a test! There is no right or wrong answer. Just be honest and tell me what YOU think.*

- Ⓒ Please circle the number accordingly. E.g. If you strongly disagree with the statement, circle number 1; if you strongly agree, circle number 5:

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
■ I like the story <i>Liang and the Magic Paint Brush</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
■ I think that Liang is a good person.	1	2	3	4	5
■ I think that Liang should have helped the rich banker who has the ill son.	1	2	3	4	5
■ I think it is justice that the emperor in the picture book is drown at the end.	1	2	3	4	5

- 
- Ⓒ Why do you like or dislike the story *Liang and the Magic Paint Brush*. Use 5 sentences at least to elaborate your point.

- Ⓒ Why should Liang have helped or not have helped the rich banker with the ill son? Use 5 sentences at least to elaborate your point.

- Ⓒ In the story book, Liang painted so much wind that the boat the emperor took sank into the sea. Would you think that Liang should have felt sorrow for the death of the emperor? Use 5 sentences at least to elaborate your point.

### *3.6.4 Participant Observation Design*

There were two different main approaches I used for participant observation. One approach was coming to school to be the children's drama teacher; the other was my role as a teaching assistant (TA) in the children's ordinary lessons. Overall, these two approaches enforced the essence of conducting exploratory qualitative research and, in return, enriched the quality of data I gathered. In the following discussion, I am going to explain how I applied my two approaches: how they worked together and in what ways, how I had to modify them when I was in the second school, what constraints I met in my project, and how I dealt with them to adapt to the reality of my situation.

#### 3.6.4.1 Role of Teacher-Artist (T-A)

Rather than the dual role of teacher-artist, my actual role in the research sites became a triple role, researcher-teacher-artist. Juggling between them meant that I had to face different tasks, also this triple role required intense concentration and mental effort on my part. In my research project, children's behavioural responses were equally as important as their verbal responses. How children presented their 'still image', a drama convention in which participants use body movements framed in contextualised dramatic situations (Neelands & Goode, 2006, p. 25), and any other class activities were important

visual data to me while I was teaching (Newby, 2010, p. 460). As human behaviours and actions are ephemeral, in order to capture them, I had two visual devices to help me. One was to use a video camera to film the lessons, the other was to use a camera to photograph children's representations.

#### 3.6.4.2 Role of Teaching Assistant (TA)

In general, I came in to classes as a TA for one hour and a half approximately on a weekly basis the day after my drama session had taken place. In the first school, the literacy lesson was the subject children had with their class-teacher. I am going to use pseudonyms *Emma* in school A, *Lucy* in school B. The reason for being a TA was so that I could observe more closely the children I was going to work with. Conversely, children also had significant time to get accustomed to me as a new adult face in the classroom. The regularity of being there on the day after the drama lesson set up a pattern for me, the class teacher and the children. This not only helped children to feel safer working with me as a researcher-teacher later on, but also helped myself and the class teacher to set up a special working relationship on a regular basis in the project. It was also a way I could give something back to the class teachers as a thank you for letting me work with their classes.

The two approaches in the two cycles provided me with different

challenges due to the actual class situations, classroom settings and different personnel. I am going to explain what these differences were, the challenges I encountered and how I managed them, and also the limitations I had in each cycle.

### *3.6.5 Videotaping & Photography*

Visual recording has one apparent advantage over the human researcher, that is being indefatigable (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998, p. 122). These two methods can compensate one particular trait of the human researcher who is not able to sustain the same level of mental concentration and took away a significant amount of pressure whilst I was taking field notes (Wellington, 1996, p. 262). I could therefore concentrate on teaching and always be ready to interact with children rather than worry about when I could find time to jot down notes. Moreover, both videotaping and photography have the feature of reproducibility, to copy and to take along with me wherever I went (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 197). In addition, raw visual data can be kept in digital format and then transformed into observational data (Byers, 1966), and this allowed me to review them on multiple occasions whenever I needed to, particularly at the stage of analyzing the data (Wellington, 1996, p. 262).

The main distinction between videotaping and photography is that the

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former is a series of moving images while the latter is a single framed still image (Newby, 2010, p. 355). Both methods can capture human behaviours and interactions (Byers, 1966; Wellington, 1996, p. 262). In my project on most occasions I placed the video camera in a fixed spot where the lens could capture the widest horizontal view of the whole class. The preferred place to set up the equipment was in the corner of the room, so that the cable would not drag along the ground, and so could prevent children from tripping over it.

Furthermore, photography focuses more on single incidents and drama conventions such as still image or characterisations. These raw visual data allowed me to retrieve and analyze how children arranged themselves to represent social interactions and relationships in contextualised situations (Byers, 1966). In brief, videotaping tends to record holistic situations while photography can capture particular moments. In addition, digital video filming can offer a rich source for the researcher to extract single still images.

#### 3.6.5.1 In School A

##### Being T-A

In the first cycle, I had one volunteer image recording assistant, *Yu Min, Wang* (*Miss Wang*), from the MA drama and the theatre education course<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> I have got Yu-Min, Wang's consent to publish her name.

She had personal interests in my project and her willingness to help me out started this working relationship and her accompaniment and assistance from the outset were transformed into a *nearly* critical partnership (McNiff, et al., 2003, pp. 112-113). In this section, I am going to elaborate how I dealt with research-teaching when I had a visual recording assistant. Some issues which touch upon the power issue as camera holder, and its interlinked issue in terms of reliability of data due to having a 'third person' on the research site, will be explained as well. Moreover, Miss Wang, who worked as a visual recorder, fed back her experiences and observations to this project which may be useful for anyone following such a model in future.

Miss Wang has professional knowledge about filming and her understanding of ethical issues facilitated our communication when it came to deciding what support she could offer and how. I am going to elaborate first about visual recording support and about ethical issues later on. As a visual recorder, Miss Wang had to handle two items of equipment, namely a video camera and a photo camera. She recalled how we reached consensus on technical management<sup>3</sup>:

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<sup>3</sup> I designed an open questionnaire for her particularly to describe the period of time she was involved in the project. The questionnaire was written in Chinese Mandarin, she replied in Mandarin as well. The translation was done by myself and I asked Miss Wang to check it so as to increase the validity of data.

*In terms of filming, I asked you if there were any particular images or any particular students you would like to focus on. You replied that for now, I didn't have to frame any close-up images through the video camera; that it could frame a holistic view (such as whole class interactions with me and the children's own group activities). Yet in terms of photography, you instructed me to take close-up shots of certain activities such as children's representations in still image.*

Before heading to the research site, I went through a run-down of the lesson with her. I told her which activities I needed to have focused still pictures for. The foci could be students' small presentations, or my performative ways of teachings. As she mentioned:

*In the scheme of work Monkey and the White Bone Demon, your way of teaching had a great proportion of 'performing elements'. I then asked you what shots I should frame through the video camera. You or children's responses? You then made the decision to focus the lens on your storytelling performing.*

The video camera perspective focused on my storytelling performance which was vital to me as a practitioner. It allowed me to review lessons and then I could note down what I should improve, what worked and what did not so that I could adjust my performance and instructions accordingly in the second cycle.

The recording assistant's role at the later stage of the project had two transitional points. One is when I had run the project for two and a half months and I had developed my researcher's sensibility and narrowed down the focus

of my observations. I asked Miss Wang to become my 'third eye' to pay attention to any body's movements which were close to those I now wished to observe. She took notes, and when she transferred the tape into digital DVD format, she captured still pictures from the moving images so that I could save the selected pictures in my project folder to file for analysis in the future.

The other transitional point was the time after Miss Wang had been filming for drama sessions for almost a month. She found a compromise way to manage these two approaches to record visual data. She said:

*I used a video camera to capture the holistic classroom situation, and a photo camera to capture subtleties. Basically once I set up the video camera, I wouldn't move it around but only used 'zoom in' and 'zoom out' to focus on yours or the children's representations. Rarely I might move the video camera. Regarding the use of the photo camera, whenever I spotted anything interesting, I would take pictures of it for research reference, apart from following instructions from the briefing time. **(However some of these photos were chosen by me. This meant that some of them might not be useful to the researcher, for instance, I framed pictures of facial expressions that children had when they were concentrating in drama lessons)***

As a result, I had both moving visual data and a handsome quantity of still images as my visual data to select from for analysis. Her quotation in parentheses touched upon the power issue as a camera holder and its interlinked issue with regard to the reliability of raw data. This is what I am going to elaborate on now.

Miss Wang was aware of the power she had in terms of perspective-selection (Gray, 2009, p. 186) as the quotation in bold demonstrates. However, the fact that she made the choice to take a wider range of pictures in addition to my instructions does not divert from my research focus since we had discussions before each session took place. Therefore on the one hand, the issue of having discrepant interpretations between photographer and observer-researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 115) was reduced to a minimum, and on the other hand I had a decent quantity of photos to sift through when it came to analysis.

Furthermore, I was aware of the issue of her presence in terms of validity and credibility of data as any forms of intervention can change children's behaviours (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 113). The way I dealt with it was to make her presence overt the first time the children met her. I introduced her as my working colleague and explained to the children that she came over to assist me for teaching purpose. Miss Wang recalled this:

*Regarding the social identity I had in your class, you introduced me officially to children. Apart from that, I came in early to school with you and also assisted them at least three times in their math. Therefore children knew me pretty well. The more familiar they are to the camera holder, the fewer chances they have to pretend.*

She further provided her observations which touched upon the issue of

data-contamination by the camera holder.

*Compared to adults who are more alert to the camera, children tend to neglect completely the existence of the camera when they devote themselves thoroughly to activities. As I remember, when I was filming, they seldom looked straight into the video camera. It meant that the existing camera was almost forgotten.*

The overt introduction and the familiarity which she developed with children smoothed the project in a way that removed the concern about data contamination to a certain extent.

The fact of having a visual image assistant took a huge pressure off me in the first cycle in particular. As this project involved me working on my own as an artist, I needed time to develop my own piece of storytelling. In particular, I had ideas to integrate and combine performing elements from Chinese culture, such as Chinese opera and Chinese masks, with storytelling performance techniques inspired by my course as a Masters student at Warwick. I needed to develop cyclical patterns of preparing a drama lesson, developing a piece of storytelling, rehearsing and travelling to school and I could only arrive there by taking two buses. At the same time I had to bear in mind my own research questions. All these turned out to be fairly intensive and highly-demanding not only mentally but also physically.

The fact that I was able to have image records in both formats reduced my

nervousness in the above circumstances. This working pattern took me approximately four weeks to get accustomed to the class I worked with and the energy I spent on preparing lessons while running the first and the second stories. This period allowed me to have sufficient time to get to know the class I worked with, to become familiar with the children's temperaments and traits and the working styles and attitudes of the class teacher. I used this particular time to observe while teaching from a wider spectrum in order to grapple with which children had particular interests in expressing their ideas through their bodies, and which ones were more capable of articulating ideas for further research purposes.

This period of time was also vital for having sporadic chats with the class teacher about the children's general learning. It was more like a chat between working colleagues who taught children in different subjects. In this way, I could understand more about children and their learning competences in general. I usually did not audio record these chats yet I took notes with key words jotted down when I left the school. Later on I typed them up in detail by word processor. This gradually accumulating information became my background knowledge for my own teaching while working with the children. Moreover, I used them to design interview questions with the class teacher in later weeks

when one scheme of work had been completed. I will explain this in the section of interview design later on.

Taking thorough field-notes was another vital aspect to complete participant observation as a research method. There were two steps to writing my field notes. The first one was a brief notebook in which I jotted key words, key images and key short sentences. The second step was to type it via a word processor with more details added in. In the drama space while I was teaching, I always placed my note book aside in a fixed place in case anything critical occurred. However, the idea to be able to jot down notes while teaching died down after a few lessons, since in a real teaching situation, I could hardly spare time to make notes, as interactions in drama lessons were intensive and required me to pay attention to 'what is happening now' rather than 'what has happened'. Therefore, taking notes once I walked out of school became a golden time for me to grapple with the essence of each lesson. I took them when I waited for a bus or was sitting on a bus on the way back home. Miss Wang occasionally filled me in on things which I had not noticed while I was busy teaching.

The second step of note-taking took place on my own working desk. I typed my observations as detailed as possible based on the activities which

had taken place in chronological order. I typed whatever I remembered observing on the children's learning situations, their reactions to each activity, my personal notes on practice in terms of teaching such as what had been achieved, what learning objective was not achieved, and why I thought certain things had happened. I would then also type what learning objective had to be achieved in the next lesson and also about how I could possibly achieve them. These lingering burgeoning ideas for teaching in forthcoming lessons would develop into more mature ideas and then evolve into more specific feasible steps in practice.

Rather than starting with the first activity, sometimes this second step of note-taking began with any critical incidents or any of the children's verbal and physical responses which impressed me the most. Next I added what we did in this particular activity and also placed from my memory the remaining activities on the day in chronological order on file. Before I saved the electronic file, I always put several other factual data on the headings of each document. The final step was that I named files and stored each carefully.

The task of taking detailed field notes was mentally demanding work. Yet my ability to memorise was improved after six weeks of teaching-researching. This led the process of participant observation to become easier and this was

when I started narrowing and filtering down the scope of the general observation into specific aspects which were more relevant to my research questions. At this stage the two formats of visual images supplemented my focused participant observations. As some particular children's physical responses drew my attention, these raw visual records allowed me to revisit them after actual lessons had taken place.

### Being TA

The initial idea of being a TA, nevertheless, shifted from merely getting familiar with classes, to the critical time which I spent having informal chats with individual students as follow-up when I observed any interesting moments children had had in the drama sessions. In the first cycle, however, I was less able to conduct such follow-up for two reasons. Firstly, it took time to identify themes or critical incidents or moments from the outset of my research project as I had to sift out the non-relevant yet rich human interactions I had with children. At the same time, I had to always ask myself what the main themes which related to my research topics were. That is to say, I had to develop a certain sensibility from scratch to selecting critical incidents from everything else, or deciding which actions were worthy of exploring in-depth. It took me some time to develop this researcher's sensibility to spot the emerging

indications, and further on to grapple with the idea of why it mattered to my project. Secondly, for instance, the class teacher *Emma* in school A was a good lesson planer. She gave me clear instructions and tasks printed on her weekly lesson plans. She told me who I would be working with each time I came to school. She thought in a way that it would help me and children become familiar with each other.

This was a considerate arrangement and it appeared to be working from the outset. However, the more drama lessons I taught, the clearer ideas I gathered about which children I wanted to do follow-up interviews with. The fixed arrangement, as a result, became a routine which I found awkward to break up. Alternatively, I developed a way to do follow-up. I took note of specific moments of interest and then I approached the children concerned during break time to have brief informal conversation to gather further data.

#### 3.6.5.2 In School B

During the second cycle of teaching I was on my own. This fact had a significant impact on my participant observation approach and how I handled the technical equipment to record visual data. Another factor which influenced my approach was working in a different school with a very different classroom culture. In the second cycle, the two different roles I played as teacher-artist

and TA were much more integrated on the actual days of teaching and the ways of gathering data became more interdependent.

#### Integrating Being TA & T-A

As School B was on the other side of the city. I had to take two buses to get there. I carried all the equipment for research and usually arrived forty-five minutes early. I threw myself into my role as TA immediately once in the classroom situation. I would observe first what activity children had with Lucy and then ask her what I could assist with. The subject was either literacy or numeracy, and my tasks varied. I sometimes assisted a small group of children to do their mathematics questions, sometimes I sat with the whole group in the back row while they learnt literacy facing the big screen in the classroom. Sometimes, at the end of their class time, they would play games for fun such as *Splash!*, or subject-based games. Most of the time, the class teacher invited me to join in with everybody else in a big circle.

Children saw my presence as a drama teacher *Miss Lo*, and I took part in their authentic classroom life as part of their community. One third of the class were away from their actual classroom during my time as TA with another teacher, Bob (pseudonym), who taught them English as an additional language. These children had mixed language competences and some of them had

special learning needs. They came back to the year 5 classroom around five to ten minutes before break time.

Being on my own in the second cycle of teaching meant that I had to handle the camera and video camera myself. The space for the drama lesson was not a school hall yet the standard classroom children had for other subjects. Before my drama session, children had fifteen minutes play time. I had to use this short amount of time well to push away and stack tables and chairs up against walls in order to clear up an empty space for drama. Meanwhile I had to set up the video camera in one corner in the room. I also displayed other teaching materials, props, and camera in the area where I had easy access.

In this cycle, I was able to amend lessons or activities if I had to. Before each lesson, I reviewed the DVDs of my teaching from the first cycle. By this time I was able to detach myself to use a critical eye to assess my own performing and teaching, and to evaluate outcomes of the teaching. While doing video observations, I took notes which were focused from a practitioner's point of view to see what could be done better, what could be done in different ways in order to meet my teaching objectives, and what performative aspects I could improve. I took notes one lesson at a time so that any amendments I had

to make in the second cycle, I was able to remember freshly.

The video observation notes were taken in chronological order based on the lesson. While viewing moving images, my mind was simultaneously applying 'reflection upon reflection-in-action' (Schön, 1992), as I was forming understanding mentally and cognitively from watching the recording.

Furthermore, I had to reconsider how I could manage both teaching and visual documentation in my own lessons. In order to concentrate on teaching, I set up the video camera attached to a tripod where the equipment would create the least disturbance to the class. I also made sure that it could capture a wide horizontal view so that I could view most of the activities the children did. I placed the photo camera with props on a table where I could easily fetch it when needed. However, at first I hardly used it to capture any images. The main reason was that working in a new class and with a different class teacher needed time to get accustomed to the teaching pace.

The classroom was boisterous particularly in the first five minutes when the children came back from the playground. The common class scenario was that some children grabbed a cup of water at one side of the room. It usually led to more children doing the same. Staff walked out from the staff room and dispersed towards different doors or passed by our classroom. Some children

were lingering in the store room, chatting or squabbling. All these happenings were new to me. It took me a couple of weeks to observe and then got accustomed to the rhythm of the school timetable and class culture.

After two weeks, I found the way to handle the photo camera. That was whenever I saw interesting work children presented with their body movements, I would quickly pick up the camera and take images of them. Rarely, I would ask for support from the class teacher *Lucy* and give her precise instructions of what images I wanted. However, such cases seldom occurred. Since *Lucy* was usually busy with her own work in the classroom, I preferred not to interrupt her. As a result, in the second cycle, I had a fairly low number of pictures as visual data. On the other hand, these few images were selected by myself and were usually highly useful since they were sifted through my mental efforts.

In the second cycle, fewer pictures meant that I had to use more note taking to supplement my data gathering. Nevertheless, it was another challenging research activity, as I was occupied mentally and physically during my own lessons. Any interesting conversations or physical responses which I noticed, I could only rely on my memory and I jotted them in on my notebook later, often when I was waiting for or sitting on the bus, surrounded by crowds and buzzing noise. When I arrived home, I transferred the tape straightaway

from video camera into digital format on my laptop so that I could save it, burn a copy to DVD format, and file it. I used time while transferring the tape to do video observation from the small screen of the video camera. I noted down any particular children who had presented interesting work which I had not noticed when in the classroom. Moreover, to those particular moments and conversations I had jotted down in the bus, I paid more attention while video observing, and noted down further details since watching the video stimulated my recall and allowed me to make the previous note-taking more sophisticated.

Children in case B had mixed abilities in terms of English language skills and academic achievement. Few of them showed aggressive attitudes in the classroom when working with their peer group. A small number of children demonstrated disruptive attitudes in the first two drama lessons and were not being cooperative. All of these formed a collective challenge to me as a teacher. Lucy, the class teacher, most of the time assisted me playing a disciplinary role. However, not every single minute was she able to be there following the lessons. In brief, these different challenges prevented me photographing, yet my note-taking based on field teaching, and notes taken based on video observation all supplemented my data collections in the second cycle. In addition, these notes gave me indications of which informal interviews were

worth having with children the next day when I went to school as a TA. I will elaborate this in the interview section.

### *3.6.6 Interview Design*

I carried out both formal and informal interviews with both classes. In general, I had formal interviews with a group of children after each scheme of work and with the class teacher as well. At the end of the whole project with two schools, I arranged a formal interview with the head teacher to ask her view on such a project, general information of the school neighbourhood and its approach to learning. In terms of informal interviews with children and class teachers, occasions varied. I used semi-structured interviews. In the two cycles, I had slightly different approaches towards informal interviews, which I explain in the following paragraphs.

I always brought my portable MP3 to record audio in case any informal interview might take place. Most of the time when I found chances to conduct an informal interview, I had enough time to set up the recorder after I had got permission from interviewees. Nevertheless, sometimes I might deliberately not take out the recorder for certain chats which occurred spontaneously after drama sessions with class teachers. In the second cycle, I had a chance to have a chat with Bob, the language support teacher, to ask his opinions about

certain children's learning from a linguistic point of view. He was not involved as closely as the class teacher, but he could give me some insights from the standpoint of English as an additional language learner. The reasons I chose not to have a recorder were because these occurred often in a natural setting and I preferred not to interrupt the flow of conversations. Such informal chats were useful and usually would lead me to observe children in depth with a deeper understanding.

In terms of interviewing children, I had individual and group interviews in both schools. I had informal interviews with them when I came as TA the next day. These informal chats were more often with certain children about particular physical representations which had taken place in drama lessons. I spent a short amount of time asking them to articulate what they thought of their actions, their motivations to have the actions, and to describe to me what they had been trying to convey through their body movements. In the first cycle, I chatted with particular children based on the visual recording I had in previous lessons. In the second cycle, I selected interviewees based on my field notes and video observations as stimuli to investigate visual data in depth.

Group interviews with children were much more formal and I had to arrange them in advance. The way I did this was to check time and space with the class

teachers to see when would be more convenient to them. I also asked for their suggestions as to where would be a more suitable venue to interview children. The general principle was to minimise disturbance. The size of group was five to six. I tried to have three girls and three boys in each so that there was a different dynamic rather than homogeneity.

I selected children who were more verbally and physically responsive in lessons, or children who were more able to articulate personal insights and more willing to share experiences in a group situation. In the first cycle, I had two groups of six children, and in the second cycle, I arranged one group interview also with six children. The reason to have two group interviews in the first cycle but only one in the second was because children in school A had more competence with linguistic skills than the children in school B. In order to compensate in school B I conducted more informal interviews with individual children.

In terms of transcription, I transcribed each interview the following day using software particularly designed for word to word transcription. After finishing a transcription, I could transfer the transcription into Word documents and save in my folder. I named files by date, interviewees and scheme of work so as to make it me easier to retrieve data when I had to.

### 3.6.7 Visual and Image Research Methods

Visual or image research methods have been of interest to researchers for at least two decades (Bach, 1998; Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 2002; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Nickel, 2009; Piper & Frankham, 2007; Prosser & Burke, 2008). This way of collecting evidence based on eliciting visual forms of data from research participants has been particularly used by researchers who work with young children, children with special educational needs and children with English as an Additional Language. For these groups, visual methods are seen as a more apt alternative than seeking to gather verbal or written responses. According to these researchers, they can be less intimidating and more inclusive for many children (Burke, 2007, 2008; Freedman, 2003; K. Johnson, 2008; Moss, Deppeler, Astley, & Pattison, 2007; Prosser & Loxley, 2007; Thomson, 2008).

In my project, there is a combination of image methods that I applied (Prosser & Loxley, 2007). They can be categorized into:

1. *Found visual data*: these include: images in picture books, religious icons as teaching aids, my demonstrations of physical representation, and children's individual and group still images captured by photo and video cameras. In some literature on research in drama education, the use of

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drama conventions such as still images has been seen as art-based research (see, Cahill, 2006; Cahill, 2011). Here I include visual data from drama conventions as part of this category of method because it was the researcher and not the participants who made the decision as to which visual images of the students' work was relevant to the research (Nickel, 2009, p. 42).

2. *Participant-generated pictorial data*: children's drawings. The first and second categories<sup>4</sup> can have a supplementary step listed as the third category;
3. *Image elicitation with children*. This step is to find out more about the perceptions and interpretations of participants from any visual objects which the researcher might invite them to look at. It can be applied independently, yet in order to have rich data, it is suggested to combine it with other visual objects, either found by the researcher or generated by participants. In my project, I combined image elicitation with different visual objects, namely: a) a certain chosen page of a picture book, b) religious icons in the form of stone statues and folk paintings, and c) images of children representing their own individual still images.

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<sup>4</sup> With children's own drawing, researchers could also apply image elicitation as follow-up in order to investigate in-depth children's own creative processes to enrich the content of data collection. Although in this project, I missed chances to do so, it is a valuable lesson to learn for any researchers who would like to use a similar methodological approach.

I did visual elicitation with children in different methodological approaches. With a) and b), I integrated this method into my lesson plan as an introductory activity when starting a new story, as in both pictorial materials, there were strong Chinese cultural elements and each was saturated by Chinese cultural symbols. In other words, they presented new and even strange information to children that they had never been introduced to before. They presented a good learning opportunity that involved aesthetic appreciation of visual stimuli, which invited them to begin to understand new cultural territory. (Adams, 2003; Anstey & Bull, 2009b; Arizpe & Styles, 2003; Freedman, 2003; Harrison, 1996; Schwarcz, 1982; Sipe, 1998).

My role here was to facilitate children into vocalizing their observations and interpretations of the images. They had to be encouraged to articulate their perceptions. When introducing these images, I had to try to strike a balance between welcoming children's interpretations and offering them suitable guidance to decode the cultural meanings latent within the symbolic use of form and colour. (Burke, 2007, 2008; Harper, 2002; K. Johnson, 2008; Paivio, 1978; Reason, 2010). Children were invited to gather both representational or denotative meanings and also symbolic or connotative meanings from these cultural images (K. Johnson, 2008).

With some individual still images captured either by photo camera or video camera, I carried out interviews with specific children after the drama activities, in order to talk about them in more depth than would have been possible within the immediacy and pressures of the drama lesson itself. I brought along visual images of their specific physical responses with me when conducting follow-up interviews of this kind and asked children to talk through their own personal aesthetic decisions and creative processes. Such photo elicitation is as Bourdieu et al state:

‘The study of photographic practice and the meaning of the photographic image is a privileged opportunity to employ an original method designed to apprehend within a total comprehension the objective regularities of behaviour and the subjective experience of that behaviour (Bourdieu, Boltanski, Castel, Chamboredon, & Schnapper, 1990, p. v)’.

#### *3.6.8. Pedagogy as a research tool*

In the two cycles, I used picture books, photographs and a Chinese painting to scaffold my lessons. The primary purpose of using visual images as pedagogy was to probe children, asking them what meanings they made out of pictorial semiotic systems (Anstey & Bull, 2009a). This ‘picture or painting reading time’ would take place with the whole class of children, and sometimes I grouped them into groups of five so that they could have a discussion about visual images based on the questions I gave them to think about. For instance,

for one of the activities in the scheme of *Liang and his Magic Paint Brush* from among seven different water ink Chinese paintings, they chose one they liked the most, and sat beside it. They would talk about this painting with people who had made the same choice. Then they talked about why they liked it, what made them like this painting, what they saw in it, how they felt when they saw the painting, and whether they could imagine how the painter painted it with a brush. Later on, they would share their discussions with the whole class. Their interpretations were informative about the sense they had made of these pictures.

Drama conventions were another pedagogical research tool because they are highly concentrated representations of research participants in different forms. It is important to document when using these conventions the different kinds of research evidence being teased out. For instance, when I did TiR, I could sit on a chair (or in the scheme of *Monkey and the White Bone Demon*, I chose to start in a standing position to demonstrate more clearly distinctive traits of four characters whom I physicalised for this activity), then children could ask questions to get to know more about the characters. Still image was another convention I applied, for children to convey how characters felt at a particular moment, what was happening, and what their relationships with one

another were like (Neelands & Goode, 2006). Writing a contextualised story plot was a variation from one of the conventions. For example, in *Monkey and the White Bone Demon*, children had to write down a 'heavenly note dropped from the sky'. Their task was to think from the perspective of the character, and to mimic the tone of the Buddha in order to produce a more convincing note. By scrutinising what they wrote here I was able to look for examples of how children had approached this cross-cultural challenge.

Homework related to drama lessons seemed to be less tedious to children and to me as teacher. I gave out different forms of homework, for instance writing or drawing. Before handing a work sheet out, I took time and effort to discuss with the class teacher to see if the homework could be integrated into their literacy curriculum. In the first cycle, children were learning to write narrative composition so the class teacher suggested I give out a homework entitled 'character study'.

The methods such as still image and children's drawings could always be further investigated in depth. These different forms of data were turned into material which interview questions were developed from (Cahill, 2006; Newby, 2010, pp. 352-353). As Cahill claims, 'the dramatic construct becomes a form of research text, communicating the data and interpretations of the

investigators' (Cahill, 2006, p. 64). However, giving out homework might not be suitable for every class in every school. In the second cycle, I trialled this but the return rate was low. More than half of the children found it difficult to write and express ideas in written English. In this case, homework became a burden for both children and class teacher. Thus, I deliberately reduced the quantity I asked for.

The last pedagogy as research method was to combine the drama convention hot-seating in role with two class surveys, one before and one after it. This design was suitable for a short one-hour scheme of work such as *From Bad to Good to Bad to Good*. The sequence was to gather children's first impressions before they had the chance to interrogate the main character's beliefs and way of thinking. Children's perceptions towards this particular character might stay the same or might modify or change after hot-sitting. I asked for their perceptions and collected class opinions in the form of an informal class survey as explained in the analysis section.

In summary, these art-orientated research methods framed within my pedagogy worked either to elicit responses by probing questions or to let me tease out children's different forms of expression as raw data (Cahill, 2011). In addition, children also had the chance to 'experience in a particularly focused

way and to engage in the constructive exploration of what the imaginative process may engender' (Eisner, 2002, p. 4).

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

My way of analyzing data can be divided into two interlinked stages. The initial stage took place while I was still on the research sites as a teacher-researcher and took the form of progressive open coding. This stage of coding is more to do with identification and selection of data on a broad scale whilst still on the research site (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 400). The aim was to identify and prioritize what types of data from the actual teaching were most pertinent to my research questions so as to make further investigation with supplementary methods, such as interviews or post-questionnaire.

The second stage was to make a more thorough analysis after the completion of the data collection from both sites. The coding process encompassed two interwoven approaches, a more general coding process that involved three steps - 'open coding', 'axial coding', and 'selective coding' (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 195-204; Gray, 2009, p. 502; Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 400; Patton, 2002, p. 489; Robson, 2011, p. 474), and another thread of coding was the thematic analysis, which consisted of four interdependent

steps: recognize codable moment(s), encode them consistently, develop codes by using theory-driven and concept-driven methods that occurred in my case, then interpret data in conceptual and theoretical frameworks (Boyatzis, 1998). It is notable that different researchers may perceive data differently when applying thematic analysis. The data that may seem evident to some researchers may be missed by others (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 3). This is due to the fact that this analytical approach deeply engages with the 'cognitive complexity' of each individual researcher who is 'significantly affected by language, socialization, culture and social class (ibid, p. 9)'.

I identified interesting, codable pieces of data in each drama scheme and in each group. This was the stage when I familiarized myself with all the different forms of data, being open-minded in order to scrutinize codable moments from a wide spectrum of raw information, including the drawings, interviews with children, questionnaire, children's writing, teacher interviews and the most extensive of all, the recorded data from my teaching.

This familiarization with the data was an essential foundation for me as the more familiar I became with it, the more I was able to locate points of potential interest within the mass that I was initially confronted with (Gray, 2009,

p. 496). In addition, this familiarizing process allowed me to compare the similarities and differences between the two groups of children. The intention here was not to present a comparative study focusing on the different ways they had made sense of the stories; rather, I was looking into the content of children's verbal and physical responses and how these were affected by the forms of data I collected. The written work from children in school A, for example, presented me with richer findings than the written work of children from school B; but this did not mean that the data from children in school B was in any way less rich when I looked at physical, verbal or other forms of representation such as drawing. This was something I had been aware of during the teaching but it did mean that some considerations of the reasons behind this difference was called for when setting out the context of the two schools in my report.

Thematic analysis started taking its shape when the stage of familiarization went deeper. This involved layers of systematic thinking in the process of axial and selective coding in sequence. Axial coding is used to enable the researcher to recognize themes that share common attributes in the messy raw information, and the researcher has to make explicit connections between them. Hence, the first layer of codes that I selected were

straightforward, manifest themes, such as the structure of drama schemes, the core dramatic activities, and from these the different forms of children's responses. Then I applied selective coding, that is, I chose the most representative pieces of data from each group in response to the inductive themes in order to examine their place in the whole landscape of the research project (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 317). The writing style at this stage was essentially one of narrative analysis (Gray, 2009, p. 496). The narrative line of the analysis was therefore initially chronological and was intended to present the data in a solid but malleable form so that I could familiarize myself with all aspects of it and see it from more of a distance than I ever could whilst working in the classroom.

Thematic analysis became fuller at the second layer of systematic thinking when looking specifically into the content of children's responses. Some patterns or themes that were latent seemed to occur randomly and unrelated at the outset of the coding process but started making sense when applying certain conceptual frameworks or theoretical perspectives across the different drama schemes in the two school groups. This is also known as 'grounded theory analysis' (Gray, 2009, p. 502; Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 400; Patton, 2002, p. 489; Robson, 2011, pp. 467, 474). According to Patton,

grounded theory is when the data themselves are used as the 'building blocks of theory' (2002, p. 489). It encourages the researcher to seek alternative yet meaningful ways to interpret the data, and not simply to see them in simple terms as either answering a narrow set of research questions or not (ibid).

In my project, the specific themes emerged when using thematic analysis. Taking '*religion as a maker of identity*' as one example, the data only seemed to appear in patchy and sporadic ways at the outset, which could be easily neglected or taken as uncorrelated data by other researchers, yet, my degree studies in Spanish language and culture had sensitised me to religious iconography and affected and enriched this thematic choice. '*Reader response theory*' and '*theories of hybridity in performance*' were two other lenses which provided me with systematic ways of examining the data. The theme '*gendered responses on moral decision and reasoning*' was another that built on prior research done by Winston (2010). These themes were closely associated with the broader issue of social and cultural identity, therefore, I organised them under a wider heading, identity and identities (Boyatzis, 1998, pp. 139,140).

Thus the data analysis led me to look at new areas of theoretical reading and to the vexed issue of how best to present the findings of the research in a

complex but comprehensible manner.

### **3.8 Ethics**

Gaining consensus to be able to work in a school environment involves different levels and layers of ethical concern (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2001, p. 158; Cohen, et al., 2007, pp. 51-59). In my project, I was helped by my supervisor to meet up with two head teachers from the outset. Next, I met the respective class teachers one month ahead of the actual project beginning. The purpose of the research and the length of the research project were discussed with them. The head teachers verbally authorised me to conduct the research in their schools and committed to offer their full support, introducing me to the teachers whom I was to liaison closely with during the field work, reception staff, and peripheral facilities that I could use. On my side, I processed the Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks well before going into the schools.

When coming to the actual research sites, the class teachers introduced me as a drama teacher, Miss Lo, to the children. I was also given some brief time to introduce myself and to explain what I was going to bring them about drama and Chinese stories. In such a way, children were informed about their

participation in the project. The social relationship thus was built up between researcher/teacher and respondents/students, framed within a classroom setting (Sarantakos, 2005, pp. 18-19).

Of all the research methods that I applied, filming and photography were the two that could possibly expose children the most when publishing research outcomes (Norman K. Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 142). I informed the two class teachers about image recording before any actual lessons took place. I also asked their support to find out if there were any children that could not be filmed or photographed.

Presenting data that were collected from other research methods, such as interviews, children's writing and drawing, their verbal interactions in drama activities also involved another ethical concern with regard to confidentiality (Cohen, et al., 2007, pp. 65,66; Sarantakos, 2005, p. 21). I chose to use pseudonyms in order not to reveal children and teachers' identities. This choice reassured the participants and at the same time, maintained a humane relationship that this project had at its heart. Nevertheless, in the case of school B, children's ethnic identification was indicated at times when presenting evidence due to the nature of this project.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter will consist of both findings and theoretical analysis of the data collected from my four case studies, which consist of four drama schemes of work based on four different traditional Chinese stories. I will present my findings case by case and each will include data drawn from two schools, examined sequentially, as the two schools were very different demographically. The fourth case was completed in school A only.

There are three core research questions I am looking at:

- a) how do two contrasting classes of English primary schoolchildren respond to and make sense of stories drawn from the Chinese tradition, told and performed in different ways?
- b) how do they articulate, adapt and embody values provoked and engaged with during their drama work and in related classroom activities?
- c) a subsidiary question: what can I learn as an ethnic Chinese teacher-artist from this process in order better to understand this aspect of my practice?

The findings and analysis, however, do not address the first two questions separately because they are intimately connected. Reflections connected with the third question, too, occur as and when appropriate although I include a

short section to specifically address it at the end of the chapter.

Structuring the chapter has been extremely challenging. My initial investigation was guided by three prisms, namely cosmopolitanism, transnationalism and hybridity, which guided and shaped my fieldwork. Once the data was collected, my review was guided by an ethnographic approach, using thick description to explain and interpret the two groups of children's responses to each story. While doing so, certain themes emerged which urged me to re-scrutinise and reconceptualise under the over-arching lens of social identity. Nevertheless, some of the themes were not applicable to both groups of children or to each story.

*Religion as a marker of identity* was one of the broader themes that I found evidence for in both groups of children. With group A, it emerged in the third and fourth stories; with group B, it was concentrated in the third story.

*Reader response theory* was a theme applicable only to school A. I have therefore given a theorised introduction to these themes in the introduction and pick them up later in the analysis.

Another thematic focus is entitled *Gender: exploring gender differences with regard to moral reasoning*. The evidence here is drawn from school A in the third story, so I locate this as an independent discussion right after the

analysis of this story in school A.

A brief though problematic discussion centres around *ethnicity* and relates only to the introductory story with the children from school B.

*Hybridity in performance* is another overarching theme most specifically with the children in school A relating to the second and the fourth stories.

### **The Four Case Studies:**

I will now summarise the key teaching and initial research foci for each drama scheme and the related research methods I applied in each.

The introductory story, *From Bad to Good to Bad to Good*, constitutes my first case and centres around a specific Chinese understanding of life as laden with contradictions. My initial research interests here were to see what sense children made of this idea; if and how their understandings shifted after TiR; and to see what role theatrical representation could play in narrative storytelling. I analysed data from children's dramatic representations, their writings and drawings, from group interviews, edited transcription of the TiR and from my own journal.

The second case is the story *Monkey and the White Bone Demon*. I was interested to know how participatory drama might introduce this story to British children who had no pre-knowledge of the story, which is very popular with

children in China. I wished to introduce children to some basic Chinese conventions for characterization, integrating traditional Chinese ways of performing into the more Western drama education tradition. Subsequently I was interested in how children adapted, used or refused the Chinese conventions and how their bodies articulated this. The data I used here were edited transcripts from the lessons, images captured on video of the children's representations and my demonstrations and children's writings.

The third case is the story of *Liang and his Magic Paint Brush*. Here I was particularly interested in the ambiguity of Liang, who can be seen as a hero of the poor or as a prototype extremist. To address this point I used two activities which provided my key source of data. I also have children's still images, their verbal responses in circle time and interviews.

The fourth story is about *Mazu*, the Goddess of the Sea. I was interested in how a class of white British children would respond to the concept of polytheism; how conventional Chinese performing could illustrate the characters and also enrich my storytelling practice; and to what extent children would adapt the physicalisation learned here and in previous sessions to their own representations. In order to answer these questions, I draw from edited transcripts, images of children's representations, children's informal interviews

and children's writings.

## **4.2 Theoretical Lenses that Emerged from the Fieldwork**

I will now elaborate on the key themes that emerged specifically from the fieldwork. I am fully aware that this discussion will not be exhaustive couched as it is within such a small sample and subject as the research has been to the inevitable vagaries of individual classrooms. In the final chapter will, therefore, attend to these limitations and suggest further research. The discussion begins with the broad theme of identity, and then proceeds to look at religion as a marker of identity. I then proceed to look at reader response theory and conclude this initial theoretical section with the subject of hybrid performance.

### *4.2.1 Identity/ Identities*

The literature on identity is vast, complex and varied and I will limit my discussion here to some key theories that best inform my own concerns. Theorists claim that individual identity is a unique yet sophisticated socially constructed entity. Our own identity is influenced not only by our own cultural-social origins but also by temporal and continuous social interactions with other people (Cooley, 1962; Erikson, 1950, 1968; Gleason, 1983; Hall, 1992; Jenkins, 1996; Mead, 1934). In Hall's words, identities are:

'points of *temporary attachment* to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us' (1996, p. 6, my italics).

These moments of encounter or of shifting social affiliation nonetheless occur with higher intensity these days. According to Bauman, globalisation is a force that makes people regenerate incessantly their own identities in response to rapid changes in the modern world. If there is a particular purpose to identity construction, it is attached to their need to change their ways and adapt to their shifting surrounding (2001). Who we are and where we are from influences the way in which we perceive and apprehend self and its relation to the world. This is, however, not to say that our identity is socially and culturally determined, that our perception of the world is entirely fixed by our place of birth, our upbringing or social position (Sen, 2007).

Postmodern discourses of identity emphasise the traits of fluidity and malleability. Identity is not fixed nor singular yet vibrant and multiple in a state of shifting and interactivity. It is able to be re-composed according to particular situations and contexts. (Basok, 2002; Hall & Du Gay, 1996; Lawler, 2008). Lawler's view on identity is situated in this framework suggesting that identity is produced by weaving through personal's stories of life based on one's own experiences, memories and episodes (Lawler, 2008). She heavily draws on Ricoeur's idea of 'emplotment' to make a justification as to how people recreate their own identities through narrative language by connecting discrete

events into episodes and then producing an apparently seamless plot (Ricoeur, 1991, from Lawler, 2008, pp.11-16). In modern days, mobility is a normality, and this social phenomenon nourishes and enriches people's language when articulating their own identity (Minh-ha, 1994). This chimes with what Giddens states of a status of self-identification as 'coherent, yet continuously revised' (1991, p. 5).

It is this sense of multiplicity of identity that underpins my discussion. My intention here is not to suggest that children's individual identities will determine their apprehension of the stories, but I am interested to find out if there is any evidence showing whether and in what ways their identity might have shaped their understanding of the stories. My analysis is also couched within the postmodern perspective so as to make tentative suggestions that through different narrative forms children can experience a process of multiple identification. Thus, on the one hand, I must acknowledge identity as something nuanced and affected by a range of biological givens (in the case of this research, gender) and socio-cultural contexts and influences. This is where I frame my following discussion.

#### *4.2.2 Religion as a marker of identity*

Existing research, both theoretical and empirical, suggests that there is a

correlation between religious affiliation and identity (see Ebstyne King, 2003; Erikson, 1964, 1965, 1968; Fulton, 1997; Hunsberger, Pratt, & Pancer, 2001). Some research has focused on how religious affiliation develops an individual's own spiritual belief and provides a sense of meaning to lives (Bell, 2008; Ebstyne King, 2003). In this vein, religion has a functional characteristic as Byrne theorises 'giving an overall meaning to life or providing the identity, and cohesion of a social group' (1988, p. 7). Hunt shares a similar view and concludes that religion 'aids the construction of identity and lifestyle preferences as a subjective act of becoming' (2002, p. 83).

Religion not only shapes identity in a personal dimension but also in a collective way. People who follow the same religious beliefs and go to the same institutions form their own particular ways to relate themselves to the sacred and to the secular (Hoult, 1958). This co-constructed world will form a key essential grounding for their moral values and behavioural norms. Religious traditions and rituals are also practised and embodied by communities of believers, helping to shape cohesive collective identities to influence ways of knowing and doing (T. Bennett, Grossberg, & Morris, 2005; Erikson, 1968).

Geertz's essay describing religion as part of a cultural system is helpful

here (1973). According to Geertz, culture

‘... denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life’ (1973, p. 89).

This is to say that each individual who is a member of a group has their beliefs influenced to a certain extent by a predetermined culture. Therefore, primary groups, both local community and family, play substantial roles that influence young children’s religious inclination.

Some empirical research focusing on young children also shows a positive correlation between religious life and children’s self-perception of their own identity. In Jackson and Nesbitt’s early research about Hindu children in Britain, they used ethnographic approaches and found out that children’s association with ‘being Hindu’ intimately connected to their larger socio-cultural family life. Religious experiences had been incorporated into their life narratives and had become key markers in their identity formation (1993). In further research that Nesbitt conducted with Sikh children, she describes thoroughly how children perceive and maintain their identity through attending periodically and annually various activities of communal worship (E. M. Nesbitt, 2000).

According to Geertz, religious systems are manifested through structures

of sacred symbols that are clustered and interwoven together, not chaotically but in coherent patterns (1973, pp. 93, 129). Stories work in a similar way as the analytical work done by Bruno Bettelheim and Joseph Campbell suggests, who see stories acting through webs of intricate symbolism (Bettelheim, 1976; Campbell, 1993). Words such as 'system', 'pattern' do not denote a restricted and unbroken model, but what they offer is an objective conceptual framework. As such, the symbolism, both in religion and in stories, gives meaning to reality and becomes a logical and intellectual way to enable human beings to articulate meaning and to deeply shape their perceptions (Hoult, 1958). Winston's research in drama education shows examples of how children interpret stories and dramatic symbols by referencing their own religious beliefs and practices within participatory drama activities (1997, 2003). One particular example is of a Punjabi girl who drew from her own traditional tales derived from the Muslim culture about the evil power of a jinn which she related to aspects of a drama scheme developed from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (Winston, 2003). The following analysis attempts to do the same thing with reference to my own research.

#### *4.2.3 Reader Response Theory*

Children's written works are one of the forms of data that I used in the

hope of providing rich evidence about how the children made sense of the Chinese stories through drama. Here, children have to be seen not only in the role of creators producing written work on paper, but also as readers who decoded the narrative storytelling that occurred in various forms and through different activities. This dual role was determined, I am suggesting here, by two interrelated phases in the sense-making process. The first was to read the story through visually, aural and kinetic signifiers; the second was to translate their cognitive understanding into a readable literary form.

The writing that children produced was distinct from one to the other. Each of them found their own way of retelling a story, among which can be loosely traced two processes; one was to draw from the different participatory activities they experienced, the other was to draw from their own personal life experiences. In order to comprehend their individual work, two related theories are useful here. One is reader-response criticism, the other is the use Susan Bennett makes of this in her book *Theatre Audiences*. The theory of reader response by and large is a useful lens to look into children's writing because it embraces a basic and fundamental proposition, that the act of understanding written texts is influenced by the predisposition of the individual reader's mind (N. Johnson, 1988; Tompkins, 1980).

Instead of reading a one-dimensional literary form, the children were in the first phase reading a varied dramatic art form while taking part in the drama. In this they often resembled an audience, present physically at the drama, immersed in a theatrical space; children interacted in a more plural and physical sense than the normal member of a conventional theatre audience but, in both cases, there is a need to interact with a make-believe fictional world built up by scenes, in a voluntary manner (S. Bennett, 1997; Passow & Strauss, 1981, from Bennett). Children made interpretations from reading signifiers as an audience does. A collective memory is in this way formed which shapes a strong, communal response (Counsell & Mock, 2009). According to Knowles, memory does so because 'it takes place in the present, but recalls, incorporates, or appropriates the past' (2009, p. 16). Later, as individuals, children wrote these down as written texts with traces of their own retrospective experiences built into them. As Rancière suggests, spectatorship is not a passive state but engages the audience in active interpretation (Freshwater, 2009, p. 16), 'as spectators who link what they see with what they have seen and told, done and dreamed' (Rancière, 2007, from Freshwater, 2009, p.17). The texts therefore can be seen to bring about a convergence of their own temperaments with their own personal reading experiences, as some leading

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theorists of reader-response claim (Bleich, 1978; Fish, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1978).

Children joined and participated in the drama activities in a communal sense, yet their interpretations are hardly identical. Iser uses a simple and amiable example to illustrate the idea that no two readers will share identical reading experiences:

'two people gazing at the night sky may both be looking at the same collection of stars, but one will see the image of a plough, and the other will make out a dipper. The "stars" in a literary text are fixed; the lines that join them are variable' (1974, p. 282).

What interests Iser are those different lines that readers draw as this is how different interpretations are defined. This important point leads me to speculate analytically upon evidence of children making individual sense of the stories precisely in this way. For this purpose I have chosen three examples of writing, the relevant discussion of which will appear in the three following sections:

- 1) Introductory story, *From Bad to Good to Bad to Good*, school A, section Children's individual Writing, example 1.
- 2) Story two, *Monkey and the White Bone Demon*, school A, Children's Individual Writing, example 2.

3) Story four, *Mazu*, school A, Children's Individual Writing, example 3.

#### 4.2.4 Hybrid Performance

One of the more fruitful sets of data gathered in this project consists of those children's representations, both from group and individual work, in the form of still images, captured and documented in photographs. The dramatic convention of the still image was an essential pedagogical activity to help structure my drama scheme, as it helped children condense moments of plot and significance concisely into a specific single image (Neelands & Goode, 2006, pp. 4, 25). It was also a very helpful medium for me as a researcher as it required children to engage in a process of selectivity which I could later analyse as it relied on visual embodiment (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 77). All of this means that the images of children's work play a big role in my discussion as they help answer part of my research inquiry. In particular they address the specific question: *how do children articulate, adapt and embody values provoked and engaged with during their drama work and in related classroom activities?*

The human body is one of the core aesthetic elements for making theatre. It has been suggested that we should not regard the body as a possession that actor and performer own, not merely an 'out-there' implement, rather, as being

*with* the performer, as embodying her. That is to say that the ‘performer is the body’ (Berg, 1996, p. 224; Fraser & Greco, 2005, p. 45). The body, in theatrical discourse, lives as a trilateral being, between ‘the phenomenal body of the actor, or their bodily being-in-the-world, and their representation of the dramatic character’ (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 76). It is this intersected tension that stretches the possibilities of embodied art. The body is therefore not a rigid container affiliated with the performer, but more like, in analogy, a body that is constructed by spatial conjunctions teeming with mobility and motility (Frith, 2012; Garner, 1994).

A performing body is, then, a spatialised body, one that can actualise movements and also embrace possibilities of change. In theatrical discourse, this is most commonly associated with the idea of transformation (Alfreds, 1979; Berg, 1996, p. 224). Eugenio Barba expands this idea of the spatiality of the performer’s body with an additional dimension (Barba, 1990; Barba & Savarese, 1991), what he names ‘a transcultural dimension, in the flow of a “tradition of traditions”’ (Barba, 1990, p. 32), which I am particularly interested in in my research.

Barba acknowledges the different concepts of traditional performance training between the West and East and makes the point that theatre should

embrace the diversity that both offer (Barba & Savarese, 1991, p. 9). However the idea of the transcultural has been somewhat superceded by the idea of intercultural performance (Schechner, 2006, p. 304; Zarrilli, McConachie, Williams, & Sorgenfrei, 2010, pp. 552-556). The term transcultural has been seen as problematic with connotations of inequality and strenuous struggle between cultures, according to theatre theorist Ric Knowles (2010, p. 4). Therefore intercultural is my preferred term.

Interculturalism is not meant to imply that one culture has assimilated or overpowered another (Schechner, 2006, p. 304), rather to evoke possibilities for interaction based on mutuality and reciprocity. It exists on the basis of respect for other traditions in a sense that does not 'challenge the existence of traditional styles' (Martin, 2004, p. 4) but which conjures up different aesthetic possibilities for creating a hybrid form (R. Knowles, p. 4; Schechner, 2006, p. 304). Yet it does not mean that hybrid performance has to become a syncretic style or juxtapose every cultural element, to involve all cultures equally; neither does it imply that we should liberally and promiscuously embrace everything (Barba & Savarese, 1991, p. 9; Martin, 2004, p. 5). It is more about incorporating different cultural elements in order to enable 'a new result from a new meeting', as Martin claims (2004, p. 5). This is where I positioned myself

when embarking on this project, and it has also provided a lens for looking into the children's representations.

This manner of cultural adoption and adaptation, nevertheless, may provoke certain ethical concerns vis-a-vis representation, such as the cultural misappropriation and trivialization that Bharucha saw in Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* (1993). It could also attract a critical view condemning the project as inverse imperialism, evangelising minority or different cultural values (Gainor, 1995). Or the debate may align itself to post colonial discourse and use Said's Orientalism to criticise that such learning has a tendency to exoticise Oriental traditions and therefore ethically favour one side only. (Dasgupta, 1991; Said, 1978). None of these issues have easy answers. Yet, even Bharucha has been mindful to state that confrontation cannot be separated from rejuvenation in the field of theatre (1996).

I am arguing that, firstly, my teaching agenda was not to impose upon children a system based upon imitative accuracy. My teaching objective was not based in some misjudged purism; rather it was more about seeing if there was any potential for revitalisation and rejuvenation built *on* and *in* these traditions that these children could access. As Martin claims, interculturalism aims to 'move on to create new work which is as resonant as those traditional

styles were when they were first created' (Martin, 2004, p. 4). Secondly, it was not a demand for children to take on an absolute Chinese style of performing in their own creative work; rather, it was more about framing this learning within Eugenio Barba's ideal world of a third theatre. That is, to open up children's views and encourage them to try, test and make their own aesthetic choices (Barba & Savarese, 1991; Watson, 1993).

It was never my intention to bombard children with technical terms as it might not only corrode the dramatic pace of lessons but also undermine the playful nature of drama (Winston & Tandy, 2001). What was essential was that, children should understand *what was going on with story characters in story plots through a sequence of designed activities with me, an ethnic Chinese teacher-artist*. Learning physicalisation was not an independent experience from learning about the story contexts. In such a way, they did not physicalize from an empty imagination a different, remote culture. In contrast, they were introduced to the physicality of each from the outset through teacher in role. Children, on the one hand, were in a position to observe different physicalisations as I portrayed different roles, as a theatre audience does in a theatrical space. On the other hand, they had the chance to make conversation with characters in order to understand more about them. When I came out of

role, I, as an ethnic Chinese teacher, could then invite them to try out different physicalisations themselves. This gesture of invitation is like the kind of 'absolute advice' vis-a-vis performing style that Barba writes about (Barba & Savarese, 1991, p. 8). It signaled that I shared an inherited cultural heritage to them, but it was up to them to decide how much use they wished to make of it.

In March, 2010, I gave a paper about this subject in the conference *Theatre Application: Performance for a purpose* held in Central School of Speech and Drama, London. Baz Kershaw, a leading figure in theatre studies, attended my presentation and spoke positively and with great interest about my project and was particularly interested in some of the evidence I presented about children's hybrid performance. This greatly helped to allay my ethical fears.

Apart from children's positive response to imitating my physicality and drawing upon their own physical resources, there were other forms of teaching input from which children drew when representing their work. One was the visual stimulus of culturally specific pictorial images; another was the spatial arrangement of a specific drama activity.

The following discussion on hybrid performance is in four parts.

1. Story two, *Monkey and White Bone Demon*, school A, section title

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Children's Collective Work: Still images.

2. Story four, *Mazu*, school A, section title Translating their Own Body Vocabulary.
3. Story four, *Mazu*, school A, section title Running out of stylised physical Vocabulary or Finding the Commonality Between Self and Otherness through differentiation?
4. Story four, *Mazu*, school A, section title Attempts at integrating a new physical vocabulary.

### **4.3 Preliminary Discussion of the Two Classes**

Before taking addressing each of the case studies, I am presenting an initial discussion of each school and the findings from an initial questionnaire presented in each.

#### *4.3.1 The Schools' Performance*

Key differences between the two schools can be identified in some factual figures presented in their Ofsted reports. Here I focus on three areas, the percentage of pupils with English not as a first language, the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, and their KS2 test results showing children who reached level 5 or above in English and math. The comparison is made in the table below:

	School A	School B
the percentage of pupils with English not as first language	3.6%	84.7%
the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals	5.0%	26.7%
KS2 test results	92%	48%

Table 2: The Comparison between two schools of the Percentage of pupils with English not as first language, pupils eligible for free school meals, and KS2 test results

It is apparent that school B has much higher cultural and linguistic diversity than school A. This also indicates that there are many more children who need English as Additional Language (EAL) support in school B, compared to school A. According to Ofsted's report, a majority of children in school B when entering school, their English skills are in an early stage of linguistic development, whereas in school A, children's skills are in line with national expectations. Based on the chart, in terms of the percentage of eligibility for free school meals, school B has more than five times than school A. This gives information that children in school A are far less socially disadvantaged than children in school B. With respect to children's test results, the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected national standard in school A is almost twice high as school B.

#### 4.3.2 Pre-questionnaire analysis

This questionnaire was designed to inquire into some general perceptions about Chinese culture and children's understanding of Chinese stories. In

school A, twenty-eight children filled in the questionnaire. In school B, twenty-five children filled it in and three had to be counted as invalid. The reason was explained in the methodology chapter.

I gathered a good number of positive responses from both groups About interest in Chinese stories. The result is illustrated in the charts below and underlines the point made in the introduction that children have an almost universal interest in stories.

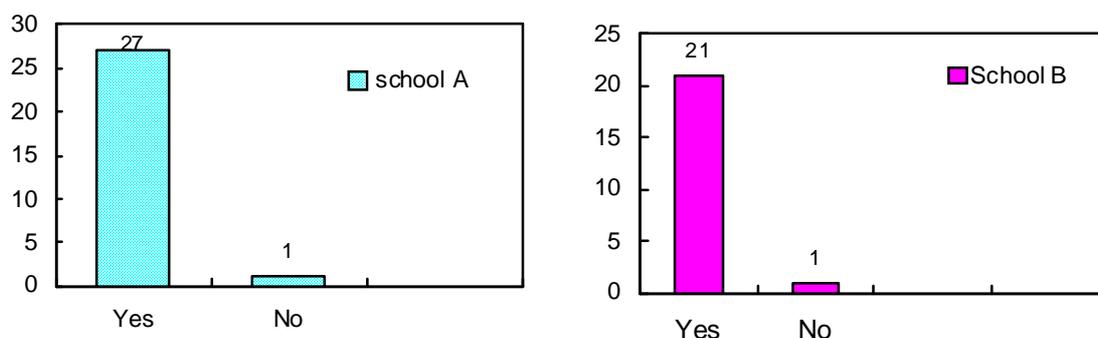


Chart 1: Do you think that British children will like Chinese stories

The children's enjoyment of story was later reflected in their drama work, in the laughter, excitement, the physical and vocal involvement that I trust is evident in the data presented later. Dickinson and Neelands claim that 'whatever our differences, the universal form of story provides a common unity for sharing different experiences of the world' (Dickinson, et al., 2006, p. 60). My research would suggest that this is the case, even when these stories come

from a culture very different from the children's own.

In the questionnaire, I also wished to find out children's overall awareness of cultural differences, so I asked the question '*Do you think that Chinese people have their own culture?*'.

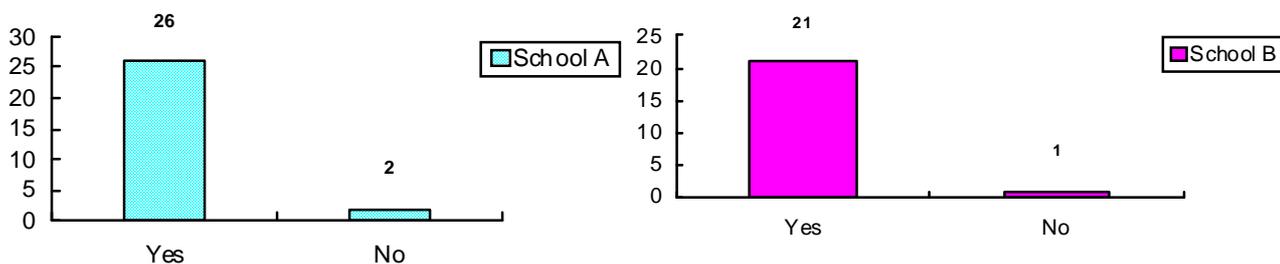


Chart 2: Do you think that Chinese people have their own culture?

Children in both groups, then, seemed to have a good level of awareness with respect of cultural differences. Another question related to Chinese culture, but was more linked to stereotypes: '*Do you think that Chinese people eat rice with most of their meals?*'.

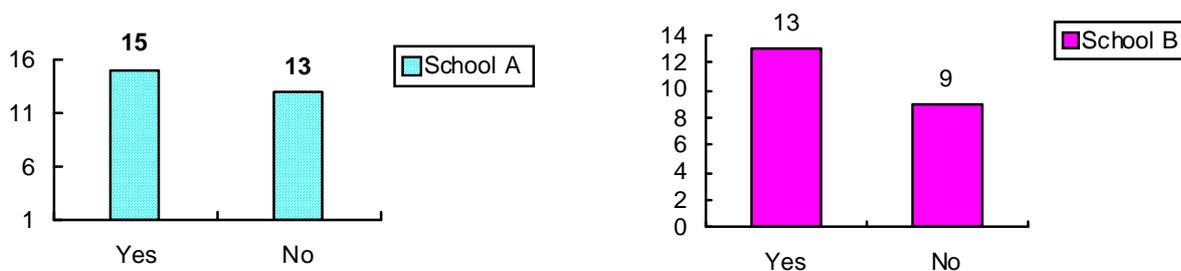


Chart 3: Do you think that Chinese people eat rice with most of their meals?

Their responses show that there is no drastic gap between children who said *Yes* and *No*. Rice is the main food of Chinese people but would not be seen as a necessity in these modern days if by many Chinese people.

Significant discrepancies between the two groups are indicated with questions related to people's way of thinking and behaving.

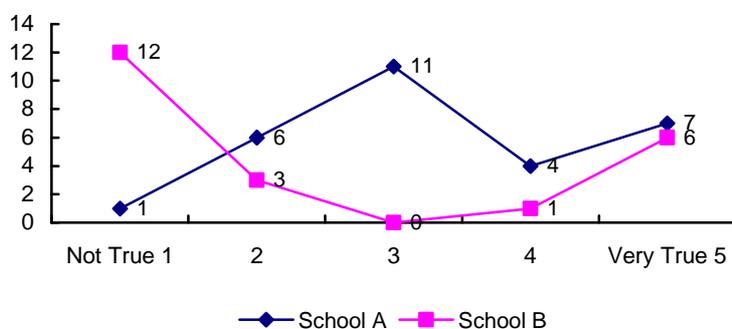


Chart 4: Chinese people have the same way of thinking as British people.

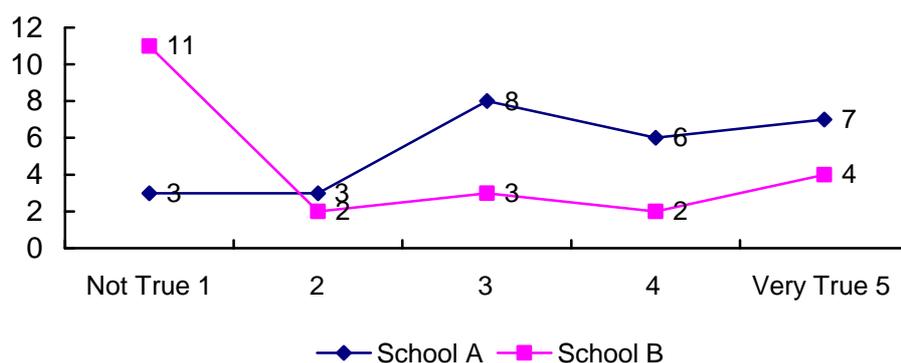


Chart 5: Chinese people have the same way of behaving as British people

Among the white, mainly middle class children in school A many tend to believe that the two statements are true, whereas the opposite is the case in

school B. Moreover, in school A, the number of children who chose the neutral answer is higher than other answers among their peers. In school B, very few children, or even none, chose the neutral answer. This may suggest that children in school A are ignorant of cultural differences, but, perhaps, children who grow up in a liberal white society have a tendency to underplay cultural diversity and hold a belief that human traits are not substantially different from one cultural group to another. This reminds us of Bourdieu's concept about how dominant cultural taste can be naturalised into sameness (1984, p. 68). In contrast, children in school B are more sensitive to cultural differences probably due to their multi-ethnic learning and living environments.

How children perceive their own identity is also interesting, particularly in school B. The design of this pre-questionnaire therefore was slightly modified when conducting it in school B. I added a section where children could circle who they were related to ethnicity, nationality and religion. I did not do so in school A because ethnic diversity is not a major concern in that school – but in retrospect I think I should have done.

Five children identified themselves as both British and Pakistani. Some signalled a singular identity as Bangladeshi, Indian, African or Russian. An interesting incident occurred when a white girl, who is one of only three white

children in this group, handed in her filled questionnaire. Then I spotted that she circled both British and English, so I asked her if she had any reason to circle them both. She paused and said: *'they are similar. It's a bit confusing'*. This self-identification will be taken up in a later discussion.

#### *4.3.3. Language Competence*

From children's verbal responses and written work there is substantial evidence to show that children in both groups were able to make sense of the stories, as will become clear in the case studies. I now wish to draw attention to some key differences related to language between the two classes before looking more deeply at how these shaped children's responses.

Children in school A are drawn largely from White British, middle class backgrounds. The ethnic backgrounds of children in school B are, in contrast, much more diverse. The group I worked with in school B had three white children, the remaining twenty-six being non-white. English Language skills matter in this project as children had to listen and speak in English to participate in the drama lessons. During my field research with group B, I found out that giving out written homework did not go well as it did in school A. The reasons are complex and children's language competence seems to be a major reason.

I recall vividly a key activity when running the scheme of *Liang and his Magic Paint Brush* in school B. I needed a child to play Liang sitting on chair saying only one sentence: 'I only draw for the poor'. I picked a boy who normally was quiet but showed enthusiasm volunteering to take part. I was aware that he was new arrival and had very limited English, but I assumed that this task would not be a challenge to him. The fact, however, was that he could hardly say the whole sentence. This personal teaching experience and overall observation led me to interview the language support tutor and head-teacher, which I did not need to do in school A.

The words of Bob<sup>5</sup>, the language support tutor in school B gave me more insight about that particular child. He had little knowledge of English when he joined school a year before and he took a while to settle down in a new learning environment. Bob also outlined the complex linguistic needs in school B as a whole.

*'(In this school), you've got a whole wide range of different needs. New arrivals, children who have learnt a little bit of English in their home country, ...who were born here, but at home, the main languages spoken are not English, and then you've got those parents who come from another country but who speak English quite well. Then you actually have got families, although they come from other countries, they were actually born here, and have been educated in English through their entire life'.*

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<sup>5</sup> A pseudonym.

Bob saw these issues of children being taught additional language in this school as closely related to broader cultural issues that could impact on attitudes and motivation to learn.

*'Some groups are keeping hold of their culture, that the family brought with them. That also has a linguistic impact. For example, it's a bit of a stereotype, but it's also quite true, some Muslim families like to hold on very strongly to the Islamic faith, that way of bringing up children. You try to persuade parents to let children take part in a range of wider social activities, but the family doesn't want that to happen. They don't take part or there is very limited participation'.*

Bob's perception is based on this specific culturally diverse community, but this cannot be generalised that all the minority children experience less family support on school activities. Research done by Lindsay and Muijs with a group of Muslim boys showed that pupils positively acknowledged their parents' support with their school work (Lindsay & Muijs, 2005) and research by Strand showed that Black African parents became involved with their children's schools more than Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents (Strand, 2007, p. 8).

The class I taught in school B had twenty-nine children, three of them White, British, the rest of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Somalian or of Russian origin. I asked Bob to describe their linguistic ability, and he said:

*'The group has a particular mixture of learning needs. Some of them*

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*definitely have got special educational needs in terms of slower development as well as that intermingling with their EAL needs. The linguistic needs coming from the fact of their family background, give them different linguistic expertise or levels of knowledge, so you've got this complicated mixture of issues. Sometimes it's quite difficult to diagnose what's going on'.*

The head teacher made similar points when I interviewed her.

*'Children come from varied backgrounds. Lots of them come from families where perhaps at least one parent would be illiterate, so there's no point to send them complex homework home, if we know that there's nobody there to support children. We also have children who have problems with domestic violence, family breakdown, all the usual things that will effect children's learning. And there's also a cultural issue as well. I mean children are under a lot of pressure to get into the mosque and to dress every night, so that has the impact on how much homework they have time for'.*

Religion is important to children in this school and practising religion is part of life, according to the head teacher. The research done by Strand claims that minority children who attend religious classes more than once a week progress less than children who do not take religious courses or attend them with less frequency. But he also points out whether there is a relation between attendance at religious classes and children's progression, this requires further research to explore (2007, p. 10). When comparing the figure from Ofsted with respect to measuring children's progression in both schools, there is fairly little difference between them. School A's score on English is 100.2, while school B is 100.0. This suggests that children in both schools make steady progression

no matter what.

The overall learning needs and pressures in the two schools, nevertheless, are different. I recalled the time when being TA with two groups. I observed that children in school A had regular vocabulary mock tests in their literacy time. In school B, no such tests had ever taken place; instead, the class teacher used a word game to encourage children to speak out words they had learned. According to children's KS2 test results in both schools, it is not surprising to find out that group A on the whole is much more able to use language than group B, but their different language competences did not make teaching drama to children in school B notably more difficult. As a teacher, I was able to interact and respond to both groups with nearly identical lessons. Their output were nonetheless different which reflects Bourdieu's point that different social groups have their own aesthetic dispositions, from which effect their own ways when come to choose what to present in social space (1984).

I will now proceed to present the analysis story by story and class by class.

#### **4.4 Case Study One: From Bad to Good to Bad to Good**

##### *4.4.1 Summary of the Story*

An old man Sai Wong lived with his only son in the far North of China. The only way they earned a living was to raise horses. One day, one of Sai Wong's best horses went missing. Neighbours who heard the news came to show their sympathy. However Sai Wong was surprisingly calm and only replied to people that what had happened could be fortune in disguise. A few days later, the missing horse returned alongside another magnificent Mongolian stallion. Neighbours gathered again to congratulate Sai Wong but Sai Wong did not show a trace of joy, instead, said that there is no absolute luck in life. His only son now spent days and nights taming, raising, and riding on the new horse and one day he fell from the speeding horse and broke his leg. Villagers came to Sai Wong's house once again to comfort him but Sai Wong told the crowd that maybe some good may come from it. A few months later, barbarians invaded China and all the young men had to report to the army but Sai Wong's son was spared due to his broken leg. In the ensuing battle a great number of young soldiers' died, yet Sai Wong, luckily, had his son's company till his last breath in his late eighties. His only son lived long and, when in his ripe old age, his injured knee always hurt when the chilly wind cut through from the North;

but he never complained.

#### *4.4.2 Analysis of the Story*

The original story is taken from the book *Huai Nan Zi* (淮南子) written in an old form of Chinese dating back to the Western Han Dynasty, around 202 BC to 122 BC. The text incorporates a key aspect of Daoism (or Taoism), which opposes any intervention of human force, with the essence of life being seen as mirrored in nature.

The origin of the story is oral folktale. An accurate date is untraceable. The structure of such tales tends to be short and simple and their purpose to convey some profound moral or meaning through language and plots accessible to ordinary people (Wei, 1982). This type of story, on the surface, is centred on a single human event (Wei, 1982, p. vii). On a deeper level, it epitomises a collective attitude of Chinese people. The themes which repetitively appear are of returning, moving in an endless cycle as nature does. The basic pattern of the story enforces two fundamental Eastern ways of belief towards life. Firstly, the world is in a state of constant change and secondly, the world is paradoxical, full of contradictions. These two key ideas are not meant to be separated nor to be seen a cause-effect relationship. They are suggested to be two independent but deeply rooted Chinese attitudes towards life.

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#### 4.4.3 Reasons for Choosing this version

There are at least three English versions of this story published.

- 1.) *From Bad to Good to Bad to Good* in *One Hundred Allegorical Tales from Traditional China* (Wei, 1982, pp. 39-41).
- 2) *The Lost Horse* in *Favorite Folktales from Around the World* edited by Jane Yolen (1986).
- 3) *A Steed Lost is More Horses Gained* in *The Magic Lotus Lantern and Other Tales from the Han Chinese* (Yuan, 2006, pp. 178-179).

The story I adapted is *From Bad to Good to Bad to Good* in terms of the flow of the narration as it adds how Sai Wong's son felt, physically and mentally about being alive due to his leg injury. This ending carries a particular tone of sweet nostalgia rather than bitter sorrow. Moreover, it not only brightens up the whole story but resonates warmly and positively with the title *From Bad to Good to Bad to Good*. I liked its sense of optimism.

#### 4.4.4 Scheme of Work

The full lesson plans can be found in appendix, pages 378-381. Activities are referenced in this analysis as A1 (Activity one), A2 and so on, with descriptions of each provided in the appendix.

I memorised and told children the story. I characterised the main

characters each time I narrated their speech. After storytelling, children had a quick discussion on what impressions they had of Sai Wong and then they voted for the most applicable words to describe him. Later children grouped in five to make still images to show the most typical aspects of Sai Wong's character drawing from the words they had come up with earlier. Then I took on the role of Sai Wong and children had the chance to ask him questions. After hot-sitting in role, I had another discussion with children to see if they had changed their opinions of him and wanted to add or withdraw any of the words they had suggested for him.

#### 4.4.5 School A

##### 4.4.5.1 First Impressions of Sai Wong

###### ➤ **In words:**

These words were collected from children after A2 listed in the chart below:

Positive	Calm	Wise	Lucky	Unlucky	Thoughtless	Uncaring
17	17	14	14	8	5	2

This activity aimed to capture children's immediate responses to Sai Wong. The first four words indicate strengths of character and the last three are his weaknesses. The word *lucky* and *unlucky* are polarised opinions although

the number of votes for the word unlucky is almost half that of its opposite.

➤ **In Images:**



Positive is one of the words most applicable to Sai Wong, according to this class of children. Their representation of a positive Sai Wong was captured in the

picture on the left in A5.



In this it is very likely that they picked up my theatrical representation of Sai Wong in A2, as pictured on the right.



The picture on the left is an example of the kind of scenario the children built. The boy on the left rides his horse and Sai Wong on the right sits on a

chair holding his jaw looking at his son. His pose did not change when his son fell from his horse. They enacted a thorough plot to illustrate what they saw as Sai Wong's 'positive' attitude when facing his son's accident. This was the only group that picked up on my theatrical representation to portray a positive Sai Wong. Children's still images here reflected their first impressions of the character, now the question was would they change or modify their

understanding after 'meeting' him in person? How far might their understanding change or develop once they had the chance to 'talk *with the character*'?

#### 4.4.5.2 Togetherness Via Teacher In Role

If the Chinese story suggests a long cultural distance far away from British children, this meeting-up with Sai Wong, symbolically, attempted to shorten the cultural distance by closing the social distance between them and their teacher who was visibly and self-evidently ethnically Chinese. The following excerpts of conversation took place in chronological order. For the sake of clarity and the proceeding analyses, the conversation is divided into three parts. Part II and part III are then further divided into segments. Segment 1 will be described as Sg1 and so on. The analysis proceeds after the excerpts. Between each part, there is a brief reflection and discussion.

### **Part I**

*Girl 1: Did you really care when your son broke his leg?*

*Me: Why do you ask me this question? Do you think I don't care?*

*Girl 1: You are like, it's like you are really calm. It's like, you didn't rush through to call for help. It's like it doesn't matter much to you.*

*Me: It does matter to me. He is my son. I care about him. But you tell me, you're wise and intelligent, you tell me what shall I do with his broken leg? There is something I cannot control over. I cannot tell the horse to stop. It just happens, what can I do? I cannot be sad all the time. And because of his broken leg, he doesn't have to go to war. He can stay with me all the time to help me out.*

The opening question expresses on the one hand, a genuine doubt about

how could Sai Wong stay calm while his son broke his leg. On the other hand, this girl interprets the character's attitude in a negative way by pointing to an apparent lack of care for his son. My reply did not offer her a straight answer about 'how much I cared about my son', rather I used a provocative tone being eager to rationalise that I could not change the done-fact of his broken leg. In the back of my mind as a teacher, I diverted her attention and made an attempt to lead her (and the class) to see things from a perspective they were evidently not used to. It was not to focus on one single incident in life but to see the richness of that life threaded between different anecdotes, alternating but never necessarily resolved as bad in their effect.

## **Part II**

### **Segment 1 (Sg1)**

*Boy 1: what's your horses' names?*

*Me: it's none of your business.*

*(some loud laughs were heard, some children were giggling.)*

### **Sg 2**

*Boy2: what's your favourite horse?*

*Me: Every single horse is my favourite. Ask me smarter question young boys and girls.*

### **Sg 3**

*Girl 2: How much do you know the horses?*

*Me: How much do you know mathematics, young lady? Can you measure that?*

*(I lifted my two arms to my chest high to represent the act of measuring )*

*(roaring laughter around the circle)*

The three consecutive questions in part II were relevant to the character

but not relevant to the core of the story. When encountering such a situation, there are ways to either neglect or divert questions and then reframe them into something more directly relevant to the teaching focus. In my case, I challenged back in role by using a rough tone making an attempt to provoke children by posing questions from different angles. Some may argue its inappropriateness but the fact was that children enjoyed being playful with this 'visible' fictional role. Playfulness was a strategy which invited children to engage in a conversation with the character. The effect of this did not end when TiR finished, it actually brought their imagination further and developed into a positive way to understand the story. This will become evident when analysing children's writing later, specifically in example 2.

### **Part III**

**Sg4** *Girl3: (using soft tone and voice asking) Did you actually tell the truth when you told people what you said?*

*Me: you thought I was not telling the truth when people came to me? (some children nodded) No, I didn't tell lie.*

**Sg5** *Can I ask you something? My son's broken leg, is it something I can choose from? (some children shake their heads to indicate the answer 'NO').*

**Sg6** *so if this is something I cannot choose from, something I cannot control over, life still goes on, isn't it? even though these things happen. And you know, life is full of challenges, full of contradictions.*

**Sg7** *Something bad may happen, but that's how I enjoy every single moment when I feel joyful. I live at present. I live at now. I don't live in the past.*

The conversation in part II and part III impressed the class teacher. After the drama session, she gave feedback that children were too accustomed with

Yes/No questions and had a tendency to expect straightforward answers. She positively claimed that:

**Class Teacher:** *'Kids they were really thinking of the story which they seldom have got the chance to, to express their opinions in other lessons. These probing questions scratch beneath the surface and really develop their thinking more deeply.'*

#### 4.4.5.3 Analysis of Children's Responses

##### ➤ **Vote-off words**

After the TiR, children voted off two words from the list they thought of in A3, one being uncaring, the other thoughtless. This projected how children had modified their responses from a spectrum inclined towards negativity to one that was distinctly more positive to the character Sai Wong and the values he represented. There were more individual responses in written forms which were collected after TiR from A8. Here are some examples.

##### ➤ **Children's Individual Writings**

###### Example 1

**Girl 4:** *I think Sai Wong is a different type of man from what I thought. He was very wise but I didn't<sup>①</sup> get why he wasn't<sup>②</sup> very unhappy<sup>③</sup> when his son broke his leg, but he was going to have to go to war if he didn't <sup>④</sup> break his leg, so I guess he was lucky.*

In this small piece of writing, this girl states from the beginning that meeting the character in person has definitely helped her to break through her initial

impressions. This understanding, however, is tempered with uncertainty as evidenced syntactically in her complex uses of negatives, four in one sentence!

### Example 2

This piece of writing was from Sophie<sup>6</sup>, a girl whose academic achievement is above on average. She is outspoken in drama lessons in terms of quality but not quantity. She was the first student who posed questions when I was in role as Sai Wong in story 1. Her writing was more expressive and lengthier than that of her peers, who had high academic achievement in literacy. Her composition was of a substantial length compared to her peer group. What interested me in particular was the complex web of sources that seem to inform her writing. There are ten sentences that I number S1, S2 etc.

#### **Girl 1:**

- S1) *I think Sai Wong is (was) quite a strong man as he is able not to cry very easily.*
- S2) *He was quite a careful and kind man.*
- S3) *Many people think that he's rough and angry at everyone but he does actually care about everyone around him.*
- S4) *Also about every animal around him because that's why he looks after horses because he cares and likes them.*
- S5) *I think that Sai Wong was an incredibly wise man for example when his only son broke his leg he chose his words wisely and spoke carefully.*
- S6) *Sai-Wong was a bit like a fortune-teller because when his best horse ran away he was kind of saying that it would bring good luck back which it did and when it did he kind of said that bad luck would return.*
- S7) *He really did care because it says that his many horses had a lovely emerald green field for them to gallop in.*

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<sup>6</sup> Pseudonyms are used in the chapter due to ethical concern.

- S8) *Sai Wong was a quiet man because he didn't live down in the village he lived on a hill by the village.*
- S9) *Sai Wong was just one of those people who other people wanted to be friends with but he was fine with the company of this only son.*
- S10) *Sai Wong sounds like a well educated man who can solve really hard mathematical problems in about five seconds.*

I have used four different colours to code the different sources that this girl appears to have drawn from, shown in the chart below.

	Colour	Source
1	Red	Teacher in Role
2	Blue	Her own interpretations
3	Black	Original story
4	Purple	Her own invention/imagination

Evidently Girl 1 has used these four complementary sources to retell a story that is now very much her own version. Through using numeration to code each sentence in the chart below, her written text, from S1 to S7, can be seen to flow along and in between the drama, the storytelling, and her own interpretations. The structure of the text makes an apparent shift after S7, as from S8 onwards it features her own inventions more fully.

S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
2+1	2	1+2	2+1	2+1	2+3	1+3	4	4	4+1+4

The dramatic experience of TiR is the very strong point of departure in her reading process. This visual and dialogical activity leads her recall of the story and also her interpretations of it as shown in S1, S4 and S5. In S3, she has formed her own view about the character and is, in effect, comparing her own

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view with that of her peer group. Partly this is because she was the instigating questioner in TIR, part 1, and therefore had a personal interactive experience with the character (see the earlier section, togetherness via TiR, part I, p.182). S6 and S7 reveal that she has made her own selections from the original story combined with her own interpretations drawn from the drama experience in order to highlight her own imaginary role. This text-reader interaction is what Iser claims as the reader's 'process of recreation' (1974, p. 288), through which the reader synthesizes everything together in a consistent pattern even though this consistency is not present in the first place (ibid, p. 283). This creative process not only recreates a fictional world for the reader, it constructs a 'virtual dimension of the text' as Iser names it (Iser, 1980, p. 54). He further states that such a dimension 'endows it with its reality' (ibid). This explains this girl's detailed invented section from S8 onwards, where her imagination merges into the text . In S10, she again retrospectively draws upon my playful response to her classmates about mathematics: '*How much do you know mathematics, young lady? Can you measure that? (I lifted my two arms to my chest high to represent the act of measuring)*', see page 185. As a result, she playfully describes Sai Wong as a mathematical genius. She has interpreted this comment as a signifier to represent an aspect of the character's personality,

using it to fill a creative gap and complete her interpretation (Ubersfeld, 1977, from Bennett).

#### 4.4.5.4 Summary of School A

This Chinese story is one I have known since my childhood; it is like natural soil upon which I have stood and in which I am rooted. I have received and believed it, taken it for granted. It has now been recomposed into a sequence of participatory drama activities and introduced to British children by and through me. This story may be new to them and culturally detached from them, yet this is the reason that they could view and scrutinize it afresh. The evidence showed that there was absorption and reinterpretation drawn from theatrical and educational experiences through storytelling and TiR.

#### 4.4.6. *What I did differently in School B*

I experimented with a different representation to portray Sai Wong. Instead of holding my jaw with two fingers, I chose to have a cigar in my hand to see whether a different representation might influence children's perceptions in any way.

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#### 4.4.7 School B

This section of analysis about TiR will concentrate on how my TiR helped children connect with Sai Wong and with the story.

##### 4.4.7.1 Togetherness Via Teacher In Role

Children in this school also asked me about why I was not feeling sad or not crying when my son broke his leg. This time I chose not to rush into rationalising about how life was fraught with contradictions, rather, I told children about how my (Sai Wong) wife's death shaped the way I thought and behaved. I deliberately slowed down the pace of narration and started with a melancholic tone:

*'Before answering your question, I like to share my life story with you. (pause) My wife died when I was 50. This made me so sad that I could not work, sleep, or eat. I could not do a thing (pause, breathe out, lowering head). Until one of my best friend reminded me that, (uplifting tone) I've still had my son, a son to take care of. That's how I come to understand that life has to carry on no matter how.'*

The silence echoed around the classroom for a few seconds afterwards, then questions about Sai Wong's wife broke through the sombre atmosphere, such as 'what is your wife's name?', 'how did she die?'. They genuinely liked to find out this information but these non-relevant questions could definitely stray away from the core of the story, so I replied in a quivering voice to keep the

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focus but also to let the children perceive my humanity in ways that the story on its own could not:

*'I prefer not mentioning such things to you all. I prefer keeping them to my own'.*

➤ **Add-in Words**

After hot-seating, some words children wished to add were: confident, personal, private and confidential. These are visibly related to the extended life story of Sai Wong that I presented through teacher in role, showing complex human emotions by sharing his personal life. The quietness children remained in after listening to Sai Wong's loss of his wife was not a sign of rejection, rather, it was more like an intangible yet intimate bond spiraling between children and the character. Sharing an intimate feeling is a universal way we show kindness to one another, a gesture of our common humanity. Nevertheless, this intimacy was not taken by children as an excuse to be flippantly intrusive into Sai Wong's private life. They listened respectfully to what they were told, navigating at one and the same time the borders of inter-cultural exchange and social manners successfully.

#### 4.4.7.2 Analysis of Children's Responses

In this section, two sources of data are used, interviews and children's drawings. They were collected from children after the drama session.

➤ **Interview**

There were six children who took part in this interview. None of them were white British.

**Me:** *Is there any difference between the way you read story from book and you listened story from me?*

**Boy 1, Somali:** *You're acting. When people read story, they just read from their head, they are not acting.*

**Me:** *So from which part you can tell I was acting?*

**Girl 1, Somali :** *(puffing smoke from cigar)*

*(The rest of the children grinned to show their agreement. Some boys started doing the same action )*

**Girl 2, Indian:** *Acting like a character, Sai...(Sai Wong, from me), Sai-Wong. You acted like he almost cried.*

**Boy 2, mixed (Iranian and Irish):** *It was kind as same as book, coz' you were acting out, you were also reciting out as well.*

**Boy 1:** *It's quite different coz' you're showing your expressions and books they usually don't show your expression.*

**Me:** *What did you think and what did you feel when you saw me acting the story?*

**Girl 1:** *Li..ke, like I really in the story.*

**Me:** *Can you describe more?*

**Girl 1:** *I really in story, li..ke, like I was talking to Sai-Wong.*

**Boy 3, Bangladeshi:** *Like we were really in story and we were going into Sai-Wong's house, that stuff.*

**Boy 2:** *Basically you were acting, and you were acting like him, and it's from your culture, you know more about the story than us, so we feel like, we are really in the story.*

**Girl 3, Indian:** *When you told Sai-Wong's story, you said the broken leg, and it's like we were in the story and in our mind.*

**Girl 1:** *When you said that his child's broken leg, you were about to cry, but you were not (to) show it.*

Acting with emotion is a common point that children picked up from my way of storytelling. This group of children not only vocalised their observation of

a theatrical way of storytelling, they also showed that they were ready to 'act'. When I asked them how they could tell that I was acting, the Somali girl emulated an act of puffing smoke by raising her right hand up and blowing breath out. Her spontaneity was a gestural way of dialoguing with a human she perceived as looking and acting differently from herself. Not having a full command of English, instead of giving a verbal reply, she used actions to tell me her thoughts.

Comments referring to emotion, such as how I almost cried, or another girl who said that I suppressed my sorrow, were drawn from observations children made during the hot-seating when I was in role as Sai Wong. Children recognised these emotions by the way I spoke, my behaviour and the tone I used. Here, emotional expression irrigated the story and provided more direct and authentic human connections to the children. As they mentioned, they felt they were *in* the story. This being *in* the story is a moment at which the children navigated the boundary between being a passive audience and becoming active participants. They were no longer onlookers but taking part by talking with the character and interacting with him. A much closer relationship was thus built between the children and my role as Sai Wong by sharing the emotions of a personal story. Children thus had a sense of being invited into the intimate

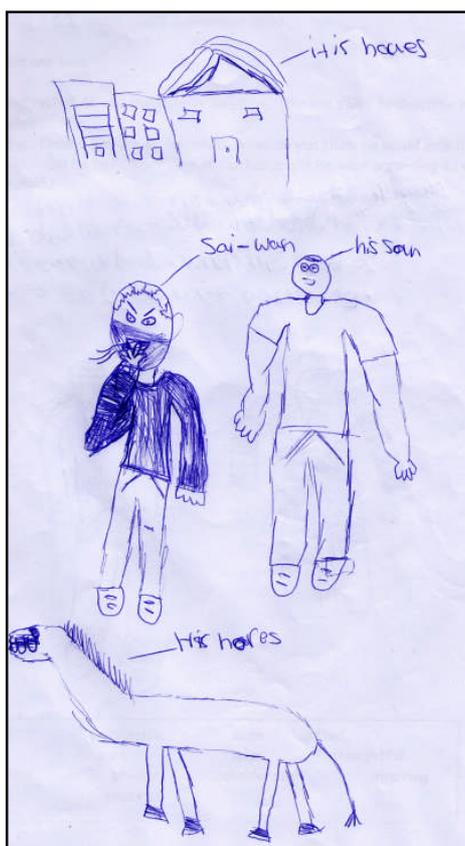
space where the story was unfolding, tellingly described in the form of a metaphor by one boy, as Sai Wong's house.

Another child's thoughts are interesting in a different way. He mentioned that the story was from my culture and that I therefore had more knowledge what this story was about. According to him, this very fact of difference helped place them inside the story. On the one hand, it seems to suggest that my ethnicity worked as a signifier, re-enforcing the ethnic nature of the Chinese role I played, which in turn added authority to my cultural knowledge. This insight would appear to come from the boy's own identity as being of mixed race, half Iranian and half Irish. Perhaps, too, it comes from being educated in such a multicultural school. Either way, he was able to articulate clearly and sensitively a theme at the heart of my research.

➤ **Drawings**

Children drew pictures of Sai Wong and here it is not their technique or drawing skills I am going to focus on, rather what I can interpret from them that is pertinent to aspects of the children's domestic and ethnic backgrounds.

Drawing 1, by Pakistani boy:



This drawing depicts all the main objects and characters from the story, such as the house, Sai Wong, his son, and horse. At the top of the picture, an array of three houses represents a village in the background. The composition is interesting as two houses on the left are more inclined to modern design. They are more like a modern block of flats suggested by horizontal lines on the left, and

the house in the middle uses squares to indicate windows for each family. The house where Sai Wong lives, on the other hand, has a more traditional, old fashioned design. The shape and the lines of the roof suggest a material more primitive such as straw, or thatch, or a cheaper type of corrugated iron.

Sai Wong and his son are placed vertically in the middle of this composition, in the centre of the paper. It suggests that they are the most vital elements of the story. Sai Wong is given more detailed characteristics than his son, as suggested by his facial features his pointed V shaped eyebrows, thick lines around his eyes, and a short moustache that covers almost half of his face. His

son, compared to Sai Wong, has less deliberate lines of drawing. His facial expression is plain and almost characterless. One of the tangible differences between these two characters, according to the boy, is that Sai Wong's son has a figure which is obviously much stronger, more muscular, more youthful than his dad. The vividness of Sai Wong reflects on the influence to a certain degree of my representation– Sai Wong is the character he has met, not the son. The housing details suggest, I would hazard, that he has placed Sai Wong closer to his own domestic life, within his own cultural references.

The following two drawings have shared features distinctly different from the first one. The common feature the following share is striking ethnic features in the faces. I am going to firstly analyse the drawings in separate subsections, and then make a general point of how I read them.

Drawing 2, by Indian girl

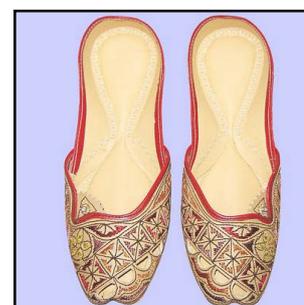


The picture is composed in two parts. On the left a character's whole body is represented in standing position; on the right, two Chinese characters in the form of Chinese calligraphy were drawn to describe Sai Wong. It is interesting to see how this Indian girl depicted the character's eyes, with thick lines around them. It makes their appearance very emphatic, as if this character had put eye liner on the rims of his eyes. It recalls that putting eye liner is one tradition of Indian people, something immediately noted by my flatmate at the time, herself Indian.

The outfit I wore on the day was a short sleeved, black top, light blue jeans, and trainers. In her imagination, the outfit Sai Wong put on was completely different: a vest unevenly cut at the edge. The trousers he wore have soft contours at the end of them. It suggests a loose fabric and a design which can tighten the trousers close to the ankles. This outfit resembles the Indian Kurta pajama, illustrated above right.



The shoes he wears resemble the design of Indian Khussa shoes as illustrated on the right.



I consulted Eleanor Nesbitt, who has scholarly expertise on Indian culture, and she suggested to me that the costume could

resemble *salvar* and *chapals* as footwear, with eye make-up such as *surma* or *kajal*. However she cautioned against over interpretation and said she would rather have more information from the child (E. Nesbitt, 2012).

The two Mandarin characters the girls chose to describe the character, *he* (和, harmony) *ping* (平, equivalence), mean peaceful or peace when put together. The girl passed me her drawing personally and told me that she had looked up on the internet the equivalent Mandarin translation of the word peaceful. What urged her to search for these Chinese characters and made this approach was, however, her meeting with an actor portraying a fictional character. This drawing, therefore, symbolises how such encounters can open up a new space for inter-cultural exchange.

**Drawing 3, by a boy of mixed race (Iranian and Irish)**

This drawing is dominated entirely by one character, Sai Wong. Unlike the other two children who drew their characters in a standing position, this boy drew the character sitting on a chair, as I did during the narrative storytelling and hot-seating, as my own picture illustrates<sup>7</sup>. In his drawing, this boy puts emphasis on the character's upper body, particularly his head. His mouth is rounded, like my own; his hair is outlined by layers of strokes which may be

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<sup>7</sup> My illustration was taken at the time when doing data analysis.

reminiscent of my own hair in ways that the heavily grown beard surrounding half of his face is not! This Sai-Wong is not a Chinese-looking man, but could be someone with Iranian features, perhaps resembling someone whom the child is close to in his daily life.



These two specific drawings from the Indian girl and the mixed race boy of Iranian and Irish parents in school B are extremely interesting pieces of data. It, however, is very difficult to pin them down through one single theoretical frame. At first glance, it seems very likely that they cast light on issues of ethnicity, which has been theorised by a range of scholars and researchers (Brass, 1996; Brubaker, 2004; Enloe, 1996; Thomas H. Eriksen, 1996; Thomas Hylland Eriksen, 2010; Fenton, 1999, 2003, 2010; Fishman, 1996; Jacobson, 1997; Tilley, 1997). Nevertheless, ethnicity itself contains a range of extremely

complicated conceptual ideas that involve class, religion, race, customs and language. The following discussion does not aim to review the usage or discourse of ethnicity; rather, ethnicity is used as a point of departure to further some speculative analysis on these two drawings.

My speculation centres upon these drawings as a medium from which the two children differentiated their own identity from others. In other words, whether they might have been using their ethnic backgrounds as points of reference when drawing the pictures. While the Indian girl uses a mode of 'dress', the mixed race boy uses the 'body' to depict ethnic uniqueness. Here, *dress* means other external factors to supplement the body's look, and, in this case, includes eye make up (Lazaridis & Arthur, 1999, p. 3, from Bun, 2006). The *Body* is not only a physical reality but a social construction (Goffman, 2010), and a dressed body can provide symbolic and iconic signs to be interpreted with regard to ethnicity (K. H. Bun, 2006). Thus, it seems to be logical to see these drawings as a 'signal of identification' at the individual level of action with regard to ethnicity (Fenton, 1999, p. 11).

My point here is not to pursue a discussion about ethnically accurate clothing, or to estimate the accuracy of the drawing with a manufactured product; rather, and more importantly, my point is that we, different viewers,

recognize the *differences* of the girl's way of expression through the drawing. This is almost tentatively to say that these drawings are a way in which children can express publicly their personal identities in a way that is recognizable collectively by others (Geertz, 1973, pp. 269, 309).

It is not an innovative idea for an ethnic group to use distinct and tangible cultural objects to define themselves (Brass, 1996). Examples like the male turban in Muslim and Sikh culture, different styles of hijab women wear in Islamic culture (K. H. Bun, 2006), or a kimono that a Japanese person might wear, or any objects that have Chinese mythological creatures such as a dragon or phoenix inscribed on them to represent symbolic values, namely an emperor and empress's imperial authority (Eberhard, 1983). To quote Barth's language, these cultural objects are like boundaries that demarcate one ethnic group from others (1969). He further argues that markers are not the real matter to make distinctions between people; what matters more is how *decisive* they are to people who apply them when wearing cultural objects is an individual's subjective and self-conscious choice (Barth, 1969), in a search for inner cohesion, a sense of belonging, a relationship with their own culture. In the mean time, it serves to make themselves distinct from other groups (Brass, 1996; Thomas H. Eriksen, 1996; Fenton, 2003, 2010).

But there is also another interesting question; has my own ethnic embodiment worked as a catalyst when they produced these drawings? Erving Goffman's *Relations in Public* may be helpful here (1971, 2010). He has a central argument that the 'world around the individual is highly social in character' (1971, p. 250) and makes a point that individuals live in surroundings in which they might respond to 'signs of alarms' (1971, pp. 248-256) as human beings have 'a capacity for picking up signs for alarm' (1971, pp. 250-251). The sources of such alarms can be certain individuals' sound and appearance as well as their general surroundings (1971, pp. 253-254, 2010, pp. 244-247).

Applying this idea to the two pieces of drawing from the two different children, I am tempted to argue that their drawings are much alike to the means in which children manifest their absorption of signs, signs that are theatrically semiotic, from which they perceive their teacher as a story character. These signs also function in a way to enable them to be socially alarmed, from which to evoke their perception of the social world where they are *in* and *from*. My way of talking, behaving and appearance, therefore, might have served to activate their own ethnic coding. They listened to the story from me in character and simultaneously, they also could hear that I have a very different accent and intonation when speaking English compared to others in this school. They

could see me as a story character, but at the same time, they could also perceive my Chinese ethnic appearance as distinct from their class teacher, in this case, a female white person. In their school milieu, it is common for them to see other ethnically diverse teachers around them. But my way of talking and the sound I produced might have become a potent emphasis or *alarm* to children, an alarm about ethnic difference.

The signs for alarming from my storytelling, in this case, might have transferred into signs of alarms in both the fictional space and in the social space for children. As Goffman puts it, an individual has 'a special ability to serve as proxy for an alarm, being more effective in this regard than many other parts of the environment' (2010, pp. 244-245). Their drawings, then, possibly show that they qualify these alarms drawn from me as a Chinese ethnic storyteller into pictorial, personalised and much more habituated signs closer to their own domestic lives; they have responded to the alarm of my ethnic difference with representations that demonstrate their own.

This is only a hypothesis of course as, firstly, the quantity of data is limited and only available in one school; secondly, I unfortunately missed the opportunity to interview these children about their drawings as I only started making sense of this raw data long after I had left the research site. In order to

construct a more thorough understanding of the points tentatively raised here, it would need further longitudinal study; for, as Barth claims, the differences that ethnic groups maintain are not through 'a once-and-for-all recruitment but by continual expression and validation' (Barth, 1969, p. 15).

#### 4.4.7.3 Summary of School B

This group of children had the same considerations as the children in school A of Sai Wong who was lacking human emotion. Their understanding of the story was led primarily by body language and they were more likely to show their understanding through bodily communication and visual representation. Compared to the verbal narration of the story, having a conversation with a character generated more responses from these children. Their drawings suggest a way that children blended elements observed from their own surroundings with those of the fictional character in a vivid, hybrid fashion. Their drawings also showed the sustainability of theatrical representation and how children arranged their thoughts through pictorial images.

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## 4.5 Case Study Two: Monkey and the White Bone Demon<sup>8</sup>

### 4.5.1 Summary of Story

The picture story book I used here is about the Monk *Hsuan Tsang* who set off on a journey to the West to search for the ancient Buddhist scriptures, escorted by three disciples, Monkey, Pigsy and Sandy. This group of pilgrims passed by a barren mountain after days of walking without food, so Monkey decided to look for something for them all to eat. The White Bone Demon, who believed that by tasting the Monk's flesh and bone he could live forever, took advantage of Monkey's absence to approach the group three times in different human forms. Luckily, Monkey always showed up in time, saw through the tricks and knocked the demon down each time with his iron staff. Hsuan Tsang, the Monk, never believed the demon was anything other than human and finally could bear Monkey's ferocious behaviour no longer. The Demon then cunningly forged a heavenly note dropping it down from the sky saying: killing is intolerant and as long as Monkey stays in the group, you will never find the scriptures. Monkey was thus forced to leave the Monk, which fatal decision gave the White Bone Demon the chance to catch Hsuan Tsang. Pigsy, who managed to escape, hurried to plead with Monkey to come to his rescue.

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<sup>8</sup> Zhang, X. S., & Morris, J. (1984). *Monkey and the White Bone Demon* (P.-K. Ye, Trans.). Harmondsworth: Kestrel Books in association with Liaoning Fine Arts Publishing House, China.

Monkey then transformed into the Golden Toad Fairy, who was the Demon's mother, on her way to feast for immortality with her daughter. Arriving in the Demon's cave, Monkey's perfect disguise was not spotted and, in the form of the Golden Toad Fairy, Monkey tricked the White Bone Demon into boasting about all the disguises he had tried in order to catch the Monk. Only then did Hsuan Tsang realise his mistake and, once he showed sorrow for his error, Monkey revealed his true identity. A boisterous battle ensued which Monkey won and he then continued to lead the group onward, towards the West to complete their mission.

#### *4.5.2 Analysis of the Story*

The story of *Monkey and The White Bone Demon* is the most popular of the various episodes of peril these pilgrims encounter in a much longer book which evolved from oral folk storytelling, followed by a period of maturation in various written forms. The well-known novel which people still read today was written in the sixteenth century during the Ming Dynasty, arguably by Wu Cheng-En (1500-1582) (K.-i. S. Chang, 2010, pp. 51,55).

The common English translations of the novel are entitled *The Journey to the West* and *The Pilgrimage to the West*. Another translation is an abridged version known as *Monkey* by Arthur Waley. The novel has achieved literary acclaim but, in this part of my research, it was the area of performance values that interested me most.

Chinese opera, in particular, has developed a series of sophisticated movements for Monkey's actions and in the depiction of fights with other characters. The drawings in this picture book authentically capture this in its illustrations and also some quintessential symbolic Chinese values, landscape being a good example. A high density of pine trees is the favourite scenery for Chinese landscape artists. Their size, shape, and resistance to the cold and the fact that they do not lose their needles symbolize longevity and steadfastness (Eberhard, 1983, pp. 237-238). There are other symbolic elements in the pictures which anyone unacquainted with Chinese culture will need to have pointed out if they are to understand what they mean, such as the colour blue-violet which signifies the underworld. They are evident in



the two full-size pictures of the White Bone Demon in her own domain. The very last full-page picture is full of symbols of longevity, such as cranes, deer and pine-trees (Eberhard, 1983). They re-enforce the purpose of the pilgrimage to fetch sacred scriptures so as to pursue immortality. The authenticity of 'the taste of Chinese' is also reflected in each of the characters in this picture book. Their dress, gait and even their weapons draw on the conventions of Chinese opera, as shown in the comparative illustrations on the previous page. The heroic character, Monkey's colourful painted face, different body movements and hand gestures, are vividly drawn.

There are two aspects I concentrated on in the drama lessons: story content and physicality. I was initially intrigued to see what sense the children would make of the images in the book without prior instruction – hence the introductory activity. I was particularly interested in how I could use participatory drama to untangle some of these hidden Chinese values while balancing instruction with creative expression, particularly with relation to physical movements. Moreover, I was interested as a teacher to see what would happen when incorporating more flexible physical forms of storytelling, which was heavily influenced by Mike Alfreds's 'The Actor as Storyteller'

(Alfreds, 1979) and Ali Hodge's commentary on Theatre Alibi's 'Storytelling as Theatre' (1993); and in how cultural artefacts might enrich the children's learning.

#### 4.5.3 Scheme of Work

The full lesson plans can be found in appendix, pages 382-386. Each of the five sessions was one hour long. Activities are referenced in this analysis as, for example, S1:A1. S indicating session, A indicating activity.

#### 4.5.4 School A

##### 4.5.4.1 Visualization

The opening activity, S1: A1 was to project the picture on the right from the picture book on to a screen. I then asked questions, as below:



- i) Who are bad and who are good in the picture?
- ii) Why do you think they are good or bad? Who is on whose side?
- iii) How many humans are in this picture?
- iv) If one of them is a demon, which one, why?
- v) What is happening in this picture?
- vi) What colour is it in the background? What is the majority of the colour?
- vii) In Chinese culture, the colour of a bruise indicates evil power and creatures from underground, so who can be the demon?
- viii) Do you think Monkey is male or female? How about the other characters?

*Me: In every story, there are good and bad characters. Who are bad and who are good in this picture?*

*Boy 1: Monkey is bad.*

*Me: Anyone else think Monkey is bad?*

*( around 8 people put their hands up )*

*Me: Any other thoughts about bad or good character?*

*Boy 2: The one who looks like a pig, is good.*

*Me: Why would you think he is good?*

*Boy 2: He looks a bit like a gardener, gardener like.*

*Girl 1: The one between the bad ones is good. (referring to the three characters on the left hand corner)*

*Me: What is happening in this picture?*

*Girl 2: The girl is upsetting the Monkey.*

*Me: How many people in this picture are human beings?*

*Boy 3: Two. The one with a crown on and the girl.*

*Me: If I say there's one demon in this picture, which one can it be?*

*Boy 4: The Monkey.*

*Me: Why?*

*Boy 4: (long pause)*

*Me: Anyone?*

*Girl 3: Because ...he is knocking all over the place.*

*Me: What is the colour you see the most in the background.*

*Boy 5: Blue.*

*Me: The colour you see the most is more or less like the colour of a bruise. In Chinese culture, this colour represents someone who is from underground or evil like, so what do you think who can be demon?*

*Girl 1: Monkey, because he is wearing blue.*

*Me: How about the colour in the background? Does it tell you anything of any character?*

*(silence from the group)*

*Me: If we see what these three people see (pointing to the group of three on the left of the picture), but the girl (pointing to the right part of the picture) was not what she seems to be.*

*Girl 4: The girl is a demon because she has no feet.*

*Me: Very last question, do you think Monkey is a he or she?*

*Boy 5: He!*

*Girl 5: She, because there's red painted around her eyebrows.*

These questions were not aimed to test children; rather they were

meant to guide children to look closely at this visual representation of a story from another culture. Their gasps when I turned on the projector indicated how impressive they found it - its colours, shapes, artistic style, composition, representation of character, costume and landscape very different from a western style, let alone the hidden cultural symbols and its rapport with Chinese opera, as explained above.

The children's initial responses, devoid of cultural references, show they could only see what the Monk and the other disciples saw: a violent Monkey knocking down a defenseless woman. The boy who thought that Pigsy was good because he looked like a gardener is definitely influenced by the rake he holds. The logic that a gardener is good has its own cultural and societal reference: English people, especially the middle class, are fond of gardening; moreover, doing gardening is deeply associated with getting people close to nature. The rake in Pigsy's hand is actually a weapon and there is no doubt that Chinese children would fully understand this.

There was silence when I asked children to focus on the blue-violet in the background. This indicated that children were forced to rethink the question. Interestingly, children went for what was in the context of the picture, the colour on the costume, but not the background. My questioning

was intended to help guide them but my clues might not be understood and could mislead them.

The last question was about the gender of Monkey. Boys drew equivalence between violent acts and maleness; but girls picked up on Monkey's painted face and associated this with femaleness. The make-up on Monkey has symbolic meaning. The massive colour of red signifies his loyalty and brevity. Such a concept of make-up is very different from Western performing conventions, as actors will apply make-up subtly in a naturalistic way to suggest, for example, a character's age.

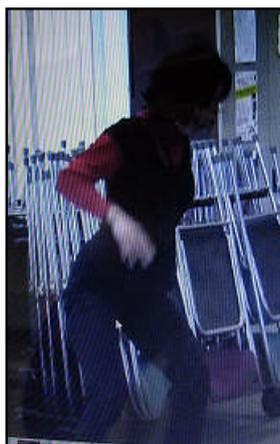
In contrast to the British children, this story and the main characters involved, are all too well known to Chinese children. I have memories of the characters, their costumes, their appearance and their characteristics from a TV series I watched when I was a child. My understanding of the story can immediately help me identify the one who wears the crown as a Buddhist monk and associate the image straightaway with how a monk would pose his body. I am able to see immediately that Monkey is saving this group from a monster, no matter what she looks like, obviously disguised as someone else. It is not bizarre or baffling to me to see someone like Pigsy, who has a pig's facial features but stands and behaves like a human being, or Monkey,

who has paint on his face, or a girl who wears a traditional outfit that is long and covers her feet! I learnt none of this at school but absorbed it from my culture.

#### 4.5.4.2 TiR and Physicalization, Part I

##### ➤ **Monk, Pigsy and Sandy**

Bringing in physical movements to distinguish characters when doing TiR was one of the innovate ideas I introduced for this scheme of work. The physicality was inspired by Chinese opera and influenced by my theatrical training. The aim was not to teach children Chinese opera and follow its discipline rigidly but to introduce a performance vocabulary for them that might offer children an opportunity to try out these physical conventions and see if they could adapt them in any useful way when coming to create their own work. Each character was given their own physicality according to their typicality. Monk is a devoted Buddhist; Pigsy represents desire and brings comic relief into the story; Sandy is loyal, obedient and dogged.



The picture on the left is Monk. The pose I held was to show a typical way of praying as a Buddhist monk. The picture in the middle is Pigsy, bending my knees slightly and sticking out my buttocks to suggest his significant weight, an idea drawn directly from the conventions of Chinese opera. I also twitched my nose and made the sound of a pig intermittently when talking, as another convention from Chinese opera. I chose to wobble as I walked to emphasize physical heaviness. The picture on the right is Sandy. Shoulders opened wide and while walking, I swung my hands higher than I normally did and lifted my legs high, a conventional way of walking as a warrior in Chinese opera. This suggests a masculine and military image on stage.

The way I did this was to introduce these three characters with their physicality. Children talked with each of them in turn to find out who they were, why they were gathered together, and the purpose of their journey. These activities were a mobile, visual stimulus. They observed different hand gestures, various ways to shift body weight, and how the characters moved their limbs. While they learned from what I *said*, my intention was to have them learn from what they could *see*. In naturalistic acting, children can interpret characters from their gestures, so how about through these highly

stylized movements?

The evidence showed that for the character of Pigsy, it was relatively easier for children to understand the character when compared to Sandy and Monk. The two children below, though they stress it slightly differently, both refer primarily to Pigsy's walk as a signifier of his gluttony.

*'Pigsy is overweight because he eats too much. When he walks he wobbles from side to side.'*

*'When Pigsy is on his journey he likes to eat a lot of food! He is bigger than his brother and sister which makes it hard for him to walk properly.'*

There is no such evidence to show how children interpreted Sandy and Monk by observing their physicality. Here children relied substantially on the spoken information I gave to them and the other interactive activities with them. Pigsy's physicality was more accessible to children because it is easy to see chubby, round, fat pigs in English farms, on TV, in cartoon films such as *Babe* and in stories such as *Three Little Pigs*. Children had more to say about how Monk's position helped them to feel calm, relaxed, even bored but only after they had the chance to try out this physicality for themselves.

Next, I present three excerpts of TiR as Pigsy in chronological order.

*(I was walking in role as Pigsy, some children giggled and laughed)*

*Me: I know I'm fat and that's why I have big hips here. (hands placed beside my buttock). I have big ears and look like a pig, so that's why I have such a name as Pigsy. Do you want to know more about me? (a hand up)*

*Me: What do you like to know about? (silence)*

*Me: No? You cannot make fun of me because I'm fat. (some laughter in the group)*

*Me: I like to show you something I like. (taking food out from bag). It's sweet peanuts. I like food! Do you like food?*

*Children: yeah (quietly)*

*Me: What sort of food you like?*

*Boy 1: (loudly and firmly) Pizza!*

*Me: What's that? I've never heard about it. Could you explain it to me?*

*Girl 1: It's like (using two hands to draw a circle from top to down) this, and you put different things on top of it.*

*Me: Is it delicious?*

*Children: (loud and enthusiastic) yes, yes*

*Me: My peanuts are delicious as well. Does anyone want to have a bite? (A girl put her hand up, and I passed her the food)*

*Me: (having food in mouth) This sweet is made of rice, and has sugar on it. (chewing food, some children's laughing) They stick on my teeth! Who likes to try?*

*(more than half the class raise hands. I passed food to another child)*

*Me: Come on. I have a long journey to go. I have to keep some food to myself.*

When introducing Pigsy, I took the chance to bring some cultural artifacts to play with. I had a small bag hanging near the height of my waist and placed some Chinese sweets in it. This Chinese delicacy not only allowed me to play out Pigsy's gluttonous desire but also to interact with children and introduce them to some Chinese food. Another cultural artifact I prepared was a pair of chopsticks. The following was another excerpt of how I used chopsticks to interact with children while in role as Pigsy.

*Me: Oh, another thing I like to show you. (taking chopsticks from the bag). (some children claimed: chopsticks!)*

*Me: (using chopsticks to pick up sweets from my hand) Have you ever eaten with chopsticks?*

*Children: (some nodding said 'yes', some shaking heads said 'No')*

*Me: I keep this chopsticks because this is the gift from the girl I like. That's why I keep it all the time in my bag. When I eat my food with chopsticks, I think of her.*

*(gently giggling from children)*

*Me: You said you know how to use chopsticks?*

*Boy 2: Yes. I tried it once and put them like that (placing the points of two index fingers together) to pick up food, but it didn't work.*

*Me: Who wants to try to pick up food with chopsticks?*

*(around 10 children put hands up)*

*(I went to one child to let him try to pick up food in my hands with chopsticks)*



Thus I used chopsticks to introduce to young children that Pigsy

was lecherous as well as gluttonous. The giggling suggests

they understood this. Food and tools to eat food are cultural

products. If you are born in the East, you are more likely to learn

to pick up food with chopsticks. Such brief moments, inviting children to have

Chinese sweets, passing food to them and using chopsticks in front of them,

created a space where they enjoyed a different kind of cultural experience,

the kind that is close to life and unites us in basic human needs and

pleasures.

*Me: Do you have any questions for me?*

*Boy 3: What is your job?*

*Me: That is such a smart question. Yes, recently I've just got a job to protect my master (putting on monk's pose and bowing) to go to the Western Heaven. Do you know where is the Western Heaven?*

*Children: (most of them said No while one child said, Yes)*

*Me: You know where it is? Could you tell me?*

*Boy 2: I think I know. Is it the West part of Heaven?*

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*Me: Do you go to Heaven when you're alive?*

*Children: No!*

*Me: Okay, this West Heaven, to me, is India. Have you heard about India?*

*Children: yeah.*

*Me: So, that's the country I go to. Any other question?*

*Boy 4: How did you end up being a disciple of Monk?*

*Me: This is another story. Well, I want to become someone who is more important. And the greatest Buddha, he gave me the job to go to India with my master. I tell you, it's not an easy job, but I'm doing alright. I have my big brother and young brother beside. We three work together to protect our master.*

This excerpt is to illustrate how I brought physicalization and hot-seating together. The children were apt to ask questions and I was able to drop in necessary contextualized information to help them with the story, notably about Western Heaven. It also shows that I had my own hybrid pedagogy, which was to incorporate TiR and the conventions of Chinese opera. They worked nicely. Western Heaven, is a sacred and respectful way to name India in the story, which is commonly understood to Chinese people. However, such a symbolic signification children would not have understood if I did not explain explicitly.

#### 4.5.4.3 Learning Physicalization, Part I

##### ➤ **Monk, Pigsy and Sandy**



The two top illustrations show how children learned the physicality of Monk. I demonstrated while also instructing them first of all to sit as a Monk then to stand like him. Then I moved on to the physicality of Pigsy as pictured on the bottom left. This picture is particularly interesting because of the boy at the back, third from the left who is evidently enjoying this physicalisation, doing it very well and immediately adding his own touches to it. He evidently is listening to my instructions to show a big belly by sticking his buttocks out, having a straight back and stretching out his arms to shoulder height, while most of the children are merely focused on bending

their knees and do not demonstrate the same control of their arms. However he is also blowing out his cheeks, fattening his face, his own innovation, but a highly apt one. The girl at the front of the picture on the bottom right is learning Sandy's physicality from my demonstration. Her upper body, straight spine, widely opening shoulders, and nicely folded arms at almost ninety degrees, all demonstrate marked physical control. Her face, serious and focused, adds to an overall sense of physical competence and commitment.

After several practices, we played some physical games. One was 'Do as I say' and required children to respond to the character I called out physically by taking on the physicality they had learned. An advanced level of this game was also played, 'Do what I say but not what I do', so children had to pay attention to my verbal instruction not my physical representation. Conventional primary school drama has tended to emphasise creative self expression rather than physical conventions of this type that is closer to traditional actor training techniques in the East. In Chinese opera, different characters have their typical and standard ways of representation, and once they make a choice of the character they are to play on stage, it is a life time commitment for the Chinese actor. Here I was not aiming for physical exactness; the children were not my puppets but I was encouraging them to

discover and try out different possibilities for physical expressivity, something they could not have made up on their own but could learn only from some systematic form of demonstration and teaching.

#### 4.5.4.4 Teaching Physicalization, Part II

##### ➤ **Monkey**

The approach I had with Monkey was slightly different as I separated an introduction to the physicality from TiR. Firstly, I demonstrated Monkey's movements, which the children then learned, and used Teacher in Role later.

The illustrations below show how Monkey's moves were more elaborate than those of the other characters.



Between these moves, I mimicked one boy's way of sitting and mimicked his actions to portray Monkey's mischievous nature, illustrated below. Children observed such play and learned a lot about Monkey's character this way.

The evidence will show what in the section on children's writing, example 1.



#### 4.5.4.5 Learning Physicalization, Part II

##### ➤ **Monkey**



This typical pose of Monkey demanded good balance and control from the children. It also required a good level of body coordination with one foot lifting to the waist line and bending ninety degrees, while an upper arm would cross the face, palm up and above the eyebrows. To the first time learner,

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this movement was especially challenging. The boy illustrated on the left made efforts to imitate the pose but he is overly rigid, as shown in his crouching body and right fist. His head and lifted arm illustrate that he is unbalanced, putting his weight on the right side of his body. The girl on the right, on the other hand, shows much more control in her movement and balance. Her commitment and control demonstrated here sheds light on her group work, as we will see in the later section on children's still images.

Some children were far more physically skilful than others, but all of these movements were made to be approachable for all children, both boys and girls, and most expressed enjoyment in attempting the physical challenge. For children who were less able to copy my demonstration, they were able to adapt the movement in a controlled manner and merge my demonstration with their own ideas something that will be returned to in the later section on children's still images.

There was some feedback from children about learning Monkey's physicality.

*Me: Do you feel any differences doing physical moves in drama and in PE?*

*Girl 1: When we are in your lessons, we do really weird movements if you know what I meant. But in PE, stuff like jumping, going over, that's normally what we do.*

*Me: so any difference between them two? And what kind?*

*Boy 1: hum...it's like...(longer pause), Chinese culture.*

*Me: Tell me more about this.*

*Boy 1: We do like rolls and stuff like that, jumps, we do them anyway, but here, we do moves, we do Monkey moves we don't usually do that.*

*Boy 3: I like it. It's like you make yourself silly but in a good way.*

*Me: How do you feel doing physical moves in drama? Do you feel comfortable?*

*Boy 3: You felt really confident and shows openly a bit, so you learn things easily and quickly.*

*Me: Did you enjoy this kind of learning new things?*

*All: yeah!*

*Girl 1: When you do Monkey movement, it's not the body shape you normally do, and Monkey jump, but they're simple and basic.*

*Boy 1: The Monkey moves and we are using our imagination to do them.*

Monkey's moves were a combination of basic physical training children had experienced in physical education and Chinese conventional movement. That explained why children could easily associate them with the basic jumps, rolls and kicks they experienced in PE. Building on previous movement vocabulary, then, made this learning of Monkey's physicality more accessible and achievable to them. Children also valued this different kind of learning and recognized that this physicality was somehow different from PE. They saw it as culturally specific in ways that PE was not, and with an imaginative dimension.

#### 4.5.4.6 TiR, Part II

##### ➤ **Monkey**

The following is the excerpt of myself in role as Monkey.

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*(I jumped into the circle with Monkey's typical move, and sat myself comfortably with my legs stretching out on floor, arms behind to support my upper body)*

*Boy 1: Who is your favorite brother?*

*Me: It's hard to tell, well. (scratching as Monkey would do). I like Pigsy, although he does wrong things from time to time. I have to help him out when he does things wrongly, and I don't like to do that, but, he is my brother, so I still like him no matter what. And Sandy, well, he is such a silent person. It's not easy to have someone in your journey and doesn't talk much. Well, I like them both, yeah.*

*Girl 1: Where did you learn your moves?*

*Me: Before answering this question, I want to let you know something about me. I was born from a stone. I'm a stone monkey. The day when I was born a storm came and the thunder hit the stone, which gave me supernatural power. That's where I've got all my powerful strength.*

*Girl 2: How old are you?*

*Me: Oh, I'm much older than all of you. How old are you?*

*Children: Nine... Ten.*

*Me: (lifted right hand up waving as if not bothered by what heard, but not in disdainful manner) You won't believe what I'm going to tell you. I have been living for five hundred years. That's true. Do you know the secret that I have? The immortality, you know, live forever. If I can go to Western Heaven, I can live even longer. Life is just wonderful and I can use all this time to learn my moves. So you see, I almost miscount how old I am, but at least I'm five hundred year old.*

The replies I gave, such as the birth of Monkey and his age were based on the original story, drawn from another picture story book '*The Making of Monkey King*' published by Pan Asian which provides more details about Monkey's birth and how he learned martial arts.

#### 4.5.4.7 TiR, Part III

##### ➤ **White Bone Demon/WBD**

The illustration on the right is my demonstration of my scariest face and body to portray WBD's true nature.



#### 4.5.4.8 Learning Physicalization, Part III

##### ➤ **WBD**

I was aware that asymmetric body shapes are difficult to hold, so I asked children to come up with their own three different scariest faces to go with their scariest body. Therefore children showed greater amounts of variation in their attempts to emulate this difficult physical shape.



In the illustration on the left, the girl in the middle tried with one hand holding her head from the opposite side, she adapted part of my demonstration to

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build her own monstrous appearance. In contrast, the boy at the front in the same picture has gone completely for his own way of showing the demon by placing hands in front of his face. Many children chose to imitate my representation, particularly the upper body, like the boy at the front in the picture on the right. In Chinese opera, White Bone Demon has been defined as a beautiful female character highly skilled in martial arts. Her stage costumes are made of flamboyant cloth with sophisticated patterns so as to distinguish a much simpler cloth design that she wears when in a human lady's form. In storytelling, there are no complex costumes and make-up to establish such clarity with regard to the dual identity of this character. Therefore I made such a distinct physical choice to demonstrate WBD to help children differentiate the form of the young lady from that of the demon.

By this time, children had met all the characters. The intention of the lesson plans up to this point had been to dissolve gradually the distance of an unfamiliar cultural story and to build up a sense of both curiosity and engagement through the physical aspects of the participatory drama. The short interview extract below indicates some success at least:

*Me: How did you feel when you do different movements?*

*Boy 1: It's quite like new experiences.*

*Me: Can you explain more?*

*Girl 1: You can learn how other people around the world live, and you*

*know, you've got chance to do that. It's like new experiences which we haven't done in other classes.*

Moreover, through trying out the different physicalities of the characters, these characters were no longer far away, nameless strangers from a different culture, rather they were actualized in real, embodied form.

#### 4.5.4.9 Children's collective work: still images

In S2:A6, children made their first still images to show Monkey rescuing his friends.



These three groups chose the dramatic moment when Monkey swung

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the iron staff to hit the Demon. They all used symbolic gestures to a different degree drawn from Chinese traditions to communicate character as their primary mode of performance. Some, nevertheless, did this with more technical skill than others. The most commonly used Chinese convention among the three groups was the character Monk. In the illustration top left, apart from the pose of the Monk, Children used more of their own ideas to communicate the rest of the characters. Top right, the boy has copied my White Bone Demon but in a simpler form. The two illustrations on the bottom were from the same group taken from different angles. Their image is more expressive and communicates much more by incorporating physical ideas drawn from myself and by adding some of their own.

The posture that the bottom group has chosen to represent Monkey's physicality is, in one way, clearly learnt from me, but they have added their own stylised version of Monkey by showing his left fist enclosing a staff. The boy playing Pigsy has his cheeks puffed out to show his chubby face and embraces both arms to show his big belly. In the same picture, the girl on the ground has an interesting body shape in the way she has entangled her hands, holding her face to show the nature of being a demon, which was drawn from my representation. In contrast, her legs are displayed in a

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lady-like way to represent the demon's disguise. With respect to the composition of their image, they have picked up on a prior activity S2:A2, in which Sandy and Monk were represented as sitting back to back.

What makes the bottom group more aesthetically attractive than the top two groups is that they maintain less of their 'daily behaviour', a way of using body and behaving that they absorb and learn from where they live and apply unconsciously; whereas the group at the top commits less into 'extra-daily behaviour', that is a body technique other than their daily, familiar way of standing or positioning hands (Barba & Savarese, 1991). When looking at the girl in the bottom picture, her standing position learned from the Chinese tradition constitutes a great physical effort to hold an extra daily balance. This is not a common standing pose that people normally would do in ordinary life. Such a body commitment, according to Barba & Savarese, 'dilates the body's tensions in such a way that the performer seems to be alive even before he begins to express' (1991, p. 34). The girl's presence is 'alive', in another words, is energetic. It seems to be paradoxical to use the word energetic to describe a still pose, but according to Barba & Savarese again, there is one kind of energy, an 'energy in time', that is manifest via immobility (1991, p. 88). Thus, as a cyclical virtue, viewers sense a charge

of energy when looking at this body shape held in an extra-ordinary position.

The children's work illustrates how the performance values I introduced have been differently adopted and adapted. They have copied, changed and re-woven them in their own ways with their own body language to present in an *actual* place a representation of a Chinese fictional world in what I am suggesting is a *hybrid* or *intercultural form*. It is hybrid not only because it has incorporated elements of traditional Chinese performance. It is also because the children have transformed their knowledge of the story through different activities into conceivable body shapes. Moreover, their representations transform an actual *place* into a performing *space*, in which they are exploring a bodily relationship between self and other, this other, too, being both fictional and actual - Chinese story characters and the Chinese performance traditions.

#### 4.5.4.10 Children's Individual Writings

Children had an individual writing exercise after two sessions of drama. They were asked to choose the characters they enjoyed the most and write down what they knew about them. Some of the children's writing drew on elements from the activity S2:A3, which was structured as a game. Meeting the character in an activity structured as a game, and one that brought in

other objects which could stimulate children's other senses, such as smell and taste in this case, become a powerful and multi-sensational way to introduce them to getting closer, physically, socially, and culturally, to characters. The following is a transcript from the activity as a piece of evidence to show how Children played it and enjoyed it, and how they were able to turn their enjoyment later into a form of narrative storytelling that illustrated their personal connection with it.

*Me: Look what I brought to you. I know you're hungry, and I have some lovely food here. Come over here. (using hand gesture to ask him come out). Come over here and I will give to you.*

*(child who played Sandy grabbed Pigsy's arm to stop him moving, while some children in circle said, 'No').*

*Boy as Pigsy: No! I'm staying here. (using his right index pointing to the ground to indicate the present location, more laughter from other children)*

*Me: Why you have to stay there?*

*Boy as Pigsy: Because I want to keep on this journey. I want to become a better...(thinking pause) pig.*

*(roaring laughing from the rest of the children)*

*Me: But if you lose energy you won't be able to walk anymore. What you have to do is to come over here, and I can give you food, and then you can keep on your journey. (taking food out wrapped in paper towel, placing food on an open palm ) What do you think?*

*Boy as Pigsy: What is it?*

*Me: (lifting food up high) I know you will love this. Let me have a bite first.*

*Boy as Pigsy: (yelling in a dramatic way and dragging voice long), No....!*

*(children in circle laugh)*

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### Writing 1, White Bone Demon

This is written by a girl who sat with most of the children in a circle, which symbolises the magical circle drawn by Monkey in order to protect other disciples and Monk.

*When I say Demon/Lady, I mean this beautiful young girl is actually an evil demon! This demon lady is always trying to trick other creatures, such as Pigsy. When she was trying to tempt him to eat the food at first, I thought she once was really nice, but when I found out that this demon lady was a demon I started not liking her or him any more. I think this demon lady is actually a boy! When he was a lady, he tried to trick us all that he was a girl not a demon. Pigsy nearly got out of our circle because he was so tempted to eat the food, but if he ate it and he went out the circle the demon lady would have killed him!*

This writing clearly draws upon the dynamic of the game like quality of the drama activity to portray its narrative and for the way it highlights the shifting gender identification of WBD as its central theme. It is this movement from male to female and to other hybrid forms of gender ('demon lady') which signifies it as something evil. Christian values either directly or indirectly form a key referential point to the children's interpretation of the stories and this is borne out by the example of her struggling with a concept incompatible with the Christian belief system. Although writing in role, the girl has identified the indeterminate gender of the Demon as the key source of shock, and key marker of something evil. To Chinese people, the demon's

fluid gender is not so shocking due to the concept of re-incarnation inherent to Buddhism, where it is accepted that people will change form in all kinds of ways, including gender, from one life to the next. Such a blurring of gender boundaries is not at all integral to Christian belief where hierarchical and distinctive gender binaries are strictly observed.

### Writing 2, White Bone Demon

Natalia who wrote this was a quiet girl yet this did not reflect the high level of engagement she manifested in group drama activities, as is apparent through her writing.

S1) *Demon/lady is a villain.*

S2) *She teaches little demons to be evil.*

S3) *In the story there is a circle which some of the characters stay inside.*

S4) *When they are in the circle it protects them like a shield from the demon/lady's powers.*

S5) *If she steps inside the circle she will dust away to her own world.*

S6) *She tries to tempt other characters out of the circle by playing tricks on them.*

S7) *She showed one of them to a character called Pigsy some chocolate to tempt him out of the circle as he had not eaten for a couple of days.*

S8) *She wants to get him to her world so the little demons can eat him.*

S9) *I think she is very nasty, cunning and selfish. She doesn't care about anybody but herself.*

In this writing is interwoven the child's own interpretations, her own imaginary ideas and information from two main activities related to the White Bone Demon. I have used four different colours to code the sources shown in the chart below.

	Colour	Source
1	Green	Her own interpretations
2	Blue	TiR as WBD teaching children as little demons in demon school
3	Red	The game children had with the demon disguised as a young lady
4	Purple	Her imaginary ideas

I use numeration to code the text in another chart shown below.

S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9
1	2	3	3+4+3	4	3	3	3+2	1

This child's text relies significantly on two participatory activities marked down as numbers 2 and 3. Between them, it is the game-like activity that particularly occupies a substantial proportion of his text. Such a writing style points to the dialectical relationship between the reception and production of her dramatised experience of the story mentioned earlier; the child's dual roles, reader as audience and reader as writer (S. Bennett, 1997, p. 51). The circle is a central semiotic that not only creates a dramatic space but also visually divides the fictional world into an inside and outside as she describes in her text. Her frequent references to spatialisation bring her own experiences to the fore. Moreover, the visual signifier, the circle, allows her to refer to other signifiers, such as physical presence of characters inside and

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outside the circle, an act of offering chocolate to Pigsy (S. Bennett, 1997, p. 65). This cluster of signifiers defined as 'combinatorial possibilities' by Erika Fischer-Lichte constructs a more rooted social relationship between the story characters in an actualized fictional world (Fischer-Lichte, 1982, from Bennett, p.70). Interestingly, her own imagination still plays a part even though she physically took part in the play as shown in S4 and S5. Her own inclusion of imaginary ideas does not take over from her embodied experiences, yet it is crucial to her to make her own storytelling more complete. According to Iser, this is an example of 'blanks' of text that leave it open to readers to connect between lines (1989, p. 34). This child uses her internalised literary competence as gap-filling material (Freund, 1987, pp. 80-85), which is much like the genre of science fiction. This not only enriches her narrative style, but also appears to have embellished her own dramatic experience. As a result, it takes her text up to a more efficient level of communication (Freund, 1987, pp. 145, 146; Iser, 1989, p. 34).

#### Writing 3, Pigsy

This is written by a girl who sat with everyone else to make magical circle. Within circle, three of her peers sat back to back to represent Monk, Pigsy and Sandy respectively.

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*Pigsy is a chubby little pig that likes to eat... a lot! He is a fine fellow that gets tempted every now and then. Pigsy ① was almost out of the circle to eat the demon lady's food. **Luckily** Sandy and the Monk ② were there to hold him so he couldn't get ③ out of the circle. And **we** ④ were there to **support** him and what I said was ⑤ 'I think that Pigsy should not go out of the circle because the food might be poisoned plus you are a stranger, and you should never take food from strangers.' And Pigsy **luckily** did not go out of **our** circle.*

This girl's narrative language is very much focused around what she saw herself and draws on Pigsy being either in or out of the circle, in a space of safety or of danger. She uses 'we', 'our circle' to indicate that she was one of those there in the story close to the characters. The number five is particularly interesting as it is addressed to the demon in the first person, this confrontation placing herself at the centre of the story, as if she stood right in front of the demon! She also uses words such as 'luckily' to reveal her sympathy with Pigsy and the word 'support' shows her comradeship with him. In this participatory drama, the ending of this game was not the same as the picture story. In the story version, Pigsy left the circle following the young lady away. It is notable that the whole point of this activity was not to re-enact the plot but to create a situation parallel to the story so that children could feel this dramatic tension. It was only in the next activity that this young lady was identified as a demon in disguise. But the children's sense of relief and enjoyment at having frustrated the WBD is one that any Chinese child would

identify with.

#### 4.5.4.11 What I did differently in School B

I brought a miniature Buddha statue with me when I introduced Monk to children in role in the first session. This change was, firstly to create a better way to introduce Buddhism in an early stage of the scheme and to give more information about the Monk. Another change was the second TiR as Monk. This time children were in role as little monks, who were actually little demons in disguise as they discussed Buddhist principles with Monk. Compared to the other scheme conducted in school A, this change made the activity more enjoyable for these students.

#### 4.5.5 *School B*

##### 4.5.5.1 VISUALIZATION

The transcription of the introductory activity:

*Me: Who are good characters and who are bad in this picture?*

*British White boy 1: Probably the girl and the king with the crown.*

*British White boy 2: Pig is good.*

*(A rejection from Pakistani boy 1 who said loudly: he looks bad)*

*Pakistani boy 2: Monkey and the person on the left hand side of king are bad.*

*(More than 10 people agreed)*

*Pakistani girl 1: The girl, king and the pig are good, the Monkey and the one on the left are bad.*

*Pakistani girl 2: No! The four are good but Monkey is bad.*

*Me: So what is happening in this picture?*

*Pakistani girl 2 : The monkey is trying to beat up the girl.*

*(some laughter from boys)*

*Mixed race boy: The Monkey is beating the girl. The two beside the king are guards.*

*Me: Who are the human beings in this picture?*

*Pakistani boy 3: The girl and the king.*

*Me: If I say there's one demon in the picture, who can it be?*

*Pakistani girl 3: Monkey.*

*Pakistani boy 4: Monkey.*

*Pakistani boy 5: King?*

*(class laughed)*

*Me: If these three are seeing what we see, what is happening?*

*Mixed race boy: The girl is that king's daughter and she has got hit by the monkey who has his staff.*

*Me: In Chinese culture, the colour of a bruise in the background represents someone who is from underworld, so who can be this girl?*

*Bangladesh boy: I know! Monkey is like Hades, and the girl is like Persephone and the Monkey tries to kidnap her with his chariot. He hits her first and brings her in the chariot. Monkey is rescuing the girl.*

*Somali boy: It looks like Monkey is hitting the girl in their eyes, but actually he is rescuing her.*

Without any cultural references, the children in school B also believed that Monkey was a villain hitting the girl. Discrepant ideas though were bouncing around about who were bad characters and who were good. The colour as a cultural mode was not a concern to children, whereas they were caught up by the word 'underworld', and made a quick and rational link to Greek mythology which they had recently been studying with their class teacher. Perhaps, immersed as they were in such a multiethnic community, also stimulated them to seek for an equivalent concept in another culture.

#### 4.5.5.2 Ambiguous Representations: Physicalization

This particular group of children always demonstrated high energy particularly in their physical representations. Interestingly, when demonstrating physical work, they showed less signs of copying me, but more of adapting my demonstration as well as the story's plot. Their physical representations of Monkey and of White Bone Demon had high proportional similarity and sometimes, it caused ambiguity if decontextualised from the narrative. See the pictures above as an example.

In the illustration on the left, this boy used his move to portray the character Monkey. His move is mirrored by the girl in the right picture on the left, but only this time, she was playing WBD, as we can tell by the counter character Monkey by her side. So the same physicality is being used by two different children to represent two opposing characters. This physicality was one of the moves I demonstrated as Monkey. Children took the same physicality and used it to represent two different characters. This act of 'borrowing' & 'sharing' suggests a flow of exchanging ideas among this particular group of children.



Another example of ambiguity is illustrated below by the girl in the white jibab. She is playing Monkey in the picture on the right and WBD on the left, two different characters with a shared body feature, her right leg high and tilting her body to the left. Both Monkey and WBD are seen as violent, as kicking and WBD's evil nature is illustrated through the face only. This is a naïve but rational response to the story, as evil is evident through an ugly distortion of the face. This comic effect leads to ugliness not violence being equated with evil.



Another example is particularly interesting. The picture on the left shows a girl holding a position to portray Monkey, aided by her peer. This same girl, when she in a later lesson portrayed the demon



(illustrated on the right), adopted the same pose below the waist as she did for Monkey, whilst her upper body is obviously adopted



from my demonstration. This ambiguous, physical shape is enlightened by her writing. She later wrote:

*“Monkey is strong and has not got any weakness inside him because he does a lot of Kung-fu.”*

*“The White Bone Demon is quite strong but a lot nasty.”*

Thus, physical strength as understood through violence is what the two characters share, both Monkey and WBD, features that are physically demonstrated through her hybrid representation.

In this girl's writing, too, she used the word ‘kung-fu’ as a reference point to imply the Chinese-ness of Monkey. This tied in very much with the class's responses to the question posed in the initial questionnaire ‘I think that most Chinese people can do Kung Fu.’ demonstrated in the chart below.

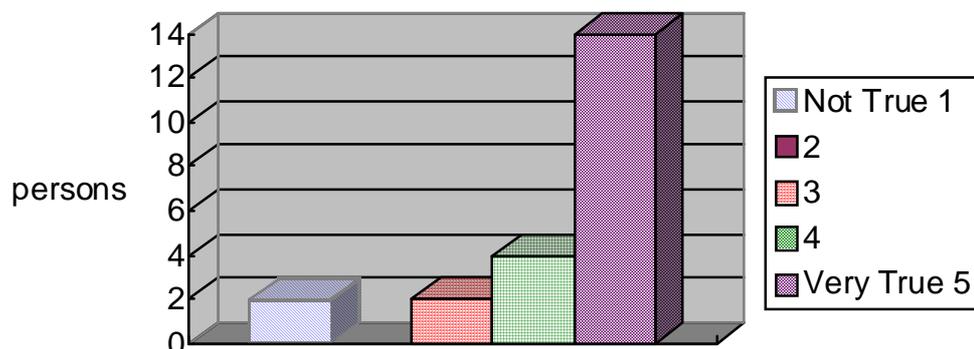


Chart 6: I think that most Chinese people can do Kung Fu.

From it we can see that in this class, four fifths (eighteen out of twenty-two,

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number of persons who chose scale 4 and 5) of the children were inclined to agree with this statement. This might well be a stereotype but as a form of violence it appears to be viewed in a positive light by this girl, perhaps as an admirable discipline, a demonstration of skill, as opposed to the simple 'nastiness' of WBD.

#### 4.5.5.3 White Bone Demon: A Controversial Character

Several different themes relating to the White Bone Demon emerged from this part of the fieldwork, also throwing up an ambiguity and plurality of response among the children to a character Chinese children would see simply as an evil villain. These are the ambiguity of its gender; the WBD's potential as a kind of anti-hero; and WBD as typically 'other'.

##### ➤ **Gender ambiguity**

In the picture book, White Bone Demon is depicted as a woman all the way through. However, children had their own discrete views about the demon's gender. While some referred to her as *she*, some did so as *he*. One

Pakistani girl wrote:

*'The White Bone Demon is very pretty but extremely cunning. I think she wears a bright white dress with a white coat which is made out of skeleton bones. The white bone demon is very smart and wicked always. She acts like an evil witch'.*

This girl drew on her imagination and the information which she

gathered through activities to create a new, narrative image of the demon. (The white cape I used in the activity as a visual stimulus.) Also an added dimension to her own imagination was evidently drawn from the demon's name.



Pretty but cunning, smart and wicked, evil as a witch, these descriptive adjectives remind us perhaps of the stepmother in Snow White, who also disguises herself and offers food for deadly purposes. The outside, beautiful appearance disguises a poisonous personality. Her narrative response ambiguously blurs the demon's image between wickedness and other positive comments such as cunning and smart. Interestingly, the physical representations this girl showed in the illustrations above may have become the inspiration for her writing. In the group picture, she is the second from the right, standing playing the demon. Her right hand touches her right chin

gently to convey a girlish temperament, her grinning face showing her friendliness to Pigsy, Monk and Sandy, while Monkey is behind her about to kick her down. In the picture on the right, we can see two characters again in one body. The lower body looks like Monkey and the demonic facial features are in her deformed eyes and sticking-out tongue.

Another Pakistani girl wrote:

*'The White Bone Demon was so vicious he also tried to teach small demons to become scary demons like him. (that was his job) he tried to do his sinful plan which was to take out hungry Pigsy out the circle for the tasty delicious smelling food! He wanted to steal Pigsy or to kill him which was way more possible that he was going to kill Pigsy. He was a very very clever man at trying to trick people as I mentioned that is his job'.*

This girl also provides details of activities she participated in during the drama to tell us what sort of demon she has in mind. She uses principally negative adjectives, such as vicious, scary and sinful to describe this villain, seeing him as a brutal trickster – and clearly male throughout!

There is a third example, however, in which WBD is neither male nor



female, but a combination of both genders. The drawing below illustrates this transgendered demon as envisaged by a Pakistani girl.

We can see from the drawing that this

demon is constituted half female on the left, half male on the right, a pictorial image combining the pretty feminine side and scary masculine side of this girl's idea of the demon. This is completely an innovative hybrid creation, distinct from any demonstration of my own!

➤ **WBD as Anti-Hero**

The WBD is an anti-protagonist in the story, a bad character we are to despise and fear. However, some children's responses were sympathetic, almost. Here is the transcription of an interview I had with a group of children:

*Me: Why White Bone Demon disguised into many times?*

*Pakistani boy 1: I think White Bone Demon disguises because he didn't like Monkey and he thinks Monkey is a horrible and terrifying person and he likes to get ride of him so that's why he disguises. And he tries to be sometimes the Buddha, tries to be the people who are hooligan, and tries to be the person who is being kind, and then he goes to the circle when Monkey was not in the circle. He is going to get something from over there and then goes to pack something from the others, like Pigsy, Sandy and Monk.*

*A mixed race boy: Because he never gives up, he wants all the demons to become immortal. He didn't want to give up, like you play football match or something, you wouldn't give up, would you. You feel disgrace for your country.*

*Pakistani girl: I think White Bone Demon did that because he didn't like Monkey. He thought that he could not do anything to Monkey so he harmed Monk instead of him.*

*Pakistani boy 2: Because she wants to be strong and she wants to kill Monkey. She could be stronger than Monkey. She taught the little demons*

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*and she disguises as different characters.*

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The first response from the Pakistani boy is extremely confusing and would present a misleading understanding of the story to anyone who did not know it beforehand. He uses 'horrible and terrifying' to describe Monkey as if Monkey was the villain, and then explains the plot in a way that implies the White Bone Demon is trying to escape from this villain. According to his descriptions, White Bone Demon could be seen as a sympathetic underdog, although there are negative (hooligan) as well as positive sides to his nature. He also recalls the activity S2:A3 when WBD approached the other pilgrims. According to him, it was not a disguise with a bad intention but more like a crafty and witty plan to win over what he wants to obtain. It is notable that this boy did not mention anything about how brutal and violent WBD is or his wickedness in intending to take anyone's life.

The boy who replies next provides a contextualised explanation based on the activities they took part in when I was TiR as WBD and enlisted them as little demons, such as S2:A2, S2: A3 and S3: A2. The way I started TiR as a demon was to instruct the children that, when I put the white cape on, I was the WBD; when I took it off, I was Miss Lo. After I put my costume on, I

addressed the class:

*'My little demons, welcome to the demon school! (children exclaimed with excitement, giggled and nudged one another). I'm your demon head teacher who is going to teach you in this demon school!'*

Children's initial disbelief at being allowed to be demonic was due to a sense of transgression, of being thrilled to be part of the demon regime, which was led by their teacher! They evidently enjoyed being evil in a playful way. When I was about to go in role again as WBD, one boy put his hand up and asked with anticipation:

*'Are we going to be in the demon school again?'*

In the activity S3:A2, I was in role as WBD and said:

*Today we have demon assembly. It's a serious business I want to discuss with you. The other time I disguised into young girl, but it didn't work. Monkey saw through my trick! I was pretty upset about this! I shall try again! Only this time I wonder whom else I can disguise into to get Pigsy out of circle. As you know this is the only way that I can have Monk and eat his flesh and bone so that I can live forever! Who wants to live forever?*

*Children: me, me! (half of the class put hands up and say 'Yes' loudly)*

The second boy in the interview definitely remembered being a little demon and shared WBD's frustration due to the failure of the first disguise. He saw WBD as a leader of the group and uses a sympathetic tone to justify WBD's position. In the drama, at demon school, the whole class was unified as one community and the children enjoyed it. The boy identifies himself in

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the interview as an underdog with WBD and expresses the need to keep trying, drawing on certain key values – being a team player, patriotism, pride and loyalty; hence his analogy with a national football game.

The very last reply from the boy also reveals a tone of sympathy to WBD and re-enforces the power of the TiR exercise by referring to ‘she’ throughout. Evidently he took this in as the role was played by a female. He concisely summarizes the role that I portrayed and what they did with me as a teacher and also in role. In the activity, I said:

*As a demon, we are capable of pulling the scariest face and body, and don't forget, we are also masters of disguise. Now, we should learn how to disguise into a very beautiful young woman. (teacher does demonstration) Let's practice together. Now, doing your transformation and I'm going to select the most beautiful lady among us, and send her to complete a very important job.*

*(children transform from demon to beautiful lady in five seconds)*

From the children's response above, we can see that participatory drama is a powerful and enjoyable way to engage them in taking part in the story context. Moreover, the TiR is a convention which can be structured in a fun way not only to learn physicality, but also to understand story characters beneath the surface. One Somali boy expressed his enjoyment of the character of WBD in his writing:

*'I like the White Bone Demon. His enemy is Monkey and he wants to disguise himself as a girl to get Sandy, Monk, Pigsy out of the circle'.*

The child likes the character because he took part in activities and

understood the plots by exploring and discovering this character with the teacher. The dual identity that I had when doing teacher-in-role was children's centre of interpretation that they then crafted into their narrative storytelling. As with the other children who took part in the interview, what makes this villainous character likable is more an aesthetic than a moral response.

➤ **Otherness**

At the end of this scheme of work, I had an interview with a group of children. The following is the transcription of our conversation.

*Me: Will you retell this story to your friends or family?*

*Pakistani boy: I won't retell them. They would keep saying that 'You're the White Bone Demon'.*

*Somali boy: I won't tell my parents coz' they wouldn't understand it. I couldn't really retell it in my language. I couldn't tell to my friends because they have already known it.*

*Pakistani girl: They would have nightmares if I showed them this (playing with her face to represent a demonic look.)*

*Pakistani boy: White Bone Demon would start attacking me.*

*Somali boy: When you can see White Bone Demon during day time, it makes him even scarier.*

*Pakistani boy: Ghost goes into your body and makes you scared.*

*Indian girl: What made White Bone Demon scary is when he makes face like that and his bone, looks very different from ours.*

Children's responses projected a shared experience to see WBD as other, the kind that they would not choose to be in real life, the kind of monster that causes people to have sleepless nights. Here children recalled

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nothing about WBD's cunning disguises but addressed more the demonic looks they experienced visually and physically, and the negative if thrilling emotions that were aroused by looking at this different body.

Another kind of otherness was interpreted by a Pakistani boy. The transcription is below:

*Me: Tell me what do you know about White Bone Demon.*

*Pakistani boy: I think WBD is from USA because USA is one of the richest country in the world and when she was in the temple disguised into Buddha, you can see she has a lot of jewelry on.*

*Me: If WBD is from USA, where is Monkey from then?*

*Pakistani boy: Monkey may be from China.*

The two story characters became national symbols, according to this boy. The association he has with WBD and USA is particularly fascinating, as he perceives them both as white, wealthy and bad. There is a clear indication of political resentment to the United States here, which is fairly common in Muslim communities in the midlands, UK. This is a brief but tantalizing and fascinating glimpse into how ideological and political ideas can infiltrate into how children respond to stories, drawing parallels and symbolic ideas from them that may be completely unintentional on the part of the teacher.

#### 4.5.5.4 Religion

##### ➤ First TiR as Monk (S1:A2)

Here is the transcription of the TiR as Monk.

*Somali: What is your name?*

*Me: (using praying posture to greet him). My name is Hsun-Tsang, people also call me Monk.*

*Pakistani boy 1: Are you the messenger of the king?*

*Me: I'm not sure who is the king you refer to. I'm sent by Chinese emperor to go to West Heaven to get sacred scriptures. Do you know where is the Western Heaven? (pause waiting children's response) It's India.*

*Pakistani girl 1: What do you eat?*

*Me: I'm a monk. Monk doesn't eat meat but only vegetables. Do you know what is monk?*

*Children: Yes.*

*Pakistani girl: What God you believe in?*

*Me: Buddha. (taking out mini Buddha statue from bag) Have you seen this statue before?*

*Children: Some said yes, some said no.*

*Me: I believe in Buddha. He is more like the great teacher in the world but not God. He teaches us to be kind, to be patient and to be unselfish.*

This was the first time children met Monk. I started this activity with a greeting in a Buddhist manner, showed in the illustrations.



Some of the children picked up this gestural work to represent courtesy and returned me the same gesture while sitting. When I asked children what could they tell from this pose as a monk, one child told me:

*'I saw you did that to show respect to others and that's why I did it to show my respect'.*

In this activity, I had a mini statue of Buddha with me to help introduce Buddhism to the children. The statue, shown in the illustration on the right, is a sitting Buddha. Some children also



picked up the way this sitting Buddha poses with his hands and brought it into their group work, as illustrated below.



We can see that the boy on the left emulated the sitting statue and another boy has his hands as I demonstrated as Monk. The transcription went on:

*Pakistani boy 2: What does your religion respect?*

*Me: I respect Buddha in Buddhism and how about you? What religion do you believe in?*

*Children: Muslim.*

*Me: I've only knew very little about it. Who can tell me about Muslim? Who*

*do you believe in?*

*Pakistani girl 1: Allah*

*Me: What Allah teaches you? Does he teach you as Buddha teaches me?*

*Pakistani boy 3: Qu'ran.*

*Me: What Qu'ran teaches you? Could you give me a simple example?*

*Pakistani girl 2: We believe that prophet in that time, and the Qu'ran says the joy of prophets, and it's written down but you cannot actually see them now because it's in Arabic.*

*Pakistani girl 3: What is your hobby?*

*Me: I read scripture everyday and make sure that I can become a better person. That's what I believe and practice.*

This group of children showed a willingness to exchange talk about their religion with me, someone with another, different religious belief. Children's responses, both questions and answers, indicated that they have religious practices. This first meeting with Monk left a strong impression with respect to Monk's devotion to his religion to at least one Pakistani boy, who wrote:

*'Monk likes obeying his Buddha and praying. He is on a quest to retrieve the sacred scriptures from the Western Heaven. He is very obedient to his Buddha so he will have a spiritual advantage'.*

Another Somali girl wrote in a way as if Monk was made an acquaintance to her but not merely a fictional role.:

*'Monk shows me his concentrating and takes his religion seriously. His religion is Buddhist first'.*

Another Pakistani girl wrote:

*'Monk is very calm and cool in his behaviour. He is very patient, quiet and truly sensible. Monk has positive attitudes which helps him to be peaceful. He is a very optimistic and religious person'.*

This interpretation of Monk is drawn as much from his mannerisms as from his speech. She paid attention to the aspect of Monk being quiet, peaceful and having spiritual qualities. Interestingly, she draws a positive conclusion saying that optimism and being religious are a complement to one another. This evidently is informed, as with the girl above, by her own religious practice and beliefs. These responses to religion as peaceful are all from girls.

➤ **Second TiR as Monk (S4:A2, school B)**

In this TiR, children were little monks who were really little demons in disguise. They were sent by WBD to learn Buddhism so as to produce a heavenly note afterwards that would drive Monkey away from the pilgrim group in the name of Buddha. The transcription of the TiR is below:

*Me: Little monks, I want to teach you something about Buddhism. (pointing to the paper lying on the carpet asked). Do you have any questions you like to ask?*

*Mixed race boy: What is 'Buddhists should not take substances which cloud the mind'?*

*Me: Before answering this question, I will assume that you understand this one 'Buddhist shall not misuse senses', could anyone tell me what does it mean?*

*Mixed race boy: It's like, when you have tantrum something like that, you don't use in a bad way. You don't kill people because of that.*

*Me: When we say sense, how many senses human beings have?*

*Class: smelling, hearing, taste, touch and watching.*

*Me: So when we say uses sense in a wrong way, what other example you can think of?*

*Pakistani boy: Say if you're superhuman, you have to use senses sensibly. You superhuman cannot just jump over people and bring death to people.*  
*Me: Good. Now we go back to the question earlier. Do you know the word 'substance'? This word is similar to material. What makes you happy? Chocolate?*

*Children: Yes. (some said No)*

*Me: Chocolate is a kind of material. Some people like to eat chocolate because they think it brings them happiness and if you are not careful, you'll eat more and more and that's when you cloud your mind.*

*Pakistani girl: You let it control you so that's why you eat more and more.*

*Me: That's a very good way to put it. You let the material control your mind, but you forget yourself is the master of your own. Now let's see the first message 'Buddhist should not harm living things'. What's the message trying to come across?*

*British Boy: Use power carefully and not hurt living things.*

*Pakistani boy: Not kill people, not lead bad things to them.*

*Me: And how about animals? They are living things as well.*

*Pakistani girl: I'm thinking about plants. Some people stamp on them and this is not good. They are harming living things.*

*Me: Little monks. I appreciate your ideas. You see all the animals, plants, human beings have lives. Who do you think have the power to take lives away?*

*Children: God.*

I had been expecting the response: 'no one can take another person's life'. So I continued explaining the Buddhist doctrine of which this universe is formed by all the humans and all the living creatures. My explanation also infused the concept of Daoism into it as I made an attempt to deliver the idea that human beings shall coexist with nature but not exploit natural resources. The world we live in cannot be missing one part, one of the elements. The Somali boy asked next:

*Somali boy: So you said that if we kill plants, the universe will go bad?*

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*Me: What other people think of this?*

*Mixed race: When you kill someone in this universe, you destroy the balance.*

Religions usually are taught to children as independent subject matter but this example, the convention TiR suggests an engaging and fun way that children can listen, contribute their ideas, and think about a religion different from their own.

In this activity, the reply I gave to children encompasses the idea to respect every single living creature, plants included. In this way, all life is seen as equally essential to the world. In Islam the central basis of belief is the Oneness of God. God offers Muslims an understanding of the purpose of existence and was evidently the immediate moral reference point voiced by those children who instantly called out his name (Mogra, 2010). This encounter could have become a clash between two different belief systems, but the question asked by the Somali boy (*So you said that if we kill plants, the universe will go bad?*), I hazard, does not illustrate rejection but engagement with and interest in a spiritual idea expressed from outside the context of his own belief system. But this uncertainty or puzzle are positive signals because firstly, it indicates that they wonder and are curious to understand; and secondly they communicate their eagerness to further understand the subject.

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Children came up with some ideas for heavenly notes after this TiR exercise:

*British Boy: Can you ask Monkey leave the group because the rest of people are in danger.*

*Pakistani boy 1: If someone harms other people, same amount will harm your journey.*

*Pakistani boy 2: at the end you can put, note from Heaven, Buddha.*

*Pakistani boy 3: say that Monkey is banished from the group. Buddha.*

*Mixed race: A good Buddhist does not hurt any people. If anyone harms any other people, destroy the balance, banish them. Make them to restore the balance of the universe. From Buddha.*

Children thus incorporated what they had learnt earlier in the discussion and made this note work in the right contextualized way. The class teacher gave positive comments on these consecutive discussions. She said that:

*'Children were tuned into the discussion and they were prompt to think. They were making sense of the story and were engaged in the story'.*

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## 4.6 Case Three: Liang and the Magic Paintbrush<sup>9</sup>

### 4.6.1 *Summary of the Story*

Liang was a poor boy who made a living by cutting reeds and collecting wood. He liked to paint but poor as he was, he could not afford a paintbrush. Not feeling dismayed, he used whatever materials were at hand to draw; twigs were his brushes and sand became a massive canvas. He drew everything he liked wherever he went. One day, he passed by an art school and asked the teacher to accept him as a student, but was refused due to his poverty. That same night, Liang dreamt about an old man who sat on a phoenix approaching him from the sky. This old man handed him a brush saying: this is a magic paint brush, use it carefully. Remember, you can only draw for the poor. Next morning, a paintbrush was indeed beside Liang and he started drawing. With the magic paintbrush, once he finished his paintings, things became real and animals he drew came to life. He then started painting for his poor friends, neighbours and children. The news spread and the Chinese emperor learnt of it and craved to possess the magic paintbrush. He sent out his army to catch Liang and brought him back to the palace.

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<sup>9</sup> The picture book I used is *Liang and the Magic Paintbrush* by Demi, 1980, New York: Henry Holt and Company.

There the emperor asked Liang to draw him gold, but Liang drew stones instead. As he could not make Liang draw for him, the emperor decided to draw on his own. But when he drew a dragon, a panther appeared instead. Liang worried that the magic power of the brush would die in the hands of the emperor, so he agreed to draw for him. The emperor commanded Liang to draw a sea, a rich swarm of sea life, and a boat. Then the emperor invited the royal family to join him on the boat. Next the emperor asked Liang to draw wind to make the boat sail. Overjoyed, the emperor demanded more wind and right before he was aware of the danger, it was too late. Strong waves devoured the boat and all the passengers with it.

#### *4.6.2 Analysis of the Story*

This story is internationally known and has been adapted into animated movies. The common image that Liang represents is kindness, assiduity and justice. Liang is a heroic figure which we can easily see resonates with in other fairy tales. He is like Jack who climbs up beanstalks: physically small but fighting against a big giant (the emperor) who is rich whereas he is poor. The Chinese emperor symbolises supreme power and owns wealth that no one else can compete with. The greed of the emperor therefore exacerbates his level of evil. On the other hand, it enforces Liang's heroic behaviour and

attitudes, championing the ordinary people against a bad aristocracy. The motifs of this story, poor against rich (Robin Hood), child against adult (Hansel and Gretel), good against bad (Snow White), kind against cold-hearted (Snow Queen), appear and reappear incessantly in fairy tales. The endings that are well accepted in our society are that the bad will be punished while the good walk away, perhaps from a warped legal system, and face a bright future. Nevertheless, such a romantic and chivalrous story can run the risk of being turned into political propaganda to promote an intolerant ideology, if taken too literally.

The original story was published in 1955 by the Chinese author Hong, Xun Tao (1928-2001). The timing of the genesis of this story coincides with the era when Mao Zedong called for artists to use literature and art to instill the values of the communist revolution. In one of his speeches, he urged artists and writers to create a new genre named 'proletarian literature and art' for workers, peasants and soldiers as these were ninety percent of China's population (Devillers, 1969, pp. 277-278). Winston, Wang and Lo have argued that this story was then exploited during the cultural revolution to justify acts of 'thought reform', 'purging the bourgeoisie' and committing numerous murders against landowners and those with money in the name of

social justice (2010).

This argument reflects a darker side of the story by placing its popularity in a historically authentic social context. My scheme of work was developed to problematise the story. In the western tradition of storytelling, we can read Liang's triumph over the Emperor as liberating, just as the death of the witch in the Wizard of Oz can be seen as symbolic of liberation from a tyrant (Winston, et al., 2010, pp. 19-20). Would the children see Liang as a liberator? What if he were also portrayed as an ideological extremist, capable of cold-heartedness?

#### 4.6.3 *Reasons for Choosing this version*

The picture book from which I drew most elements was written and illustrated by an American illustrator and children's author, Demi. There are two other versions of picture books. One is published by Ladybird and adapted by Fran Hunia's *The Magic Paintbrush* (1979). The other is Julia Donaldson's *The Magic Paintbrush* published by Macmillan Children's Books (2003). Donaldson's rewritten story consciously avoids dealing with the topic of the death of the emperor. Instead, her heroine draws a Chinese dragon to scare the emperor away. With respect to the story's content, Fran Hunia's adaptation and Demi's have similar storylines, but in Demi's version, the

emperor is described as a man without any talent for drawing, compared to Liang. It implies that Liang is destined to own the magic paint brush.

Another aspect that is worth mentioning is the style of the illustrations. Martin Aitchson, the illustrator of the Ladybird version, depicts characters, objects and landscapes with elaboration and full of colour, in an almost naturalistic way. The portraits of the emperor, with long sharp nails, a menacing grin, long beard and three strokes of moustache, deliberately suggest that readers see him as the stereotypical villain without mercy. To my ethnically sensitive eye this illustration resembles more a Western wizard.

Demi's illustrations, in comparison, are simpler. The overall style of her drawings is almost like paper-cutting art. Everything is flat. This choice actually offers the reader a clearer focus on each page. Her story uses succinct language; narration is straightforward, all of which complement well her drawings when turning from page to page. The colour she uses is rather light which softens the tone of the narration. The black outlines she utilizes are simple but precisely describe different shapes of objects and movements. All these elements combine well and in all, it gives out a less intense and threatening sensation to readers. In terms of content, interestingly, her

drawings are highly suggestive of ancient China. The surrounding of bamboo trees, which are grown commonly in China; the style of dress of different characters is ancient; peonies decorate windows and doors, a common floral pattern symbolizing prosperity and wealth and the old art school's setting, all suggest that Demi must have done some research on these details. Moreover, the appearance of the emperor in her hands is not inclined to suggest his bad or good personality but the radiant yellow robe, a colour to symbolize his status, is highly pronounced.

At the very end of Demi's story, she leaves an open ending to let readers wonder where Liang will go and what he will do after the ship wreck of the royal family. This ending does not place a solid lid on the story but unlocks it to invite further thoughts from the reader. This served well the teaching agenda of my project.

#### 4.6.4 *Scheme of Work*

The full lesson plans can be found in appendix, pages 387-391.

In sessions three and four, there were two major activities intended to explore who was the powerful one, Liang or the emperor, and how far their power could go. The first activity was when one child played Liang to confront TiR as the emperor. The second was when one child played Liang

while I played a banker requesting help for his son who was dangerously ill.

Below is the transcription of the first activity in school A.

#### 4.6.5 School A

*Me: So, Liang, now you're in my palace. Where is your paintbrush?*

*Boy as Liang: (Indicating his right hand as if he was holding it).*

*Me: Draw me some gold then.*

*Boy as Liang: Hum.*

*Me: What's hum? Yes or no?*

*Boy as Liang: No!*

*Me: Why not?*

*Boy as Liang: Because you're the emperor.*

*Me: That's why you have to say yes!*

*(children laughed)*

*Me: I asked him to draw money to me but he refused. What shall I do with him?*

*Children: kill him (some said). No (louder voice shouted).*

*Boy 2: Let him go. He has got the paintbrush to draw for the poor. Not for you, emperor. You have got plenty of money.*

*Me: (raising my voice) How dare you said that! Soldiers, take him out! He is dead.*

*(two boys who played soldiers went to the boy 2 and held hands high as if they had swords to decapitate the boy. Children laughed)*

*Me: So now what shall I ask Liang to draw for me? I want to have things which can show how important I am as an emperor.*

*Girl 2: A golden cape that you can put on when it's cold and will make you look elegant.*

*Me: I like this idea. I'll ask him to draw me a golden cape. It will be good that he can draw a dragon on it, because I'm the descendant of dragon. So, Liang, can you draw me that?*

*Boy as Liang: No. (children laughed, one girl shouted: cut off his fingers, or legs)*

*Me: No? Why on earth he said no! What shall I do now?*

*Boy 5: You can bring him to a place, like a dungeon, till he wants to draw for you.*

*Me: So, Liang. If you're not going to draw for me the next time, you're going to be thrown into the dungeon. It's a horrible place. You won't like to stay there. What shall I ask him to draw this time?*

*Girl 5: You can ask him to draw a golden carrier.*

*Me: What for?*

*Girl 5: So every time you travel, everyone is going to notice you.*

*Me: That's brilliant! I like this idea! (Addressing to Liang) Liang, draw me this golden carrier so that everyone can pay attention on me.*

*Boy as Liang: Okay, a very small one.*

*Me: very cunning, draw it then.*

*Boy as Liang: (bending his upper body as if drawing a tiny object with brush in hand, and straightening up when he finished. The children laughed)*

*Me: That's very cunning. Oh, he drew it, so I cannot throw him into the dungeon.*

*What shall I do, he is getting clever.*

*Boy 6: You can do this, ask him to draw another magic paintbrush.*

*Me: Let's try this. Liang, you can draw me another magic paint brush. You don't have to give me yours.*

*Boy as Liang: What for? (children giggled)*

*Me: so that I can draw the things I want.*

*Boy as Liang: You're already rich.*

*Me: but, you know. It's never enough. I want more things.*

This activity was a fun way to explore a dramatic tension between Liang and the emperor. The inherent tension is due to their polarized social status: Liang is a manual labourer, a lowly person in the social hierarchy; whereas the emperor is the supreme power, who owns a whole nation and is extremely rich. The external force to exacerbate this tension comes from the fact that Liang can only draw for the poor and is aggravated every time Liang refuses the emperor's request. Children understood that Liang's magic paint brush was not meant to draw for rich people, no matter what, even one such as the emperor. Meanwhile, they also understood that the emperor had power to decide issues of life and death if anyone disobeyed him.

The child who played Liang made comments after the activity that:

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*'I shouldn't let the emperor get things. He should learn something. I thought it was not fair if I had drawn for rich people.'*

The activity was a playful way to play out the power leverage between two characters. In its form it was rather like the *canovaccio* of commedia dell'arte: a vague plot performers can use to improvise around. The dialogue here was a comic exchange between an oppressive emperor and the oppressed Liang. Such improvisation is similar to the commedia tradition of *lazzi*, a form of improvised play not written in script form in order to avoid censorship. The representation of the emperor as I played him was almost like an archetypal antagonist in a pantomime, itself a form influenced by commedia - loud, pretentious and blustering. This kind of burlesque villain an audience can easily recognize as they make their plots apparent and transparent to the audience and is demonstrative of both their moral and intellectual inferiority to the hero. This sort of dramatic character is popular still today, such as the Sherriff of Nottingham in the Robin Hood films; Scar, the animated character in The Lion King, who wants to usurp the crown; and also in the enemies of heroes such as Batman, who are usually played with exaggerated, clown-like mannerisms.

Children's responses show that they perceived this activity as comedic, which helped them enjoy it and also set up a contrast with the more

surprising dilemma I introduced in the later scene, where Liang suddenly showed himself to be cold-hearted. For an improvisation this worked well. All the emperor could think of were the material things he might have more of. When Liang eventually painted him something he asked for, he did so in a way that outwitted the emperor to the children's delight, drawing a miniature carrier. The fact that some children called out that the emperor should cut off Liang's fingers was simply their playful way of testing the boundaries of the game. I ignored them and most children did, too. They were equally ready to join in and help me as emperor to decide what to ask Liang to paint and were quite ingenious at times, e.g. paint another paintbrush. They obtain vicarious experiences of inverting roles that they normally cannot in normal daily life as being participants and observers. This truly is improvised drama as a game, children offering challenges for Liang to overcome and delighting in the child actor's ability to rise to them. (Johnstone, 1999; Winston, 2005).

So this scene demonstrates, however comically, Liang's moral and intellectual superiority to the Emperor. It also has a political edge, just as the story of Robin Hood does and just like other stories where an ordinary person is special in some way and is a hero to the people by standing up to

and defeating overwhelming odds.

#### 4.6.5.1 Liang's Power

Liang's power comes from two complementary aspects, one magic - he owns the magic paint brush; the other moral – that he will only use it to help those in need, the poor. Children saw the just purposes of this power and they used tableaux to show that when he exercised this power, he was very good. See the illustrations below.



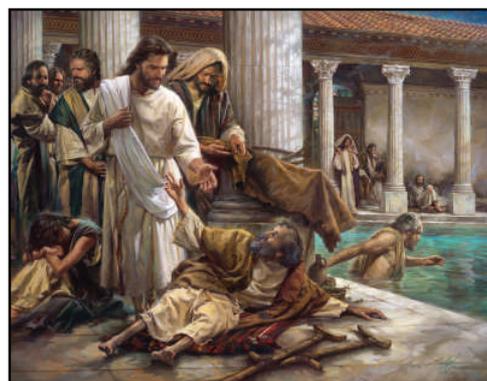
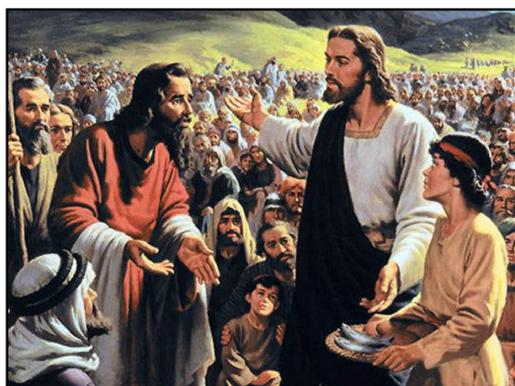
In the two pictures, the children who played Liang are holding a brush to draw for those people kneeling down before him. Children made comments that:

*'The Magic paint brush is very cool. It helps me to have things that I want.'*

*'Liang is drawing us some clothes and food, because we're poor.'*

Their representational images demonstrate the idea of salvation from

poverty and death. The images which children have come up with strikingly resemble the pictures of when Jesus gathered all the food that there was in a crowd of five thousand (just five loaves and two fishes) and re-distributed it so that all could eat their fill, as with the illustration below. The image of Liang in those images children made therefore takes on an almost religious significance. This miracle is often seen as a kind of socialist parable— when we re-distribute, everyone has more than enough (Soares, 2008)!



School A is a state school with predominantly White British children. They had regular RE lessons but, according to the class teacher's knowledge, none of them were in families that practised religion. The findings, however, indicate that some Christian values did seem to underpin much of their thinking – the kind of values that have a strong residual presence in liberal western culture. Here is particularly the ideal of altruism that Charles Taylor points out. As he claims, the secular ethic of altruism has

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'obvious roots in Christian spirituality', (1989, p. 22). This Christian virtue of charity and charitable works may or may not be practised but is deeply rooted in British social values and this sort of value is likely to permeate these children whether they are religious or not.

Thomas Luckmann once claimed that traditional religion in modern Western society is declining in terms of forms and institutions but not religion *per se* (Luckmann, 1967, 1990). I am not suggesting that here. These children, perhaps, absorbed these essentially Christian values and iconography from family, media, and from visiting churches and cathedrals, either for weddings and funerals or on days out with the family. Some have been inherited from Christianity but are now firmly embedded as secular liberal values in Western societies (C. Taylor, 1989, pp. 3-24).

It is interesting to compare and contrast these images with those of Mao, helping to bring about social justice by looking after the poor rather than the rich, indicating the difference between conservative religious and radical political iconography; between Liang as Christ-like, as envisaged by these British children, and Liang as Mao-like, as we might imagine young Chinese children might represent him. In one of Mao's quotations about class struggle, he said:

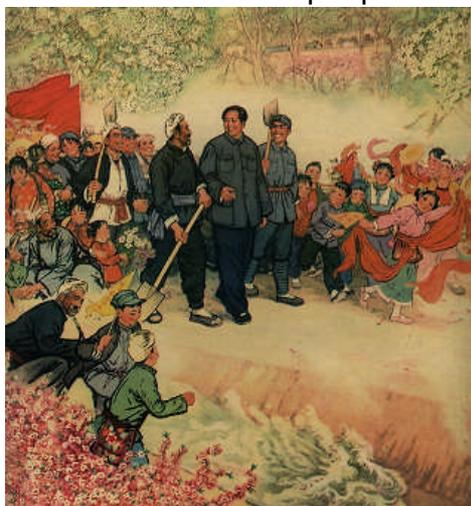
'The ruthless economic exploitation and political oppression of the peasants by the landlord class forced them into numerous uprisings against its rule.... It was the class struggles of the peasants, the peasant uprisings and peasant wars that constituted the real motive force of historical development in Chinese feudal society' (Mao, 1966).

Here, Mao explicitly points to the rural working classes - the very poor helped by Liang - as his constituency. He praises the value of the workers at the bottom of the pyramid in terms of economic status and shows his sympathy for them:

'They (the proletariat) have been deprived of all means of production, have nothing left but their hands, have no hope of ever becoming rich and, moreover, are subjected to the most ruthless treatment by the imperialists, the warlords and the bourgeoisie' (Devillers, 1969, p. 48).

Countless wall posters were used to back up this vision of Mao as the saviour of the people with distinct functions.

In the example below on the right we have a friendly and caring figure, who listens to his people and is followed by all, men and women, adults and



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children. Everyone in the illustration is cheerful and walking ahead towards the same direction. This again suggests that Mao is with proletariat and is loved by all, as Liang is. The poster on the left, however, presents us with Mao the leader of a violent revolution. This is different and it is this idea, the stern revolutionary leader, that a later drama activity was intended to test.

#### 4.6.5.2 The Emperor's Power

Children commented on the emperor's power and how they disliked the way he abused it.

*'I don't like the emperor, because he looks like he is quite nice, but he is not. He is cruel. If someone does something naughty, he really goes down hard on them. If they don't do something naughty, he is okay.'*

This comment makes the emperor sound like a very strict teacher, one that children dislike. It is an interesting example of how children experienced and played with absolute authority. Another boy said:

*'He (the Emperor) is over the top, because when Liang said no, he kept coming with new plans. Finally, the emperor said, put him into the dungeon.'*

Children used tableaux to show how the emperor abused his power and how it revealed his cruel side, see appendix, story 3, S4:A1, page 391.

On the right in this picture, the girl who sits and points her finger is the emperor, she said:

*'I'm going to let this person's head be chopped off because he committed treason. He poisoned my food'.*



On the left, the boy who stands is the soldier ready to decapitate Liang and he said:

*'This is a bad job. The emperor's executioner.'*

This is a very funny comment, in line with the comic tone I had set up but it also identifies the soldier with the common people. He does not want to hurt the ordinary people, he is one of them. However small a comment, it is indicative of a real political fact – whoever controls the army often controls the country. Revolutions usually turn rapidly in favour of those rebelling when the army abandons their support of the leadership.

#### 4.6.5.3 Liang's Abusive Power

For the ending in the picture book, Liang draws a huge storm, which causes the emperor's death. This act, to some children, was not appropriate moral behaviour. Some responses from children:

*i. 'Liang should have given the emperor another chance. I think he got too carried away.'* (from a boy)

ii. *'When the emperor drowned, I think that Liang should have felt sorry for the emperor because even though the emperor kind of tortured him, he didn't deserve to die. I think he should have stepped down as emperor, and had something else happen to him to make it fair.'* (from a girl)

iii. *'Liang could have made the emperor give money to the poor. There was no need to kill him. He could have just let him off. The emperor would have felt guilty then.'* (from a boy)

iv. *'It is a bit nasty killing the emperor with wind and then he was drown. Liang should be sorry for killing the emperor on the boat.'* (from a boy)

Responses ii and iv from girl and boy respectively condemn Liang's action of taking a human being's life away. To some other children, particularly boys, they held completely different views saying that what Liang did was proper.

They answered:

v. *'I definitely think that Liang should have killed the emperor and felt no sorrow because the emperor was mean and horrible. He just kept wanting more and more. He can't always get his own way so I think that he deserved to die.'* (from a boy)

vi. *'I think Liang was right to make lots of wind because the emperor was greedy and selfish. He wanted it all for himself. He wanted gold and silver, Liang didn't help. He was right I think, to sink the ship with the royal family on.'* (from a boy)

vii. *'The Emperor deserved it because he kept asking for things so Liang painted things that he wanted, so Liang probably didn't hear him because there was too much wind.'* (from a boy)

Children's responses represent different social ideas of justice. Among

them, two categories of responses emerge, one that has political implications, another that concentrates on personal morality – the political vs the religious once more. The responses of i and iii are typical of the Christian message of mercy and forgiveness for all. The fact that the emperor would feel guilty and hence change his ways is very much in line with the Christian idea that sins can be forgiven and people can have another chance to change their ways. The response iii also advocates a socialist idea, to urge the emperor to give money to the poor. But this is more in line with a more socially conservative idea of charity – the emperor can become a benefactor, rather than redistribute wealth according to socialist principles.

Responses v, vi, vii, see justice as more hardline, although in different terms. The child who wrote response vi contends that greed and selfishness are the emperor's traits and need to be condemned. These are exactly what Mao accused the property classes of. It is the common accusation made against capitalist greed, against the bankers today. This has more of a political agenda than the accusation of him being 'mean and horrible' by the child who provided response v. Of the last response vii the child asserts that the emperor caused his own death due to his constant requests for more things, which had apparently deafened Liang, who was so busy servicing the

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emperor's greed that he could not hear him in the storm. This is a response that has definitely come from the drama, not from the original story, which this child sees as a kind of fable, as a cautionary tale for those who would ask for too much.

#### 4.6.5.4 Revisiting Liang's Power

The story clearly represents the Emperor as a force of evil and Liang as a force for good – the powerful villain versus the plucky little hero. The emperor's death was a triumph for Liang, who was brave enough to confront him, to challenge him and then to defeat him. Yet, Liang's power to draw and his motto of only drawing for the poor, can be turned into a problem itself if we re-emphasise the political context of the story and turn Liang into a revolutionary extremist – a Robespierre, a St Just, a Pasha Antipov in Boris Pasternack's *Dr. Zhivago*.

In the very last session, I designed an activity intended to explore this potentially problematic ideological aspect of the story: I played a rich banker who had a badly ill son. Nothing else could cure him, so going to Liang was the banker's only hope. Liang was played by a child. No matter what the banker said to Liang, the child playing Liang had been secretly instructed to reply: I only draw for the poor. The following is the transcription of this activity

in school A.

*Me: I'm the banker who asked you to draw me a bigger bank, more workers, more gold and silver the other day, if you still remember. You said no at that time, but that's alright. I've got all in different ways. This time I came to you not for myself, it's for my son. He is very ill. I like you to draw some medicine to him.*

*Girl as Liang: I only draw for the poor.*

*Me: but, you see? My son is very ill. He has been in coma for six months. I talk to him every single day, but he doesn't move at all on the bed. I'm very worried about him. I know your magic paint brush can do me something good. Help me!*

*Girl as Liang: I only draw for the poor.*

*(pause)*

*Me: Fellows, what do you think? How can I make Liang draw for me?*

*Girl 1: You can ask a poor person to ask Liang for medicine. And then this person can give medicine to you.*

*Me: But I don't want to trick him. I like to ask Liang with dignity. I don't want to trick him.*

*Boy 1: You can take him to see your son, to see what state he is in. Maybe he will draw it for you.*

*Me: I'll try that. Liang, you have to come with me to visit my son, and you will understand how ill he is. Then you may change your mind and draw medicine to him.*

*Girl as Liang: I only draw for the poor.*

*Me: He insists on that. What shall I do?*

*Boy 2: You can give him rewards if he draws you medicine.*

*Me: I'll try that. Everyone loves rewards. (addressing to Liang) If you draw to me, I can give you things you want. You name it!*

*Girl as Liang: I only draw for the poor.*

*Me: You see, I have so much money but this money cannot buy the medicine which can cure my son's illness. Money is just no good here. I need medicine, that's what I need.*

*Boy 3: He can only draw for the poor. Your son means a lot to you, you can throw away all the money, put all the precious stones in the bank. And then he may draw for you.*

*Me: Did you say that I should throw away all the wealth I've earned. Is it what you said?*

*Boy 3: Yes, to save your son.*

*Me: (Addressing to the circle of children) Do you agree on that?*

*Children: (more than half of the class said ) Yes.*

*Me: What I haven't mentioned to you is that I have other two sons. I have to have something to raise my other sons up. I have to bring bread on the table. If I give up all the money I've got and quit the job, then I will have nothing to raise my other sons. Do you think it's fair to me? I've been working so hard to get into this status.*

*Boy 4: You could give a bit to the poor and keep a bit. So you help the poor out. Then Liang would draw medicine to your son.*

*Me: Okay, you said that I send some amount of money away, it sounds sensible. But I have a question then. How much I should give every single poor person? How much I should distribute to them? Do I give them equally? But if they all get equal amount of money, they are all...as poor as they are.*

*Boy 4: I think the poorer they are, the more they should get from you. Say if someone is a bit poor then poorer people, they get less.*

*Me: So how can you tell how poor they are. Say, scale of ten. How can you tell who is poor 1 and poor 10? How can you measure that?*

*Boy 4: Like people who wear scrubby clothes, no food, people who don't have house would be like two out of ten. People who have a house, their food is not that good, it would be five or six.*

Children came out with different strategies in order to persuade Liang to draw medication. What is never in doubt is the acute intelligence of the children's responses here. To play a trick on Liang, to reason with him, and to make a fair deal with him, these different approaches could not overcome Liang's strong-headed belief and then boy 3 came up with a romantic socialist approach, to ask the banker to give up all his fortune to save the ill son. This is, of course, also an echo of the Christian idea – when Jesus told the rich man to give away all of his possessions and follow him – which the rich man failed to do then as now. Interestingly, children went along with this idea. The conversation children had with me as a banker shifted to another

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area of discussion from that point. The discussion centred around what fairness and social justice meant to individuals and to society. This discussion left a big question mark hanging in the air without providing any solution, but it contributed a space where children had the chance to engage in a debate, one which challenged their thoughts and challenged the flip side of the story's ideology.

After the activity, some children expressed their opinions on whether Liang should have helped the banker or not. Children's responses indicated different emphases in their apprehension of what was at stake in this scene.

One boy said:

*viii. 'I think Liang should have helped him because you would do the same if your son was ill'. (from a boy)*

'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' – a clearly Christian value but also one that demands that you feel empathy for others. Another

boy said:

*ix. 'I think Liang should have helped the banker with his ill son because he could have died and he would have been really sad. It would have been a bit of Liang's fault' (from a boy).*

So clearly Liang's hard heartedness will come back to haunt him according to this boy. He will feel a personal guilt later in life. A girl said:

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*x. 'I think Liang should have helped the son because he was very ill. He was not lying. The medicine would have helped a lot. It would go to an ill in need person'. (from a girl)*

For her it is simple – the banker is not lying, the son is ill, anyone with a heart should help someone in such need, rich or poor. For all of these children, common human decency trumps Liang's cold hearted vision of justice. This is perhaps unsurprising for a largely middle class school; but perhaps this should not lead us to decry what the children clearly articulate nonetheless.

Some of the children made comments on how this participatory activity helped them to see things from a different perspective and how their meeting in role enforced their perceptions on the topic. A boy said:

*xi. 'When you are doing the acting, you can imagine what they look like, you've got a pretty good idea what they would look like. You could see how strong he would be when you saw the action. When you were a banker, I thought he would be like rich and nothing wrong in his life, wearing suits, but when I got to see him more, I realized what occurred to him'. (from a boy)*

This comment, although confused, indicates that the teacher's surprising play in role made him see and understand things in a more complex way than he had anticipated. Another girl demonstrated sentiments of common human decency and drew a very logical outcome, problematising any ideology that sees poverty as a sign of virtue in itself, but without the

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arrogance we might anticipate from a child with strongly capitalist values ingrained into her:

*'It was harsh when the banker was sitting there begging for his child. He said my son is in trouble. He is ill, he is sick. Could I have medicine? The medicine to get him better. But still Liang insisted that he only draws for the poor. And eventually it happens that rich people can be poor.'*

#### 4.6.5.5 Gender: exploring gender differences on moral decision and reasoning

When reviewing children's responses in the previous discussion, another theme emerges from considering the children's responses in the forum theatre activities. These responses were collected through a written evaluation sheet at the end of the drama scheme. This is the only post-drama questionnaire I designed for a particular reason: to find out children's individual moral responses to two different moral dilemmas. I was particularly interested in their moral reasoning and decision making. The questionnaire was not conducted with the children in school B for reasons explained at the beginning of this chapter.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first part consisted of closed questions in the form of a semantic differential (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 89). This part asked children to rate their attitude in a

spectrum from strongly disagree to strongly agree in a scale of five. This provided quantifiable data through which I could look at gendered responses. The more open questions in the second part allowed children to explain their moral choices.

Drama has been advocated by many scholars as having a role in moral education (Basourakos, 1999; Bouchard, 2002; Colby, 1992; Day, 2002; Doyle, 1997; Levy, 1997; Verducci, 2000; Winston, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2000). The theoretical trajectory of this section takes its lead from Winston's argument in *Beauty and Education*, in which he claims that drama can play an essential role in bringing gendered moral thinking together 'in order to counter the ways in which gendered thinking might distort or limit moral action' (2010).

Twenty-nine children completed the questionnaire, including sixteen boys and thirteen girls. The chart below shows different gender attitudes towards the following statement: ***I think it was just that the emperor in the story book was drowned.***

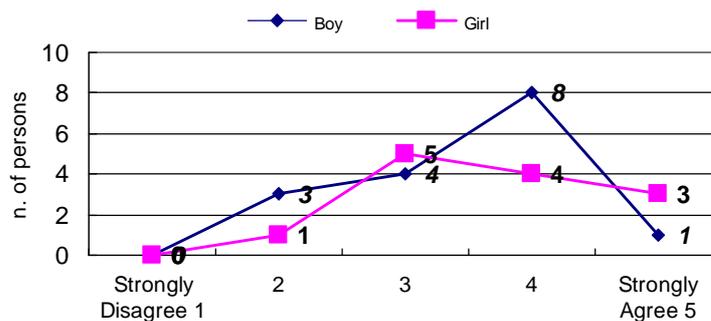


Chart 7: I think it was just that the emperor in the story book was drowned.

Here I am not doing a parallel comparison between boys and girls as the numbers of the two groups are discrepant. What I focus on are the highest points located for boys and girls as this provides an indication of each gender group's attitudinal inclination.

The highest point for boys falls on number four, whereas for girls it is number three. This suggests that this group of boys tend to agree with the statement slightly more than girls. In other words, boys have a slightly greater tendency to think that drowning the emperor was a just act, while girls are more reserved in agreeing with this statement.

However, there is a contradictory indication when looking closer at the far right of the chart, the rating 'strongly agree', where the two numbers from boys and girls are located respectively. Three out of thirteen girls make the choice, while only one out of sixteen boys chose it. Converting into percentages, more girls, 23.08%, strongly agree with this statement than

boys, 6.25%. So the evidence of gender bias at this point is contradictory.

Children's individual voices offer further evidence. The following are examples of answers to the open question listed below:

***In the story book, Liang painted a strong wind so that the emperor's boat sank into the sea. Do you think that Liang should have felt sorrow for the death of the emperor?***

I start with some girls who strongly felt that Liang did the right thing.

Ⓐ *I don't think that Liang should feel anything for the emperor. He was so horrible. Liang did the right thing to drown the emperor. I hope the emperor died horribly. (from girl)*

Ⓑ *I think Liang should not feel sorry for the emperor because he was being very mean. I might have felt a bit sorry. (from girl)*

Ⓒ *I don't think he should feel sorry because he made Liang give the paint brush to him and Liang said no so he locked him in the dungeon. So Liang gave them wind. The emperor expected Liang to give him what he wanted but Liang didn't. I think the emperor was really cruel. I think Liang is trustworthy. (from girl)*

We can see that both boys (responses v, vi, and vii in the earlier discussion, page 277 ) and girls (responses Ⓐ, Ⓑ, Ⓒ) are able to demonstrate justice-based reasoning in response to this drama. How about care based responses that temper their sense of justice (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1991, 1994, 2003)? Here are some responses from boys:

Ⓓ *I think Liang should have felt sorrow because he was the one who made the emperor drown (from boy).*

⑤ *Liang should feel sorrow because he could have just taught emperor a lesson. Liang could have made him give money to the poor. There was no need to kill him. He could have just let him off. The emperor would have felt guilty then (from boy).*

The responses ④ and ⑤ show empathy for the emperor's violent death in the story, which is one way of showing care (Brabeck, 1993, pp. 42,43). 'Caring involves...a "feeling with" the other' (Noddings, 2003, p. 30). It is a reception to receive the other into oneself so one can see and feel the other (ibid). The response ⑤ not only illuminates this point but also demonstrates another dimension of caring, the kind Noddings calls 'staying-with' (1995b). This boy demonstrates a competence that drives him, a caring person, 'stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's' (Noddings, 2003, p. 24). Another response from a boy expresses his empathy and sorrow for the death of the emperor as being out of proportion in ⑥ below.

⑥ *I don't think the emperor deserved to die. But he needed to be punished. Liang should feel a bit sorry because maybe he did not want that to happen (from boy).*

The response ⑨ from girl shares a very similar moral standpoint:

⑨ *The Emperor deserved some punishment, but he didn't deserve to die he only deserved to get punished but not to die. (from girl).*

The response ⑧ from girl articulates perhaps more clearly this balance

between justice and compassion:

Ⓜ When the emperor drowned I think that Liang should have felt sorry for the emperor, because even though emperor did kind of torture him, he didn't deserve to die. I think he should have stepped down as emperor. And had something else happen to him to make it fair (from girl).

The responses of boys (Ⓜ, Ⓝ, Ⓞ) and girls (Ⓜ, Ⓜ) here work against conventional moral dualism; instead both genders can be seen to temper justice with care (or compassion) to moderate it in what Brabeck calls an integrated morality position (1993, p. 36).

In the questionnaire, another closed question was: ***I think that Liang should have helped the banker's ill son.*** The result of boys' and girls' responses is shown in the chart below.

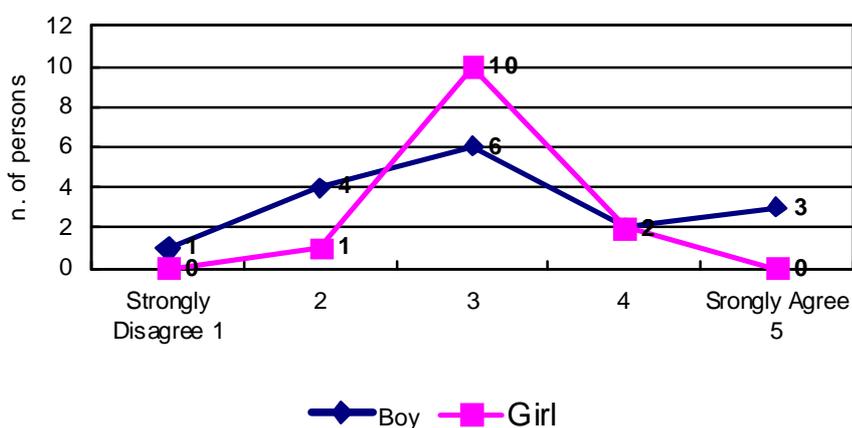


Chart 8: I think that Liang should have helped the banker's ill son.

When looking into the two genders' inclinations, the number three, a number that represents a neutral moral position, is where both genders

stand. This does not necessarily mean that children do not have their own views about the statement, rather it indicates their struggle in making a moral decision in this case. I will return to this later in the section titled category three: indecisiveness.

Another point we learn from the chart is that more boys (n: 3) think that Liang should have helped the banker, compared to girls (n:0). This would seem to contradict the theory of gendered moral tendencies. Children's individual answers to the following open question offer some further perspectives on this.

***'Why should Liang have helped or not the rich banker whose son was ill?'***

Children's replies can be divided into four categories, 1) agree to help the banker; 2) disagree to help ; 3) not on either side. 4) not answering the question directly<sup>10</sup>. The table below displays the numbers for each gender in each category.

	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
1) Help banker	6	4
2) Not help banker	5	4
3) Indecisive	4	5
4) Avoid the answer	1	0
Total n. of persons	16	13

Table 3: Gender responses on moral decisions.

<sup>10</sup> The boy wrote: *'Liang could have painted it but he didn't because he probably thought that he had too much money, so the banker could have got it himself.'*

I summarise and list children's responses below based on gender difference for the first three categories, and display the number of children who made this response in the column beside.

### Category one: Help the banker

<b>Boy</b>	<b>#</b>
Ⓐ The banker's son might die and the banker would be sad. This would be Liang's fault.	1
Ⓑ Save one life and Liang can have money in return.	1
Ⓒ Feeling empathy for the banker, e.g. ...i) <i>'his son was ill and the banker was begging'</i> ; ii) <i>'banker was sad (because son's illness) and he said he would do anything'</i> .	2
Ⓓ It is human to feel compassion and help other as you will do the same when your son is ill.	2

<b>Girl</b>	<b>#</b>
Ⓔ Save one life and Liang can ask something in return to make it fair.	1
Ⓕ Feeling empathy for the banker, e.g. <i>'because his son was in deep coma'</i> <i>'because his son was very ill'</i>	2
Ⓖ Banker wouldn't know where to buy medicine, even though he had money to buy. Alternatively, he could send someone to find/buy medicine.	1

These responses suggest that both boys and girls who chose to help the banker demonstrate concern about another's welfare and also justice, which is construed through ideas of equality and reciprocity (Kohlberg, 1980, pp. 48-49), as with boys (Ⓑ,Ⓓ) and girl (Ⓔ). Decisions based on both fairness and care are evident here, boy (Ⓐ,Ⓒ) and girl (Ⓕ,Ⓖ). Both boys and girls reason through human empathy (Ⓒ & Ⓕ, respectively) and use the dramatic experiences they participated in (described in the section under the title *Revisiting Liang's Power*, see page 279) to shape their reasoning.

### Category two: Not help the banker

<b>Boy</b>	<b>#</b>
Ⓜ the banker is rich enough to afford medicine himself.	3
Ⓛ The fact that the banker is rich conflicts with Liang's principle, he only draws for the poor.	1
Ⓟ the banker should have bought medicine himself, and he should have spent lots of money on it and then become poor.	1

<b>Girl</b>	<b>#</b>
Ⓜ The banker is rich enough to afford medicine himself.	1
Ⓛ The fact that the banker is rich conflicts with Liang's principle, he only draws for the poor.	1
Ⓜ The banker was not only rich but also mean. If he loved his son, he should have given all his money away to be poor in order to save him.	1
Ⓝ Personal distaste e.g. <i>'I don't like the banker. He was very nasty. He was push and push. I think Liang was good because he said I only draw for the poor.'</i>	1

The responses from boy Ⓛ and girl Ⓜ share the same reason, which is based on sticking to one's principles, a 'male' tendency. Other reasons are more gender specific. The responses from girls as in comments Ⓜ and Ⓝ manifest their personal dislike of the banker as motivating their moral response.

### Category three: Indecisiveness

In this category, both boys' and girls' morality position are tossed from one side to another. I have coloured their responses differently in order to emphasise this struggle between compassion and justice. Also, I have marked out the parts where they either gathered information, or made deductions, or made further imaginative decision on what might

happen based on the participatory drama, see sections entitled Liang's

Abusive Power, page 276, and Revisiting Liang's Power, page 279.

Colour	Categories
Red	Manifesting compassionate mind
Green	Manifesting justice
Sky Blue	Information I gave out when I played banker in forum theatre.
Orange	Children's own deduction of character's personalities from forum theatre.
Grassy Green	Children's own ideas that extend from what they knew from forum theatre.

## Girl

⑤ *I think Liang should not have helped the banker because he was given the paint brush to draw for the poor and poor only! I also think Liang should have helped the banker because he was not doing for himself it was for his son!*

① *I think he should have because the banker wanted his son to be alive. But in a way he shouldn't because the banker was a bit mean. And Liang really needs to draw for the poor.*

⑩ *I think the banker should buy his own medicine for his son. It wasn't Liang's problem. Liang should also helped a bit I think.*

⑥ *He should because maybe he spent all his money on food and drink for his wife and his son, but he should not (have helped banker) because banker should have got it when he was at the shop.*

⑭ *I don't really have proper answer because I think he should because his son is ill. But I don't think he shouldn't because the banker has a LOT of money. Liang was kind so he probably wanted to help but he might not because if he helps the banker, the banker might think he can get anything of him.*

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## Boy

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Ⓒ *I think he should have helped the banker's son because he was very sick. I don't think he should have helped because he should only draw for the poor.*

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⒫ *He should have cared for the banker's son because there was no medicine that can cure it, but no (not help banker), because the banker was rich.*

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Ⓒ *I don't think Liang should have helped the rich banker because the banker could buy his own. But I do kind of think he should have helped him because maybe the market didn't sell them. I also think that he shouldn't have helped because he is a greedy man.*

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Ⓓ *I think that he should have helped him because of his ill son. But I don't think he should have helped him because she's got lots of money and she would probably be able to buy medicine herself.*

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With the colour coded, it is apparent to see that both genders indeed encounter a moral dilemma between being compassionate in red and being just in green. Their dual replies demonstrate shifting moral standpoints from one to another. The response Ⓜ from girl who starts her reply with: '*I don't really have a proper answer ...*' illuminates this particular mindset of indecisiveness that she shares with the rest of her peer group. The responses Ⓣ, Ⓚ, derive the details that they collected from drama activities to support and explain their own moral reasoning as the coding in orange and sky blue indicates.

Some may see such moral responses as manifestations of moral relativism, but rather I see this as children grappling with the complexity of moral conflicts in this particular socio-cultural context, and taking into

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account the people involved and most likely to be affected in this dramatic scenario. This is what Noddings' calls 'displacement of motivation' (2003, p. 25). It means that a caring person shifts motivation about to whom they shall care, and for what, and most importantly, *they understand why* (ibid, p. 33). Children at this point do not confine their moral thinking within a frame of who is right or wrong, rather, they take on board to find out 'what is good for the people involved' (Noddings, 1995a, p. 143). In fact, Noddings' idea of motivational shifting chimes with a climate of moral pluralism as Kekes claims (1993). Basourakos summarises succinctly Keke's main argument:

'John Kekes suggests that the plurality and conditionality of socially constructed and culturally reinforced moral convictions constitutes a rich fabric of ethical perspectives that determine how moral conflicts originate, and how moral dilemmas are perceived by individual moral subjects' (1999).

When looking into children's responses, they indeed juggle their moral positions, yet they do so not from a void but, instead, their reasoning is backed by specific points in order to lay out this 'dual argument'. This is to say that instead of caring about one side only, they allow their 'motive energy to be shared', they start 'putting it at the service of the other' (Noddings, 2003, p. 33).

While they reason, both boys and girls, retrieve their own memories

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from what they observed, heard, detected and deduced from the dramatic activities see pages 267-268 and pages 280-281. Such dramatic experience is bound tightly with their moral reasoning. One particular example is in the response ⑥ from a boy. In his description, the banker flips from male to female, which obviously references me, a female teacher playing the fictional role.

Scholars advocate that the essential pedagogical approach to moral education is to have dialogue with learners (Blatt & Kohlberg, 1975; Day, 2002; Elkind & Sweet, 1997; Kohlberg, 1980; Noddings, 1991, 1994; Tappan, 1998). Using different dramatic forms to frame such dialogues is one way to approach such learning (Basourakos, 1999; Bouchard, 2002; Day, 2002; Winston, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998). In this case, children's written responses are evidence that the dialoguing that took place in the drama space had a strong afterlife as an internalised form. Such a dialogue, is a potent one as Tappan states, 'dialogue, no matter where or how it happens, is morally valuable' (1998).

#### 4.6.5.6 Conclusion

The responses here show that a justice-based morality is not a binary opposite to an ethic of care and vice versa. The two moral domains actually

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seem to function together in most of the cases analysed above. It would appear, then, that the story offered a context within which the drama activities encouraged children to explore complex moral issues in concrete, accessible and engaging ways (Winston, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2005). Moreover, the drama activities not only provided the children with a safe space to practise moral reasoning (Winston, 1999). A dramatic space like this helped transform the children into 'spect-actors' (Augusto Boal, 2002, p. xxvi). Children were invited to take part, not necessarily physically, yet cognitively, mentally, and morally. Children, thus, could become 'active, moral agents' as Winston puts it (1999). Their participation in drama provided them with vivid memories from which they were able to recall particular details later to engage in moral thinking (Levy, 1997; Winston, 1999). These activities also provided visual and auditory stimuli to help children make personal connections with characters. Being able to interact with them in a dramatic space breathed a liveliness into what might have been an abstract moral debate, and brought their experiences closer to a real life situation (Noddings, 2003, pp. 2,3). The visual signs and sensory attractions of drama added a rich dimension to the activities, which 'evoke human sympathies and also allow for other processes apart from the

linguistic to become engaged in the moral reasoning task' (Winston, 1998, p. 112).

#### 4.6.6 School B

##### 4.6.6.1 Liang's Power vs. the Emperor's Power

Here is the transcription of the activity when I played the emperor and children played Liang.

.....  
 Me: (Addressing to the class) What shall I ask him to draw for me?

Mixed race boy: Gold, coins and silver!

Me: Liang, draw me gold, silver and coins!

Pakistani boy as Liang: I can't do that because the old man who gave me this said that I can only use for poor people. And you're already rich, you've a palace, why do you need more?

Me: No! it's never enough. You see. You think I'm rich because I already have had gold and a palace, but I don't think I'm rich enough, that's how I see myself, so draw for me.

Pakistani boy as Liang: You give out money first.

Me: (addressing to the class) what shall I reply?

Pakistani 2: give your money to the poor.

Me: How dare you say that! (children laughed) No, I won't give away my money!  
 (Addressing to the class) What can be the next thing I ask him to draw for me if it's not money.

Pakistani boy 3: Noodles!

Me: Great! So, draw me 10 bowls of noodles.

Pakistani boy as Liang: **No!** You can ask soldiers and servants to cook for you.

Me: You know I'm the emperor of the nation and you don't draw for me this and that. What shall I do with him.

Children: Torture him! Execute him!

Pakistani Boy 4: Torture him until he draws something.

Me: (Addressing to Liang) Are you afraid of torturing?

Pakistani Boy as Liang: **No!**

White British boy 5: Put burned iron on his head.

Me: So that's what I'm going to do, to burn iron that is so hot and put on you.

*Pakistani Boy as Liang: God will curse you if you do that.*

*Me: God? Tell me where is God?*

*Pakistani Boy as Liang: In the sky, you cannot see him.*

*Me: I don't believe you. You know, I'm the emperor, I can do whatever I want.*

*White British Girl 1: Ask him to draw medicine for the future.*

*Me: So draw me a perfect medicine that can cure all the illness.*

*Pakistani Boy as Liang: **No!** You have money and you can go to the shop to buy it.*

*Me: But in the shop they don't have such a medicine that's why I ask you.*

*Pakistani Boy as Liang: **No!***

*Me: Let's make a deal. If you draw it for me, I'll give you some gold, money and servants, so you actually earn things by drawing. What do you think?*

*Pakistani boy as Liang: **No!***

The child who played Liang leads with a request for the Emperor to redistribute his wealth – an implicit political message in the story that is not stated as such but that this child immediately grasps and articulates. Interestingly, this social justice is also backed up in his mind by sacred justice. Like the Muslim prophet Muhammed, Liang has God's blessing as he is the chosen one to do good deeds, and the emperor will be judged by God, in this case, cursed, if he tortures him.

Under the threat of physical punishment, the Pakistani boy defended his righteousness and claimed, '*God will curse you if you do that*'. Throughout the Qu'ran, the word *curse* is used repeatedly to condemn unbelievers. Here is one example:

*"O Lord, verily we have obeyed our Lord, and our great man; and they (infidels) have seduced us from the right way. O Lord, give them the double of our punishment and curse them with a heavy curse" (Koran, chap. 33, page 315).*

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The boy is, I would suggest, drawing on language and concepts directly related to his religious identity. A curse is the kind of language that neither a Buddhist nor a Christian would readily associate with God; but dramatically the statement was striking and powerful and perfectly apt within the context of this work with and in front of his classmates.

The child here very much plays Liang as the fearless opponent of the Emperor, the hero of the people, saying No! to him strongly on five occasions. He displays quick wittedness, always having a swift response and justification for his refusal. In some ways he is like a strong willed child refusing to do a grown up's will – a great game for a child in the classroom – but he always sticks to the logic of the story. His classmates request Liang to draw food and medicine that satisfy a human being's nutritious and health needs but not material things. They also have fun testing his resolve, suggesting an array of imaginative tortures for him that he is always ready to respond to.

After the activity, I asked children who was more powerful, Liang or the emperor? Around six children of this group claimed it was Liang. Their reasons were :

*'He has got the paintbrush. He can draw everything, anything.'*

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Another Pakistani child gave me more details, said:

*'Liang is more powerful because he has got the magic paint brush. If he was allowed to draw, he could draw a phoenix, draw a dragon, draw anything to kill the emperor. He can do whatever he wants.'*

Around five of them thought that the emperor was more powerful, one

Pakistani boy saying:

*'The Emperor is more powerful. He could kill Liang if he didn't draw for him.'*

Another Pakistani boy provided more details after they listened to the rest of story from the picture book. His comments were drawn from both the drama activity and the book, he said:

*'The Emperor is more powerful because when Liang was drawing, the emperor was smashing the table. He asked Liang to draw and draw, when Liang said no, he smashed the table. He didn't stop begging for the paint brush.'*

For the majority of children, Liang's low social status was elevated and he could out match the emperor through the god-like qualities bestowed upon him by the magic paintbrush. The two boys who see the Emperor as more powerful, however, appear to equate power with brute force and displays of violence and remain impressed by these images after the story and drama. When I narrated the very end of the story book I asked 'what Liang would become', and one Pakistani boy said:

*'Liang would become emperor.'*

There were six others who shared the same thought, but this idea was opposed by another Pakistani boy who believed that Liang would go to an unknown place and keep drawing for poor people.

#### 4.6.6.2 Good as Liang

After listening to the whole story, children learned the ending that the emperor was drowned in the sea because of the strong wind Liang drew. I then asked children if Liang was a good or bad person; four fifths of them said, 'he is good'. The reasons they gave are listed below, preceded by my own interpretation of the moral principle they are articulating:

**Liang is incorruptible:** *"Normally if other people had the paintbrush, when they heard that emperor would give them money, they would draw for him, but he didn't." (Somali boy)*

**Liang has strong will power:** *'He is good because he didn't give in even though the emperor tried to persuade him to draw for him.'* (Pakistani boy)

**Liang is compassionate:** *'Liang is good because he helps people.'* (Pakistani boy)

**Liang is justly vengeful for the good of the people:** *'Liang is good. If the emperor stayed alive, he would ask the same things from people as he asked Liang. It's good that Liang killed the emperor. Even though he drew for the emperor, he wanted to kill the emperor.'* (Mixed race boy)

**Liang is compassionate and would never kill on purpose:** *'Liang may accidentally kill the emperor, but inside his heart, he has a good*

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*heart and cares about other people.’ (Somali girl)*

The witch must die. Evil power has to be abolished. For these children, in this story, the emperor is understood as a bad character, an evil tyrant. Liang, the righteous character, wields the sword of justice and never bends his knees to show any sign of fear, not surrendering to or being corrupted by dark powers, especially one who wears a crown. This is the classic hero tale which we never seem to tire of and readily resonates with other stories, such as Robin Hood and Zorro. We cheer when these free spirits ride back in victory defeating and frustrating evil authority. But the image of Liang the hero is flexible enough to carry a range of heroic virtues, and although many emphasise the classic virtues of moral strength, will power and courage, there was room for those children who value compassion to see evidence of it in Liang.

#### 4.6.6.3 Revisiting Liang’s Power

In the last session, children came up with different approaches to persuade Liang to draw medicine for the rich banker so that he could save his son. Here I choose to list strategies children contributed rather than display the whole transcription, once again offering my own interpretation of the children’s comments afterwards.

*'Tell Liang that If you don't draw for me, my son will die, and it will be your fault.'* (Pakistani boy) [**Playing on Liang's sense of guilt**]

*'Tell Liang that my son is really ill and I wish him better. He is my flesh and bone and I love him.'* (White British boy) [**A very evocative attempt to encourage Liang to feel compassion**]

*'He can only draw for the poor, so you (banker) can give some money for the poor. And then he will draw some medicine to your son, your son will become better. You can earn more money later.'* (Mixed race boy) [**A very pragmatic response, directed at the banker rather than Liang**]

I prodded these questions further, for example:

*Me: To whom I should give money to?*

*Somali boy: Everyone.*

*Me: But how much I shall give away?*

*Somali boy: Enough for food.*

This child from Somalia may well be acutely aware of the basic human need for food – a humble and humbling response for the teacher. He did not ask for equal shares, just for enough to fulfil basic human needs. There are other approaches children suggested.

*'Tell him that he drew for the emperor, and he doesn't need help, so why not he can draw to you, a person who needs help.'* (Somali boy) [**Very interesting, and perhaps pointing to a flaw in my dramatic plan here!**]

*'Tell him that he is not drawing for you, but is drawing to your ill son.'* (Pakistani boy) [**Clever, and equating illness as a form of poverty**]

*'Tell him that if my son dies, I'll be depressed. My life is going to be ruined. I cannot live without him.'* (Somali girl) [**Appealing to Liang's sense of human decency**]

*'You can apologise to him to be rich. And your son won't be rich if he cannot live.'* (British boy) [**Show remorse for your greed and appeal to his sense of reason**]

*'You can dress as a poor person having croaky voice to ask him for medicine.'* (Pakistani girl) [**Just be a good actor and deceive Liang**]

#### 4.6.6.4 Good as Liang, or Is He?

After this final activity, children re-evaluated Liang and different views were shared:

*'I think Liang is really bad. He didn't draw medicine for a person who is dying and that person probably died, and he let the emperor die. He probably planned it. He is a bad man.'* (Pakistani boy)

This child drew on additional knowledge from the final activity and re-considered the ending of the picture book. The mixed race boy also shared his view, which was amended after meeting the banker, he said:

*'My initial opinion was that Liang was good because he destroyed the emperor, helped the poor people. Afterwards, the rich banker came, but Liang only drew for the poor. His son would die and the rich banker would die from being sad as well.'*

Another Pakistani boy commented:

*'Why Liang only draws for the poor people. The truth is that he should have drew for everybody. Even rich people cannot afford certain stuff. Liang doesn't suppose to say that, oh, no, you're not having it, because you're too rich.'*

The drama had doubtlessly had the effect I had intended. Once Liang was portrayed as a single-minded extremist the children no longer accepted

him as a hero. They were happy to help the banker and rejected Liang's cold heartedness. Basic kindness and compassion meant too much to them and triumphed over stern and unmerciful justice.

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## 4.7 Case Four: *Mazu*, Mother Goddess of the Sea<sup>11</sup>

### 4.7.1 *Summary of Story*

*Mazu* (媽祖, mother, ancestor) is the respectful title given by Chinese people to *Moniang*. She was a deified human being, who was born in a fishing family Lin in the coastal area of China. Her birth was a granted wish by the Goddess of Mercy, *Guanyin* (觀音). Nevertheless, it was not exactly what her parents had wished for, as they prayed for a baby boy in order to continue their family line. When this baby girl was delivered, a strange phenomenon took place: a flash of red light shot across the room followed by a fragrant draft of air. What followed this was something else remarkable. She did not cry at all when she came out from her mother's womb. Her parents therefore named her *Mo* (默), which meant 'silence' in Chinese. To show their affection to their newly born baby, the couple Lin therefore named her *Moniang* (默娘), a silent girl. *Moniang* was a pensive and tacit child from a very early age, which made her different from other children of her age. One day, her parents brought her to the Buddhist temple to pray. The image of *Guanyin*, the Goddess of Mercy, enlightened her spiritually and soon she

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<sup>11</sup> The story is from *The Magic Lotus Lantern and Other Tales from the Han Chinese*, by Yuan, H., (2006). Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited.

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became a devoted Buddhist. One early morning, an elderly monk paid a visit to the Lin family and asked to see *Moniang*. He taught her a secret charm which gave her the power to tell the future and to go to other places without physically being there. When *Moniang* was in her teenage years, she obtained different powers to exorcise ghosts, cure diseases and avert disasters by decoding encrypted incantations etched on two bronze tablets. She used this power to confront two demons, Sharpen Ears and Sharpened Eyes, who disturbed the villagers' lives. It was said that at the age of twenty-eight, she ascended to heaven in a mist and that is how she became the Goddess, *Mazu*.

#### 4.7.2 Analysis of the Story

*Mazu* (媽祖, mother, ancestor) was born in China but her connection to Taiwan has grown deeply and widely and now is rooted in the people's everyday life. This folk religion has historical links with the maritime culture of Taiwan and can be traced back four hundred years to those who migrated from China to Taiwan and risked their lives to cross the sea. They prayed to this Sea Goddess to protect them from unpredictable weather in order to arrive inland safely. People who successfully landed and settled down therefore established temples dedicated to *Mazu*, whom their devotees

believed had protected them. Also, in early days, a lot of families made a living by fishing. Sailors and fish catchers prayed to Mazu before setting out to sea. A folk belief passed down that *Mazu* would come to rescue people if they were about to lose their life at sea. The fact that there are four hundred *Mazu* temples in Taiwan these days explains the reverence that people still pay to this guardian of the sea.

I learned this story from a literacy text book in primary school age, as a cultural asset worth preserving. Moreover, 'praying to *Mazu*' is common when Taiwanese people are downhearted or dismayed souls, even among secular people such as myself.

This story has its cultural value in itself and has interesting resonances with western stories. *Mazu's* birth, for example, as a sacred child is similar to Jesus Christ's; the fact that it is not exactly what the parents wished for is like Tom Thumb. It is interesting to see how British children might receive it.

#### 4.7.3 *Scheme of Work*

The full lesson plans can be found in appendix, pages 392- 398.

#### 4.7.4 *School A*

##### 4.7.4.1 Reading Pictures of Goddesses

Working with pictures of Goddesses before any drama activities had

taken place had three purposes: to introduce the concept of polytheism to children; secondly, to introduce the main characters so that they could become familiar with their names; thirdly, to encourage children to read these images and articulate their interpretations.



On the left, is one of the slides I showed to the children. This statue is *Moniang* who holds a lantern high up to guide ships. The lamp's shape is that of a lotus flower, which symbolises purification in Buddhism.

Before giving out any information about this statue, I asked children: *what do you think of this character? good or bad?*

More than half of the class said 'good' with only one reply said: *'she is evil'*.

One girl said: *'he is good because the thing he holds in his hands looks like a flower'*.

Another boy said: *'he is good because the thing he has is like a lantern. He may be a God of a lamp'*.

At this point, none of them thought the statue was female. They used 'he'.

*Me: Have you noticed the shape of the lantern?*

*Boy 1: A flower?*

*Me: A lotus flower. Lotus flower is a symbol of Buddhism. It symbolizes purification.*

*Do you have similar statues of Goddesses in the UK?*

*Boy 1: Not in the UK but the one I know is the statue of liberty.*

*Me: So the light she holds symbolizes liberty, right? (children nodded) What sort of symbol it can be with this lamp (in the picture)?*

*Boy 2: Light?*

*Girl 1: It's like when it rains too much, she lights the lamp on.*

*Me: If I say, this is the Goddess of the Sea...*

Girl 2: A light house?

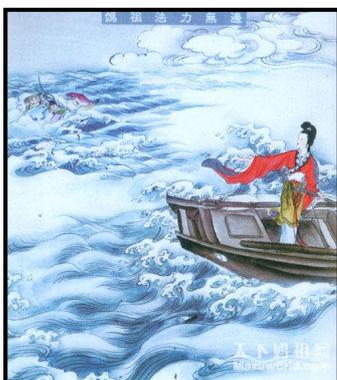
Me: Yeah. I quite agree with you, it's a light house.



The child who made associations with the statue of liberty obviously took several similarities between these two statues from their appearances: They are both female figures; they both hold a symbolic light up high with their

right hand; they both wear robes. They are both also located in harbours.

Apart from these conceivable observations, the two statues, strictly speaking, are fairly different. The statue of Liberty is a symbol of freedom, an iconic figure to represent the United States. The statue of *Moniang*, is a religious figure who lifts up her light high for an instrumental function.



This illustration portrays *Moniang* saving people from the sea. I asked children first what *Moniang* was good at according to this illustration and children had several responses:

'She is good at swimming'. 'She is good at surfing'. 'She is good at fishing'.

I then later modified my question into: 'what ability *Moniang* had in order to save lives'?

Then children replied:

'She can control the sea.' 'She is in charge of sea and waves'.

Children's first responses were based on the foreground of the picture, where the character wore a red dress, standing on a boat. My second question helped them see her god-like qualities which they interpreted very accurately.



On the left is the slide of the Goddess of Mercy or *Guanyin Pusa*. I asked children what the things were she was holding in her hands. There were two reasons for showing this image before drama activities took place. Firstly, this is the Goddess to whom The Lins prayed for a male heir in the story; secondly, this image is commonly hung on walls by Buddhist families in Taiwan.

*Boy 1: A bottle on her left hand.*

*Me: A vase, a vase in her hand. How about the other hand?*

*Girl 1: A tree.*

*Me: What kind of tree?*

*(silence)*

*Me: It's willow, a willow twig. so what this Goddess can do with a vase and willow twig?*

*Girl 2: The twig can touch the water so it grows...*

*Me: You're almost getting it. I'll give you some more clues. The water in the vase is not ordinary water but purified water. Who wants to have another go?*

*Boy 2: It can keep people alive and stop them from dying.*

*Me: Yes! She dipped twig in vase and used purified water to help anyone in need.*

Children's replies indicate how, as a group, they were quickly able to

make good sense of the imagery but only with my help. In this picture, the golden round shape behind the goddess's head gives her a divine feature. The colour gold, in Chinese, also represents an entity from the top of the hierarchy. Such symbolism may well be culturally specific but there is some relatively straightforward cultural crossover here. Gold symbolises power and wealth in the west, and the round shape behind the goddess's head resembles the saintly halo common in images of Christ, the saints and also the Virgin Mary.



In fact, when comparing the above illustration of the Goddess of Mercy and the Virgin Mary on the left, the common features are striking. Both of them stand high above clouds with a look of serenity. The golden halo at the back of their

heads symbolises their purity, royalty and glory in a life beyond death. They both stand above clouds to enforce their celestial attributes. The whiteness of the robes in the case of the Goddess of Mercy symbolises purity, also an iconic feature of the Virgin Mary.

In this case, children did not allude or make any association from the picture I showed them with any catholic symbolism. My supervisor, who was brought

up as a catholic, did so immediately, however. Of course this state school learning environment had less focus on religion and none on catholic iconography. Perhaps, children who went to catholic schools would have noticed this readily enough.

The concept of polytheism is very distinct from the monotheism of Christianity. One of the children commented in a positive tone on what this had taught him. His words express interest and enthusiasm.

*'I've learned about Goddesses like Moniang. Christianity has one world, but when you live in Taiwan, you have loads of gods to represent different aspects of life, Goddess of Mercy and all that'.*

#### 4.7.4.2 Applying Physicality



Children learned these basic female hand gestures taken from conventional Chinese opera with me in the first activity in the first session S1:A1.

#### 4.7.4.3 Translating their Own Body Vocabulary



In S1:A3, children used tableaux to relate the plot when Mr.& Mrs. Ling prayed to the Goddess of Mercy for a baby boy. In the illustration on the left, we can see that the girl who sits on the chair has applied this hand gesture to portray the Goddess,

and the girl who stands behind emulates the guardian of the divine, posing with her hands in the style of lily fingers that I had demonstrated earlier. They do so without any instruction from me. In Chinese performing art, this hand gesture is merely used by female roles to give a feminine trait in a performance space. The child has made her own decision to apply this gesture to a static statue. She has kept the essence of this feminine pose and translated it from a fluid body into a sedentary statue.

It is possible to dismiss this representation as inauthentic or inaccurately applied. Nevertheless, I argue, without any presumption, that children have seen the possibility that an embodied performing gesture can be stretched (Pavis, 1990, p. 64). This is not about the flexibility or suppleness of muscles, more the motility of performance vocabularies such as gesture, gait and gaze to be mobilised for the purposes of creating art of

the children's own. This also resonates with Pavis's idea of 'translating the untranslatable' (Pavis, 1990, p. 65). To British children, the idea of a Goddess was surely exotic, the story of Mazu was novel, but gradually it became more grounded for them through participatory activities. With the aid of enactment and embodied movements, children could concretise unfamiliar, nebulous and exotic names and turn the story into something more comprehensible. Rather than through verbal language, it was through performing embodied language that they grappled, played with and managed this.

In S2:A1. Children created a tableau to illustrate *Moniang* praying in a temple.

On the left, this group of children, on their own initiative, had definitely taken in the concept of polytheism from their choice of having five standing Goddesses in front of one girl prostrated



in prayer. Their goddess postures have been taken from the slide of the Goddess of Mercy that they saw in the first session, with one hand raised holding a willow twig, the other holding a vase pointed down to earth.



Dramatic practice such as this relies on memory. In this case, what the children recalled is a visual memory of an image, stored and

resurrected when given a task of improvisation (Nicholson, 2003). The picture of the Goddess is no longer that of a two dimensional image but becomes three dimensional, spatialised via their enactive process (Sigel, 1978, p. 94). Children's emulation of the posture also, perhaps, reflects an aesthetic response to the image that first captured and drew their attention (Armstrong, 2005), and that has helped them translate an intangible, imaginative divine into an intelligible, rooted configuration. Such stimulation is indicative of the children's productive reception, wherein an element of a foreign culture has undergone a transformation into their own innovative, hybrid form (Fischer-Lichte, 1990, p. 287). Another example of how prior, imagined experience acted as an adaptable, mnemonic peg is provided in the same image. This picture shows the same group taken from another angle. The girl who posed prostrated enacting *Moniang* later told me:

*'I was thinking I might go like this (palms facing each other placing hands in front of chest ), but I then thought if she was really engrossed in the statues, she would show more like feelings to the statue. She would bow. She was more devoted to this religion.'*

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Prostration is one of the most common positions for prayer in Chinese temples, the one that shows the ultimate devotion and reverence to the divine. The first time children saw this position of prostration was in the previous story *Liang and his Magic Paint Brush* when I showed children how people bowed to the Chinese emperor in the old days. Such prostration can be applied on different occasions to different subjects. Without any instructions from me, this girl remembered it as a way to present courtesy and pay due reverence and deduced its applicability to a new situation. She hence found in it a culturally apt way to represent an attitude of supplication and devoted prayer. This perhaps is another instance of hybridity, the kind of motility of cultural gesture that has been discovered by people who are from different cultural backgrounds, adopted into a new socio-cultural space by deducing its enactive meaning from similar past experiences.

#### 4.7.4.4 Running out of stylised physical Vocabulary or Finding the Commonality Between Self and Otherness through differentiation?

In S2:A3, children were invited to sculpt what a teenage *Moniang* might look like. Their collective contributions are illustrated in chronological order from left to right.



Children started with the posture of the Goddess and the stylised poses are more apparent in the first two choices, then gradually children did not go for any Chinese conventional ways to portray her, rather they opted for more contemporary, naturalistic poses. One might argue that this is reflective of their limited performance vocabulary. However, this hypothesis might fall into a trap of making the presumption about ‘an absolute difference’ between foreign and exotic cultures by imposing too sharp a distinction between children’s own cultural identities and that of the Chinese. Moreover, when purists attack inauthenticity, a marker of orientalism, this way of thinking, of ‘got-to-be-different’, could re-enforce such oppositions and construct an inverse orientalism, ‘Constructing difference by means of stereotypes, in a binarism that helps to perpetuate a politics of “them” and “us”’ (Peters, 1995,

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p. 205). Culture should not be seen as a property that only one party possesses, neither a criterion nor a benchmark to divide or grade one from others. This piece of data reminds us not to lose our perspective when viewing hybrid performance. Berg illuminates nicely what interculturalism is and is not when subject to this ethical issue:

‘Interculturalism is not an attempt to trace and distinguish differences based on boundaries around a fixed sameness of identities excluding otherness. Interculturalism is an attempt to *establish a process* in which the boundaries are exceeded and the *experience of difference itself is produced*’ (1996, p. 225, my italics).

Boundaries between cultures exist and differences will persist (Clingman, 2009). Yet, to re-iterate once again, my point in introducing Chinese performance values was not to overpower the already existent cultural resources of the children. Navigating the boundaries between cultures was intended as a process of communication not domination (Winston, et al., 2010).

This activity, then, can be seen as a flowing state of searching, a meeting place where children were negotiating, disagreeing or agreeing and then making their own performance decisions. To quote Berg again, it was an example of an opportunity that ‘can refer to the body as a site of the interplay, a cipher of difference and discrimination but also a site of sameness’ in order

'to share the feeling of difference within a feeling of sameness' (1996, p. 225).

In this case, as ordinary as children chose to shape *Moniang* in the later poses, these poses nonetheless suit the friendliness and approachability of *Moniang* and are therefore congruent with how Chinese people perceive this divine figure.

#### 4.7.4.5 Attempts at integrating a new physical Vocabulary

In S3:A1, children used their bodies to represent a monstrous look. The two girls below chose to adapt the representation of the White Bone Demon from the earlier scheme we did on the story of Monkey in order to show their own ideas of how a monster might appear in this story. This retention of bodily memory works extremely well both aesthetically and ontologically in this new context.



When comparing those two representations, the girl in the illustration on the right catches my attention more, in a positive way, like when watching a group dance, there is sometimes only very few performers who capture our interest. Reasons for this can be varied, and Barba calls it the 'presence of the performer' (Barba & Savarese, 1991, pp. 54-67). It is that, to quote Barba's words, 'a body-in-life dilates the performer's presence and the spectator's perception' (Barba & Savarese, 1991, p. 54). When we look at her work in detail, we see that she demonstrates a huge physical effort to hold a precarious balance, one that we are normally not used to in daily life, and this augments the tension in a way that manifests the performer's energy in a visible way (Barba & Savarese, 1991, pp. 34-67). She kneels down with her right leg, while her left leg is bending and she places her left foot close against her bent upper right leg. She uses her right knee to support most of her body weight but not the left one by the fact that her left foot is in a position of tiptoeing. Her performed body shape is almost like a perfect S figure from the point of bent right elbow, the point of bent left knee, to the point of kneeling right foot. This complex body configuration is hybrid in such a way that she not only remembers the physicality I taught but also improves on it technically by integrating her own body language into her

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representation (D. Taylor, 1991).

When I interviewed this girl, she told me about her decision-making process:

*'I was thinking that when we got the demon and like this (lifting left hand up and placing around the head as her upper body illustrated). Some of the monsters are quite small so I went down on my knees'.*

Her physicality thus had a learned point of departure, demonstrating a control of technique and displaying a cognitive readiness to adapt quickly to represent meaning. To viewers like us, her work is seductive and comprehensible, a key combination for prolonging liveliness in a performance (Barba & Savarese, 1991, p. 54).

#### 4.7.4.6 Children's Individual Writing

Children were asked to write a short story showing one or both of *Moniang's* powers (foretelling the future and being able to visit places without physically being there). They were asked to include how adults in the story might misinterpret her behaviour and see her as being naughty or disobedient. Here are three examples of children's writings. I have chosen these as they are interesting examples of how they have taken the story and used contexts more related to their own environmental and social milieus.

##### Example 1, from a girl

*The red beam of light raced across the room and shot in to Moniang and replaced Moniang's spirit, giving her magic powers. She could tell*

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*the future and visit places without physically being there.*

*Years later, when she was 10 years old, Moniang was in school. She had to pass this test. Her teacher found her being naughty and disobedient. oniang was stuck on a question. She wished she could be sitting under a cherry tree in the summer sun. When she closed her eyes she was.*

This girl edited the story heard from me and integrated other magical elements taken from other stories she had read. According to the story I told children, a strange phenomenon took place when *Moniang* was born: a flash of red light shot across the room followed by a fragrant draft of air. This unnatural phenomenon was more like a prophetic message to suggest the baby girl's extraordinariness, not a source of her magic power which is how this girl has interpreted it. In her version, *Moniang* has inherited magic powers very much as Harry Potter did at his birth (Rowling, 1997). This girl later sets up her heroine in a school setting, an environment she could not be more familiar with; at age 10, which was about her own age, she encounters an unsolvable question during a test, a worry common to any school child approaching her SATS. She has made a wish not to be in the classroom, not sitting her test and puff! her wish is granted. The place where *Moniang* sat down in her story was under a cherry tree in summer time, a very typical and desirable pastoral scene more typical of Britain than China, of course. In this delightful short tale, she has used the story of a girl with magical powers as a

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form of wish fulfilment, so common to children's stories.

**Example 2, from a boy**

*There was a girl called Moniang. She came across to adults as being naughty and disobedient. She had two powers. She could tell the future and be in places without physically being there.*

*One day Moniang's mother was out of bread so she asked Moniang to go and get some from the shop. However Moniang knew that the shop would be closed by the time she got there because she could see the future. So Moniang refused to go and told her mum to go herself in the car because the car would get there before the shops closed. Moniang's mum was cross because she thought Moniang couldn't be bothered. Moniang was upset that her mum was cross so she used her second power to go to the shop and get some bread without physically being there.*

*However, when Moniang gave her mum the loaf of bread over 2 minutes later. Her mum was even more cross because she thought that it was here all the time and Moniang had hidden it. It was not fair on Moniang because all she was doing was using her powers to help.*

This boy has transported his heroine into a domestic environment where he himself spends a significant amount of time when not in school. In his own story, she is as ordinary as himself and has to do the kind of chores common to many schoolboys. Here *Moniang* lives in a very British family; the food which is going to be served up on the table is a loaf of bread, not rice. Also, in this story, *Moniang's* disobedient behaviour is very much that of a child who squabbles once in a while with their parents and is a kind of wish fulfilment which also justifies his own, perhaps, reluctance to go shopping

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and the perennial feeling that parents are not fair to them so common to boys of this age. This topic resonates with much loved verses by Allan Ahlberg such as *Our Mother* in *Please Mrs Butler* , where children are always accused by their mother of doing things wrong, even when things are not always their fault. The heroine's power in this boy's story to see the future is thus used in a fairly common situation in daily life rather than in any extraordinary event. The anecdote he describes is close to his own domestic experience, as if he wished to have such magic powers to do things that his parents ask him to do when he is reluctant to do them.

#### Example 3, from a boy

##### ➤ **About Jack**

This writing is produced by Jack, who is quite chatty and talkative child in general. He has quite an adventurous character and likes to try out things according to my drama classroom experiences. He was also keen to enact in front of the class. His writing seems to suggest another aspect of him, a one much more subtle and observant. There is one interesting comment about Jack from the class teacher after I taught the group the story of Mazu with Chinese hand puppet. She said:

*'When you first introduced the puppet (of Mazu), they were*

*absolutely transfixed. The girls at the front could not take their eyes away from puppet at all. One person I really noticed was Jack. You said to them that they can have little chat and whisper while you set yourself up. Jack was sitting right at the back and you know, he is normally quite talkative and quite chatty. But he didn't speak to anybody, just absolutely transfixed on the puppet, and just absorb and staring at it.*

This observation from the class teacher indirectly reveals the interest that piqued Jack about the story character through puppet of Mazu.

### ➤ **Jack's Writing**

*One day there was a boy called Jack he was playing cricket in the park when a strange girl appeared out of no where. She was in a strange gown that looked Chinese. He turned away to tell his friends and when they looked she was gone. Jack's friends walked home separately. It was starting to get dark there was a shadow he looked and there was the girl again. She came close to him and Jack said what is your name. My name is Moniang.*

*'Nice name'.*

*'Thank you'.*

*'Why did you come to our game today?'*

*'Because I was going to tell you when you are older you will play for England'.*

*'How do you know? I don't believe you.'*

*'I have special powers no one believes me I can tell the future' she told him.*

*'Adults are always telling children not to play with me because they think I am just making up stories and being naughty'.*

*Jack asked her how she got her special powers. Moniang told him she*

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*lived with her mum and dad. She got her special powers from a God that's who made me. The God of the sea her name was Moniang as well. My mum and dad wanted a boy but they got me instead they were still happy to have a baby girl and always loved me and looked after me. Jack told Moniang he had to get home because it was getting really dark. Moniang said to Jack 'don't forget what I've told you'.*

*In 2021 Jack was waiting nervously in the pavilion at Lords waiting to come out for England for the first time. Suddenly Jack heard a voice he remembered, it was Moniang she said ('I told you the future would come true.')*

This well-structured tale differs from the previous two. Unlike the other two children who placed *Moniang* in the centre of their own stories, this boy creates a male character whose name is Jack as his is. The boy Jack possibly projects himself at the similar age having a similar hobby, playing cricket in a British setting that he cannot be more familiar with - a park, a cricket pitch, the Lords pavilion. The trajectory of the storyline is from the boy's point of view as we see from his narrative language. To interpret his creative writing, one way is to see it simply as an endearing account of a potential friendship between a young boy and a girl that helps to bring about his future wishes and happiness. The other can be more critical and complex, if we frame the story within theories of postcolonial discourse.

Scholars influenced by post-colonial debates might see dangerous echoes of patriarchal and imperialistic exploitation and colonisation in this

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boy's tale from two intersected aspects: an asymmetrical power relationship intricately associated with race and gender, in which this young male writer places himself in a dominant position meanwhile effectively downgrading the female role into one of strange and exotic otherness, her function in the story as merely instrumental (Chrisman, 2003; Said, 1978). Using Vladimir Propp's categories of characters, the boy has made himself the hero of the story and reduced *Moniang* to the role of his magical helper (Propp, 1968). Such an interpretation – in which the Chinese goddess only exists to help bring about a very male and British dream of glory - is difficult to ignore for several reasons. One can argue that it feeds on the construction of the East as an unfathomable mystery deeply embedded in Western consciousness, lying latent if not dormant (Said, 1978). One can also argue that the boy's white skin works as a secret signifier (Dyer, 1997) and connotes the ideology of 'white culture' as bell hooks suggests 'as a concept underlying racism, colonization, and cultural imperialism' (1991, p. 166). To extend the argument of this ideology of whiteness in terms of both representation and iconography, one might see nascent here an imbalance of power relationships where non-whiteness is marginalised at the expense of a white and distinctively imperial form of cultural hegemony in the shape of the game

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of cricket (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995, pp. 213-242; López, 2005, pp. 1-30; T. Morrison, 1992).

This view of a privileged white subject, perhaps, cannot be eradicated because the images and geographical locations are visually and cognitively recognisable (Dyer, 1997), but this does not mean that whiteness is therefore necessarily inscribed into fixating superiority, or non white must be equated with or doomed to inferiority. The potential readings are more ambiguous; to see a foreign woman, 'as an exotic outsider ... inherently cloaked in a certain mystery of isolation .. has the potential to diminish or empower her' (Button & Reed, 1999, p. 183).

We would do better, then, to re-scrutinise and re-pose our inquiry from 'what' to 'how'. López suggests a concept derived from Heidegger by using the word *Mitsein*, being with, to open up a new phase of discussion (López, 2005, pp. 6, 15). In his opinion, to work through the relationship between the two and to focus on the 'indispensability of this intersubjective relation for being' (López, 2005, p. 15) are key. To read this boy's writing again, then, one might notice a verbal exchange between the young generation's burgeoning friendship, brief, yet tantalizing in the implications of the final words of Moniang.

*“Jack asked her how she got her special powers. Moniang told him she lived with her mum and dad. She got her special powers from a God that’s who made me. ...My mum and dad wanted a boy but they got me instead they were still happy to have a baby girl and always loved me and looked after me. Jack told Moniang he had to get home because it was getting really dark. Moniang said to Jack ‘don’t forget what I’ve told you’”.*

#### 4.7.4.7 Moniang’s Magic Powers

In S2:A6, children learned the plot that *Moniang* was given two bronze tablets which had inscribed incantations on them. She studied them and obtained more magical powers. Children paired up to write down what these powers could be. Their ideas are listed below:

1. *The power to control the animals and living things when people are in trouble or need help!*
2. *If some trees fall down in a forest, she could take control of a stray animal to move them out of the way.*
3. *Air to fly*
4. *Control the wind so she can save whoever and whenever.*
5. *She controls the weather when it is tipping it down with rain or bad weather. She can change it to something good.*
6. *Her power is she has strength to move heavy things around.*
7. *Control the sea.*
8. *Stop people dying.*
9. *Get more food.*
10. *Help sea life.*
11. *If someone was thirsty Moniang could make a glass of water appear.*
12. *She can tell if a storm is coming to warn people.*
13. *She can make it lighter and darker whenever she wants. So people can see if there are any monsters or bad things.*
14. *She can control the sea when she’s calm the sea is calm. When she’s angry the sea gets out of control and can cause harm.*
15. *Control water, so when there’s an enemy, she can send them far far away so they won’t ever come back because they will be really terrified.*

16. *Turn into other people for disguise.*
17. *If someone was mean to someone, Moniang could have a big wave of water over them.*
18. *Turn into what she sees and needs to! So she can help poor people.*
19. *The power to persuade people or any living things to do things they do not want to do when she touches them.*
20. *Power of medicine can help people get better.*

a.	Powers that help people and living creatures	1,2,4,10,11,12,18,20
b.	Powers similar to Christ's miracles	8,9,20
c.	Powers that are used for vengeance, justice or punishment	14,15,17
d.	Powers over natural forces	4,5,7,12,13,14,15,17,19
e.	Powers that help the environment	10
f.	Powers that can fulfil wishes	3,6,11,16,18

In children's minds, this goddess from another culture possesses any possible number of powers they have come across in other stories. Some in category b are strongly reminiscent of the 'magic' of Jesus as manifested in his miracles. These include, as we have seen, the power to prevent death (for example, when Jesus raised Lazarus, John, 11); provide food (the Feeding of the Five Thousand, Matthew, 14: 13-21) and to cure sickness (when Jesus cured the leper and also when he cast devils out of the man possessed, Matthew, 8) But children have drawn from a range of different sources and literary genres that they are familiar with to make perfect sense of this story from another culture.

## 4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained my reasons for choosing the particular cases I worked with. I have addressed each of my research questions as they pertained to the findings of the four cases in the two schools in a systematic and logical, albeit complex fashion. I have provided evidence from different aspects of the data to illustrate and triangulate my arguments, organising much of my analysis in a grounded fashion, according to themes that emerged from scrutinising the data itself. The findings show that the children participated and engaged willingly in the drama activities. Their writing, drawing, physicalisation and participation in forum theatre and other participatory drama activities show that they not only made sense of the stories, but also enjoyed working with them. Their responses to them, however, differed in a number of ways which I have argued as influenced by different aspects of their identities, namely religion, gender, social class and, speculatively, ethnicity. Children's writing and physical representations were analysed through the theoretical lenses of reader response theory and hybridity respectively. I am aware that the potential for generalisation in this project is limited and that further research will be needed to broaden and deepen these findings but I believe that the findings are nonetheless

illuminative and point the way forward to further possible research. In my concluding chapter I will proceed to elaborate on the limitations and achievements of the research; on possibilities for future researchers; and on the educational implications of this research.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

I explained my personal interests when embarking on this research in the introductory chapter. Those past experiences that stirred my uneasiness in cross-cultural exchange did, after all, become an engine that propelled me to explore the ethical possibilities of such projects. I examined the reasons for using stories and how participatory drama can be useful when bringing these stories into a different cultural setting. I discussed the concept of transnational space to understand how British children and I interacted in a dramatised Chinese cultural setting. In the second chapter, I described how the current socio-cultural environment in Britain has become more culturally diverse and complex, where the chance to encounter strangers increases, but not necessarily the ability or willingness to relate with or understand them when they share the same community. The dynamic between social, cultural and historical distances with strangers are the key factors that influence our relationships with them and our moral connection with them. I further discussed the cosmopolitan view on ethics that has greatly influenced this project. This cosmopolitan ethical perspective drew significantly upon Appiah and makes use of storytelling and art forms to connect and engage with others in a spirit of enjoyment and curiosity. This also led me to justify the

use of participatory drama in this project. In chapter three, I explained my methodological paradigm as ethnographic case study and the different research methods I applied, as well as my strategies for analysis. In chapter four I presented my findings and analysis, although the complexity of that section, both in analytical and structural terms, is testimony to the complex nature of the inquiry it involved.

I started this project with three research questions in mind, namely:

- a) how do two contrasting classes of English primary schoolchildren respond to and make sense of stories drawn from the Chinese tradition, told and performed in different ways?
- b) how do they articulate, adapt and embody values provoked and engaged with during their drama work and in related classroom activities?
- c) a subsidiary question: what can I learn as an ethnic Chinese teacher-artist from this process in order better to understand this aspect of my practice?

Rather than revisit each of these in sequence, their necessary interlinked nature leads me to reflect upon them in an integrated form.

## **5.1 General Comments**

My project covered two demographically distinctive local primary schools in the West Midlands. I did this deliberately to embrace a broad spectrum of

different children's responses whilst recognizing the broad ethnic diversity that being British nowadays includes. Of course, with more time and financial resources this diversity could have been greater but nevertheless I feel that the variety of responses I was able to analyse and theorise in my analysis section shows that this was a decision that provided a fruitful outcome.

This project was a pioneer in the field of drama education to teach British children traditional Chinese stories through drama in a systematic way. In general, both groups of children were able to understand and make sense of stories through participatory drama, in spite of their distinct language competence. Moreover, both groups engaged with the different kinds of dramatic experiences re-enforcing the idea that drama can present a balanced pedagogy of verbal and kinesthetic strategies that this particular age range of children will respond to. The results also suggest that the pedagogy succeeds across genders and cultural diversity.

The use of ethnographic case study was a suitable methodological design. Spending a substantial time being a teaching assistant outside of the drama lessons provided me with an important chance to observe children's verbal responses in an ordinary classroom situation. This helped me to understand their personalities more when I came to do drama activities,

especially those that required one child to enact verbally or nonverbally. There are some important points I learned from working in such distinctive schools, however, which future researchers could benefit from being aware of. As children's linguistic competences can be so varied between two such schools, researchers need to be flexible and adaptive to the actual situations they find themselves in when collecting data. Children in school B generally faced more challenges in terms of literacy than those in school A, so changing the format of data gathering from, for example, writing to drawing proved essential and productive. Researchers might do well to think carefully about other forms of data collection, such as questionnaires, in ways that will not diminish the quantity of significant data they gather. They may have to be creative in their methods. I found that informal interviews after drama lessons were very useful with children in school B. Encouraging children to draw rather than write; and investing more time in verbal interactions during key activities in each drama scheme were two other necessary but successful strategies.

Talking in advance about children's literacy ability and their overall school life with class teachers or language support teachers is something I would strongly recommend. Also, liaising closely with class teachers when

planning for work to be carried out at home or elsewhere in the curriculum, is vital. The fact, for example, that children in School A were learning how to write in narrative style, led the class teacher to suggest a Character Study as one aspect of their drama homework. We could both therefore be satisfied that we were each benefiting from this work for our two complementary, though different, outcome needs.

Adaptability and flexibility can lead to different forms of data emerging to complement those envisaged in the original research design. I see this as a positive outcome of this project. Filming and photography combined proved to be not only useful but also essential, particularly for those aspects of the analysis dependent upon closely interrogating children's physicality. As I mentioned earlier, the quantity and quality of visual images increased significantly through having a support assistant to take care of the technical aspects. Also, it was essential to be able to transcribe verbatim the verbal exchanges that took place during key activities, particularly with teacher in role and forum theatre, that depend heavily on verbal exchanges between the drama practitioner and children. Technical support and good video recording ensured that this happened with ease.

## 5.2 Children's Responses to the values embedded in the stories

Identifying the core cultural values in each story and then devising a drama scheme of work that would articulate them, provide space for children to explore and interact with them, this was at the heart of the intercultural learning I envisaged for these British children. In this final section I will reflect upon the values identified in each story, and on the activities applied in order to explore them. Whilst evaluating their success, I will also make recommendations for further research.

### 5.2.1 *From Bad to Good To Bad to Good*

The story *From bad to Good to Bad to Good* explored the idea of cyclical rather than linear time and the particular Chinese idea of fate this involves. The key convention for evoking this was teacher in role, which not only provided the children with a chance to clarify, and to understand a philosophy of life that was alien to them but also provided them with a face-to-face dialogical interaction with a teacher-actor who was herself the embodiment of such a tradition. Data suggests that children did manage to gain a more positive view of the philosophy from this interaction which at first they were ready to see as dry and heartless. This was, I suggested, due to the space that drama opened up for them to penetrate and dialogue with the

story and with an embodied Chinese teacher-actor. That this ethnicity was porous, however, that some children seemed to re-interpret in their drawings, presents some tantalizing possibilities for interpretation that this research project could only speculate upon. A more rigorous and specifically planned use of pictorial responses as integral to the data collection in a future research project could provide deeper and more focused evidence to explore further this interesting area of identity and identification.

#### *5.2.2 Monkey and the White Bone Demon*

In the story *Monkey and the White Bone Demon*, I explored the cultural significance of colour and some symbolism with the children taken from traditional Chinese drawings. It suggested that some of these are indeed culturally specific and need explanation as well as discussion for children to gain understanding. Related to this cultural specificity, I concentrated on performance values related to Chinese opera. Children were introduced to some basic movement and representational forms drawn from this tradition of performance but were allowed to use them flexibly and to make their own hybrid representational forms. This hybridity was evident in School A but not School B, where simplistic received representations (hovering around conflict and kung fu) remained dominant. However, children did display some

interestingly personalised responses to the White Bone Demon in terms of their interpretation of its gender and its 'whiteness'. A further study could concentrate on such responses and look in detail at how such culturally specific characters transmute across cultures to take on new nuances of meaning in children's understandings.

### 5.2.3 *Liang and his Magic Paint Brush*

The story *Liang and his Magic Paint Brush* was particularly interesting. On the one hand it could be seen as the kind of fairy tale in which the weak and the poor triumph over the strong and powerful – very typical of such western fairy tales as *Jack and the Beanstalk* or the *Wizard of Oz*. On the other hand, a more culturally focused analysis could see such values as, in this case, strongly determined by the philosophy of *Mao Zedong*, cruelly put into practice during the cultural revolution (Winston, Lo, & Wang, 2010). In order to explore this ethical tension I used forum theatre as it is not only a playful and subversive dramatic approach but also allows for critical distancing. Some unanticipated findings came out from this exchange, however, with regard to how religious ideology might have impacted on the two groups of children. Once again these findings are no more than tantalizing, but the still images that children in school A made did convey

echoes of Christian iconography, with the hero being depicted as Christ-like, whilst the verbal exchanges with students from School B carried echoes of their Muslim beliefs. Religion, of course, can be a major strand of one's cultural identity but further research would be necessary for this to be investigated systematically – how religious values can find articulation through drama and hence demonstrate how they might impact on individuals' and groups' apprehension of stories from different cultural sources. Another unplanned finding from this drama scheme revolved around how gender seemed to influence moral reasoning in some of the activities in school A, where children were most proficient and confident in oral English. Research by Colby (1982, 1987) Winston (1998) and Edmiston (1995) has already explored this area but not with specific relation to Chinese stories, and further more targeted and focused research could investigate drama, moral reasoning and gender within this context.

#### 5.2.4 *Mazu*

In the story *Mazu*, the concept of polytheism was introduced via religious icons and cultural symbols. This offered British children the possibility of developing some form of intercultural competence in understanding how Chinese culture can be expressed through visual images

(Hitchens, 1981). Interestingly, cultural movements and physicality learned in previous drama schemes informed some of the children's representational work here, which suggested that performance languages can become memorized in an embodied way to inform future work, thus creating new hybrid forms of representation. A future, longitudinal research project could focus on this and at the same time explore the complex ethical dimension of hybrid performance and intercultural exchange in schools. The ambiguous ethics of this kind of work was further illustrated in the written story of one child (male) whose story could be interpreted through a postcolonial lens as a fable for cultural misappropriation. Once again, how children incorporate such work into their own imaginative creations could be the subject of a rich future ethnographic study.

### **5.3 Limitations and Constraints of this Research**

In this project, I spent a substantial amount of time in the field, which allowed me to collect abundant and fruitful data for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. However, I am well aware of the limitations of my research. Firstly, with regard to the drawings that I collected from children in school B; these were interesting data *per se*, but without follow-up interviews with the children who drew them, I was left speculating on their work without

the benefit of their own voices. I collected such data when I finished my teaching on the site. I kept them safe but had not, in hindsight, considered how useful they might be in terms of the information they might yield to me as a researcher. I was looking at them too much as a teacher, thinking of their quality in terms of drawing skill rather than the potentially rich information they held. It was only much later when I returned to them with the critical eye of a researcher that I began to interpret them as research data rather than teaching outcomes. I lead with this example as it illustrates a danger inherent to being both teacher and research at one and the same time and indicates how critically alert the practitioner researcher must strive to become in order to avoid dividing her research eye from her teaching eye. I made the mistake of seeing this data as rather banal and was initially blind to what it could tell me.

If I was to repeat the research now, I would begin analysing earlier and consciously avoid separating teaching and data gathering from analysis. I would consciously attempt to keep my research agenda in the back of my mind all the time not only when on site, and right after teaching, but also immediately that I found myself back in my study space. I see now that researchers have to adopt and maintain an analytical mind-set and start

examining data critically and in an exploratory manner continuously. This process will need researchers to sit down and carefully look through all their data so they can begin to make speculative sense of it from the outset – or at least look for specific areas or questions that suggest where further inquiry in the research site might best take place. To talk with senior researchers will be a useful and helpful step during this stage of analysis as they could contribute some necessary intellectual input or potential insights at this crucial stage.

Another constraint is that I was not able to teach the drama scheme of Mazu with children in school B. This is a shame. As children in the two schools were demographically different, their religion and beliefs are distinct from one another. It would have been interesting to find out how children in school B responded to the story of a goddess and the concept of polytheism. With this particular group of children, I actually spent about three hours more on the other schemes of work, compared with school A. Thus my time was used up and I could not ask for more time in school B, which had already been very generous to me. In future, I would take into account the socio-cultural background of the school and the children whilst designing the fieldwork and either build in extra time in case I needed it whilst initially

negotiating with the school; or be aware that I might want to prioritise certain schemes of work for the potentially rich data they might offer me.

The last limitation I would like to address is the lack of technical support I had in school B, particularly for filming and photography. It is true that I found a way to cope with this hindrance but, nevertheless, I would strongly recommend to any doctoral student conducting a similar project in drama education to have a visual recording assistant with them all through the project. To maximise the benefit of such assistance, it is extremely important to communicate with the assistant before the actual lessons take place, and have a joint evaluation after each lesson and further communication once the researcher has watched the results of the actual filming. In this way, it will not only take away a lot of the pressure from the researcher who has to organise, perform, remember children's responses, interact with them and keep fully focused on their teaching during the lessons. Also, with sufficient communication, the video and camera images will be more in line with the needs of the research project as the assistant will be able, for example, to frame the cameras for close-ups at specific moments with specific children. This will increase not only the quantity but also the quality of the visual recording. As a result, researchers will be able to collect sufficient valuable

images to add to the richness of their analysis.

#### **5.4 Final words**

This project, though narrow in its focus and its application, has, I believe, been worthwhile in terms of the practical pedagogy it suggests and the possible foci for future research it has unearthed. Perhaps some people might argue that its focus was not particularly important, or even ethically misguided – a form of reverse cultural imperialism – but I hope I have countered this in my theoretical positioning and in the argument for a positive understanding of cosmopolitanism that I have promoted. Ultimately, the aspiration to embrace otherness positively through drama is, I believe, a worthy one, with drama providing the kind of open, porous space, what I have termed transnational space (after Clingman) to enable the values within stories to be navigated and explored rather than preached and absorbed. I hope and believe that this account of my experience is worthy of sharing with other drama practitioners who teach children from cultures different from their own, who nonetheless wish to educate them – share with them – stories from their own culture. This is one of the best ways, I believe, to stimulate the kind of benevolent curiosity for the ‘other’ so necessary if we are to learn how to get along with one another in a world that is increasingly characterised by

the intimacy of its diversity.

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## APPENDIX

### CASE 1, STORY 1

#### Lesson Plan: From Bad To Good To Bad To Good

A1: The warm-up activity was to ask children some statements and ask them to take sides depending on whether they should supply yes or no answers to prompts such as the following: I shared an ice cream with a friend; I broke my leg in the playground; I found ten bars of chocolate by accident; I had an argument with my best friend. The scenarios I chose were meant to be close to children's lives in order to make the questions more relevant to them.

A2: Then I narrated the story from memory.

A3: I asked the children what adjectives they would use to describe Sai Wong. I collected a cluster of words which covered all different possible interpretations of this character.

A4: I asked the children to write down the top three words which they thought were the most applicable to Sai Wong. The quantity of words should be no less than five. We then counted their favourite choices by asking them through a quick show of hands.

A5: Next, the class was divided into groups of four or five. Each group was assigned one word from the top list that the whole class had decided. Their task was to use still image to make their appointed descriptive word of Sai Wong stand out from a frozen picture.

A6: The following activity involved myself in role as Sai Wong (Teacher in Role) and hot-seating. This was a chance to get to know Sai Wong's temperament and his thoughts by answering questions thrown by the children.

A7: After hot-seating, I asked the children if there was any word that they thought was no longer suitable to describe Sai Wong after they had met him, or conversely, if there were other words they wished to add to the list.

A8: The individual writing and drawing activity was undertaken by the children after the drama session.

## NARRATIVE STORYTELLING

I made some changes as marked below. Instead of monologues spoken by Sai Wong, I added more dialogue between Sai Wong and his neighbors. This change added a dimension of social relationships to the story.

### *From Bad to Good to Bad to Good*

Once upon a time, in the far North of Ancient China, there was a man whose name was Sai-Wong, who lived with his only son. All the people in his village admired his knowledge of horses and loved to talk about the fine horses he had, when they saw these beautiful creatures running freely on the wide emerald green plain.

One day, one of the best of his horses ran away towards the far end of the land owned by barbarians and didn't return. News spread and everyone came to Sai-Wong to express their sympathy.

### Change 1

#### School B

Surprisingly, Sai-Wong looked calm puffing smoke from a tobacco; the bad news seemed to have no influence on his daily life.

"Aren't you worried about your horse? Losing such a good steed must have cost you dearly," one of the neighbours asked.

"Well, I don't see how the missing horse is a loss"

"Why? It's worth a lot of money!" another neighbour asked.

"Because you never know what will happen in the future. The lost horse may bring me good luck some day."

#### School A

Surprisingly, Sai-Wong looked calm and the bad news seemed to have no influence on his daily life. He told people who felt sorrow for his loss: Sorrow? Ah yes, it is sad to lose one's horse, but then who is to know what blessing might not come from this bad fortune? We shall just have to wait and see

Several months later, the missing horse came back home and by its side, another

magnificent Mongolian stallion ran in parallel. This scene made all the people in the village gather around Sai-Wong's house again and congratulate his good fortune.

### Change 2

#### School B

"You are really lucky! You've made a good fortune without even lifting a finger!" exclaimed the neighbours".

"Well, instead of good fortune, this free horse may bring us bad luck."

Sai-Wong replied flatly.

#### School A

Nevertheless, Sai-Wong seemed not to be as cheerful as everyone else, and said: Ay, yes, this seems like good fortune well enough, but there is no such thing as absolute good luck. We must wait and see.

The Mongolian stallion was handsome but wild and needed to be tamed, so Sai-Wong's only son spent one day to the next riding it, though this meant that he did no farming or chores.

One day, when he rode the stallion which was running like the wind, he suddenly, lost his balance, and plunged to the ground and broke his leg. Everyone came to Sai-Wong's house to console him.

### Change 3

#### School B

"Thank you for your concern, but let us not mourn just yet, but my son's broken legs could be a blessing in disguise".

#### School A

However, Sai-Wong didn't sigh or complain about what had happened but only said: Let us not mourn just yet, for who is to know what blessing is even now on its way because of this accident? Wait and see! Wait and see!

A few months later, barbarians attacked the northern frontier and all the strong young men in the village had to report to the army by the command of the central government.

It was a hard battle, and every nine out of ten young men died on this horrific battle field. While many families cried for the loss of their beloved sons, Sai-Wong and his

son were safe. His son had been saved from joining the army by his broken leg.

So, Sai-Wong had his son's company for many years until he died peacefully in his late 80s. A few years later, when his son was also in his ripe old age, his injured knee felt sore whenever a chilly wind swept through from far North.

He didn't complain physical pain cutting through his bone, and was only grateful for the twinges, because they reminded him of his great good fortune to be alive.

This was the story *From Bad to Good and Bad to Good*.

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## CASE 2, STORY 2

### Lesson Plan: Monkey and the White Bone Demon

#### Session 1

A1: Project the second full size picture from the picture story book on screen. Ask children questions such as:

- ix) Who are bad and who are good in the picture?
- x) Why do you think they are good or bad. Who is on whose side?
- xi) How many humans are in this picture?
- xii) If one of them is a demon, which one, and why?
- xiii) What is happening in this picture?
- xiv) What colour is it in the background? What is the majority of the colour?
- xv) In Chinese culture, the colour of a bruise indicates the evil power and creatures from the underground, so who can be the demon?
- xvi) Do you think Monkey is male or female? How about the other characters?

A2: Introduced three characters, Monk, Pigsy and Sandy by interacting with children. I used an adapted version of hot-seating. I instructed children that when I sat on a chair, I was Miss Lo, and when I stood up, I was the story character. They could talk to characters and they had to find out their names, their favourite and less favoured things, and their jobs. I also asked children to observe if there was any differences between each character's physicality.

A3: Children then tried out each character's physicality by following my demonstration. They started with how each of them would sit, and then in standing position, and how they would walk at slow pace or faster speed. Next, I called out the name of the role, and they showed me physicality accordingly. An advanced game of physicality was that I said the name of the characters, but I demonstrated a different one from what I said. Children had to do what I said, but not do what I did.

A4: Group children into threes. They allocated the roles of Pigsy, Sandy and Monk. Then, they put themselves into the shoes of their assigned characters, to discuss what they might feel frightened about in this journey, and what sort

of hopes they would have. They were required to come up with five fears and five hopes. Then, they shared these with whole class.

A5: Trying out Monkey movements in big circle. Firstly I demonstrated a set of kicks and the typical of Monkey pose originated from the Chinese opera. Then the children followed one at a time to learn a whole set.

A6: TiR as Monkey. Staying in character with distinguishable physicality. Children asked questions to the character to get to know more about the character.

## Session 2

A1: Quick physical recapitulation of the story character's physicality.

A2: Three chosen volunteers sat in the middle of circle made by the rest of children to represent Pigsy, Sandy and Monk respectively. I narrated plots

✧based on the story, with my own words prepared in advance. The children who were in characters moved according to the narration.

✧ *Monkey, Monk, Pigsy and Sandy have been walking for a whole day long. They are tired and hungry. Monkey decided to look for food for them. Before leaving the group, Monkey draws a circle in order to protect them being away from demons. Monkey asked them to stay in circle no matter what would happen.*

*While waiting, monk, Pigsy and Sandy are sitting back to back to each other, legs crossed, the back of your right hand placed on top of the left palm, eyes closed. The characters' minds are flying out of their body, they cannot smell anything, hear anything or see anything. However, Pigsy, is half-meditating. He cannot concentrate because of hunger. He is the only one who is fidgeting.*

*Later, one beautiful young lady will approach here and try very hard to get Pigsy out of the circle. You, as a magical circle, have to help Pigsy decide whether he should do what monkey said or make an exception in this case. You have to put your hand up to be able to speak. I'm going to ask you to close your eyes later, and when you hear a ding made by triangle, you can open eyes. Monk and Sandy, you both can have open-eyes mediation; Pigsy, you can speak or move accordingly. Now, close your eyes.)*

A3: Next children were told that they would meet a young lady whom I played

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later. She would allure Pigsy out of circle. Children who were in circle had to help Pigsy, not as Monkey instructed them, to stay inside of the circle away from danger. The child in role as Pigsy could interact with the young lady as he wished.

A4: The following activity then involved finding out who was that young lady. I was at that moment in role as White Bone Demon (WBD), and the children turned into little demons in the Demon School. In this school, me/WBD told them the reasons for gathering together were to learn some facts from their biggest enemy Monkey and also to learn the skills to disguise in another human form. I demonstrated the scariest face and body movements, to emphasize the demonic nature of the character, and then invited children to make their own. I also demonstrated how the demon transformed into a beautiful lady.

A5: Summary of the plots by using the techniques of storytelling performance.

A6: Group children into five. Make a still image to represent what they understood from the previous storytelling.

A7: Individual writing about what they have learned about the story characters.

### Session 3

A1: Quick physical recapitulation of the story character's physicality and the demon's transformation.

A2: TiR as WBD and children again turned into little demons. Me/WBD told them that she needed ideas from them as to whom she should disguise into next time.

A3: Children grouped in five to discuss what sort of disguises could work to trick Monk, Pigsy and Sandy. They also had to show with their body how they transformed from the form of a demon into the form they chose to become.

A4: Using a Chinese painted Monkey mask, two white masks, a simple setting made use of classroom chairs and a piece of cloth to tell the plots of which White Bone Demon disguised into two other different human forms,

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but all failed because of Monkey.

A5: Physicalise how Monk punished Monkey by repeatedly reciting mantra to tighten the ring hat Monkey wore on his head.

#### Session 4, School A

A1: In role as Monk introduce five Buddhist precepts on a big piece of sheet. Discuss with children the meanings of them.

- Buddhist should not harm living things.
- Buddhists should not take things that are not given to them.
- Buddhists should not misuse the senses.
- Buddhists should not speak in a way which could be hurtful.
- Buddhists should not take substances which cloud the mind.

A2: Tell children the plan of WBD about fabricating the note that will drop from heaven to ask Monkey to leave. Children then imagine what can be the style of writing from heaven, and write down their individual thoughts on the slips.

A3: TiR as Monk to discuss what children have known about Buddhism.

A4: Pair children up. Then children decided who was sculptor, who was clay. The first round people who were sculptors used their partner to make the image of Monkey. When they had finished their work, all the sculptors gathered and toured around between these Monkey sculptures, as they would do in an art gallery. The second round they swapped roles and this time sculptured WBD.

A5: Collect words that children would use to describe both Monkey and WBD, then write them on board. Separate words are placed into columns according to the number of syllables. After doing so, words were read from those with fewer syllables to those with more, in rhythm. The teacher led children's reading.

A6: Used projector to tell the rest of story from the picture story book.

#### Session 4, School B:

A1: TiR as WBD, children were little demons again. Me/WBD told children

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that the only way to make Monkey leave the group was to drop a note from sky as the words from Buddha. I would need little demons to come up with a convincing note to make plan work.

A2: In order to enable children to produce such notes, little demons had to learn what these notes would sound like. Little demons followed WBD's plan to transform into little monks and asked Monk about precepts of Buddha.

A3: After meeting Monk, the teacher discussed with the children what sort of heavenly note they would come up with to fulfil the task.

#### Session 5 (School B only)

A1: Warm up in pairs. The first activity was to show how Monkey and Monk looked like when Monk said mantra to discipline Monk by tightening the ring hat. The second activity was to show how Monkey used an iron staff to hit an old man disguised as a demon.

A2: Explained to children the symbolic meanings of Chinese painted Monkey mask.

A3: Grouped children into two. Asked them to think of five different words to describe Monkey and WBD. Then they shared these with class.

A4: Then, the children decided who was the sculptor and, who was clay. In the first round, people who were sculptors used their partner to make the image of Monkey. In the second round, they swapped roles, and this time sculptured WBD.

A5: Used the projector to tell the rest of story from the picture story book.

A6: Children's individual drawing. Colour draw clothes to the story character.

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## CASE 3, STORY 3

### Lesson Plan: Liang and the Magic Paintbrush

#### Session 1

A1: Physical warm up. Children spread out in space. Use their fingers to draw an animal in the air. Prompt them to think about the actions their animal may take. Then, in five seconds, they turn into the animal they drew in stillness. Draw another animal, and this time, children not only turn into it, but come alive and explore the space.

A2: Story circle or story whoosh.

#### Narration

A long long time ago in China, a boy named Liang, who was a little bit older than you, eared money on his own by gathering up firewood and cutting reeds. He got up to work when sun rose up and went home to rest when the moon came out like everybody else in the village.

He worked hard, but still lived poorly. How big would his place be? Where were the walls? Would there be anything at all in his house? (gathering ideas from children and set up imaginary shelter for Liang together. Make sure the place is small, made of simple natural resources, such as straws, woods, rocks.)

(reassure the imaginary place again with children and continue the narration)

The only thing Liang liked to do was painting. He painted wherever and whenever he went. But he was too poor to be able to afford a brush. So he had to be creative enough to find the alternative ways to paint. (ask children what could be his resource? E.g. burnt wood, finger, ash, )

One day, he passed an art school and peeked from outside. The art teacher, who was an old man in his 60, with white cape and white beard, spotted Liang. Before Liang could say anything, the teacher said: 'You are too poor to be able to pay money for the classes. Besides, look at you, wearing such a patched cloth, no one would believe that you can paint! Go away and don't disturb our class!'

Liang was disheartened by the teacher's words, but he said: 'I want to learn painting so much from you. Please, please teach me'.

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The teacher glared at Liang for a second said: 'What?' teach you? I will never teach a beggar like you! Then he drove Liang away.

A3: Chinese Painting. Choose at least 7 different colour printed traditional water ink Chinese paintings. Laying them down on floor. Tell children to have a look at them and pick the one they like the most. Discuss the pictures with others who share the same choice. Some aspects they can engage in for discussion are:

- What do they see from the drawing?
- What are the features of the painting?
- Are there any differences between the painting they see and their own drawing?

A4: Storytelling.

#### Narration

Being refused by the art teacher cannot stop Liang from painting. His fingers just cannot keep still. When he went to gather firewood, he drew birds in the sand with a twig. When he went to the river to cut the reeds, he drew fish on the rocks with drops of water. One night, as he sleeps, he dreams of an old whom is sitting on a phoenix and hands a brush to Liang. The only thing the old man says is: It is a magic paintbrush. Use it carefully. And remember, you can only draw for the poor. Then, the old man flies away. Liang wakes up wondering: how real the dream was! Then, a brush! a pain brush is utterly in his hand! Liang jumps for joy shouting: Thank you, thank you so much. No matter who you are, thank you! So Liang starts painting. He paints a duck. As he finishes, the duck comes to life and wobbles away. This paint brush is a magic paintbrush!

A5: Discussion. Ask children to pair up to discuss what Liang would draw for poor children and poor adults. Then share these ideas with the class. I write their suggestions down on the board.

A6: Physicalise the objects they suggest. I group different numbers of children to create their objects. For instance, 3 people to make a cart, and 5 people to make a house.

#### Session 2

A1: Playing objects they draw in the air. Children group into fives and number themselves from one to five. Then, in their own groups, they take turn to draw objects, play with them, and then put them down.

A2: Interactive Storytelling.

### Narration

With the magic paint brush, Liang starts painting for the poor.

*Who would you think needed help?* (get a list of people from children while suggesting the following list. Discuss with them why they think these people need to be helped)

Farmer laborer	Shop owner	Banker
Cleaner	Business man	Doctor
Miner	Begger	Merchant

*What do you need?*

(ask them why they need it? If they draw money, it's unacceptable, because then they become rich.)

(pass paint brush to children to give them the chance to draw for their poor peers!)

He draws and keeps drawing, and only draws for the poor, as promised. From time to time, he draws animals for himself, but he has to make sure to leave something out, to avoid the animals coming to life.

(What animal would Liang draw? Get a list from the children)

But Liang has to make living apart from drawing for other poor people. He is pondering what he should do with his magic paintbrush.

(Have you got any ideas? What kind of paintings would Liang draw and sell?)

So, he starts selling his paintings on the market. He only sells pictures of birds and to make sure the birds do not come to life, he always leaves something out. One day, a man asks for a picture of a crane. Liang gives it only one eye. But with a sudden gust of wind, another drop of ink falls where the second eye should have been---and the crane flies away.

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A rich banker passes by and he cannot believe what he has seen.

(What is he thinking in his mind? Any one?)

He is thinking loudly, exclaiming: Gold, Jewelry, and more gold and jewelry. I'll ask this boy to draw these for me! Before he goes to Liang, he wants to make sure first that what he saw is true, so he goes to other villagers to double check.

(asking children as they're villagers and ask them if they know anything about magic paint brush, if they have ever received things from Liang?)

So as the rich bank intends, he goes to Liang and asks Liang to paint him gold and jewelry, and do you know what Liang replies his request? I only draw for poor. That is what Liang says to him. The fact of the magic paint brush spreads nationwide and the greedy emperor is also eager to have it.

(Now we are going to see what the emperor is like)

A3: Viewing pictures of Chinese emperor, some places in the palace, musicians' and dancer's pictures on PPT.

A4: Children group in five. Each group is assigned a place and professions working in the palace: a) prime ministers work with officers in royal chamber b) royal soldiers train in the court c) gardeners work in royal garden d) musicians play music in royal chamber e) dancers practice in another royal chamber

A5: Meeting the emperor live! Choose one child to be emperor and coach him that what he has to do is to nod, if he is not sure how to respond, ask the TiR as chief advisor.

A6: Discuss with children how powerful this emperor is. Is he more powerful than Liang? In which way he is powerful or not.

### Session 3

A1: Children turn into Liang's neighbours. Ask children to pick one profession they like to have and show through actions. Then they bring three different actions to go with their profession one at a time. Next, ask the children to choose the one which they can do repetitively. While they carry on their actions, tell them that they will meet a messenger sent by the emperor.

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A2: TiR as messenger sent by the emperor. Bring the royal verdict to them and announce:

'He who has magic paint brush has to contribute it to the emperor. He who refuses to do so is going to be imprisoned'.

A3: Game of emperor. Group into fives and name the numbers between them. The number I call out becomes the emperor of their group. This emperor will ask the others in the group to do things and they have to be obedient to the emperor.

A4: Brief narration to tell children that the emperor sent out his army to catch Liang, but smart Liang started drawing things which could help him run away from danger. What sort of things he could draw?

A5: Discussion time.

- What would the emperor ask Liang to paint with his magic paint brush?
- What would Liang reply?
- What would the emperor do if Liang refused him?

A6: TiR as emperor. Choose one child to be Liang. The rest of the children can give suggestions to Liang if necessary.

A7: Read the rest of story from the book. Use PPT to support.

#### Session 4

A1: Still images. Children group together in fives and are asked to make three still images. When going through their tableau, tap some character's shoulder to see what they see as a role in their picture.

1) Liang is very kind. 2) The emperor is very cruel 3) Liang is very cruel.

A2: TiR as banker v.s. child as Liang.

Teacher gives individual instruction to the child who plays Liang. The only sentence Liang can say: I only draw for poor. Make sure the rest of children do not know about this. The banker invites children who are sitting in a circle to come up different ways of persuading him to draw medicine for his badly ill

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son.

A3: Group children in fives. Make a picture of what will happen based on what they have just seen. Or make two pictures: a) what should have happened? b) what will happen?

#### **CASE 4, STORY 4**

#### **Lesson Plan: Mazu**

##### Session 1

A1: Using Power-Points to introduce commonly seen and different gods and goddess, such as Goddess of Mercy, Kitchen God, Mazu (Goddess of Sea), Moniang (Mazu, before she became Goddess) and Mazu's temple.

A2: Story circle or story whoosh. I narrate story and the children enacted it in the circle. The narration is:

##### Narration:

Once upon a time, on an island in the East China Sea, there lived a fishing family Lin. In their house, there were middle-aged parents, their five daughters and one son. They were popular among their fellow villagers because they were always willing to help anyone in need. Mr and Mrs Lin were worried that if something should happen to the only male heir, the family line would break. Keeping a family line unbroken was a serious matter to the Chinese. Thus, the mother (choose one child to be a mother) prayed to Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy, for another boy.

*Mother: Guanyin Pusa, I make the plea here to ask for your mercy./ Please, let me have another baby boy.*

The father (choose one to be father), also prayed to Guanyin, side by side with his wife.

*Father: Guanyin Pusa.. If you grant our wish I promise I will go to the Buddhist temple to make donation/ and burn incense to you.*

One night, the wife dreamed that Guanyin Pusa gave her a pill and said to her (choose a child to be Guanyin):

*I know you are a good couple,/ and you deserve someone to carry on your good deeds/ when you are too old to do so. /Here is a pill of fertility. /Take it, and you will be pregnant.*

Mother then took this pill in her sleep! She opened her mouth wide open and lifted up her arm with an open palm, and the pill was on top of it. Then she swallowed the pill.

When she woke up, /she remembered the dream and looked at her stomach thinking loudly/: *Can I be pregnant?/* she says as she feels it! /

9 months later, the baby came. It was a baby girl (use a red shoulder cover holding as a baby). A strange phenomenon took place: a flash of red light shot across the room (child does this), followed by a fragrant draft of air (Children make the sound). She was not an ordinary baby girl.

A3: Divide children into groups with five or six children. Each group has to create a still image based on the allocated tasks.

a) The moment when baby girl Moniang was born.

- What did the surroundings look like when the girl was born?
- Who else might be in the room to witness her birth?
- How did those people feel when they saw the strange phenomenon?
- What kind of facial expression might they have to reveal their feeling?

b) Mr. & Mrs. Lin prayed to Guanyin Pusa, Goddess of Mercy for a baby boy.

- There must be Mr.& Mrs. Lin and Guanyin Pusa in your picture.
- How would the Chinese couple pray?
- How important was it for the Chinese couple to hav a baby boy?

c) Ms. Lin dreamt about Guanyin Pusa who handed her the pill of fertility.

- There must be Mrs. Lin and Guanyin Pusa in your picture.
- How did Guanyin Pusa look? How did she stand or sit?
- What facial expression might Mrs. Ling have when she dreamt this?
- Can you think of a way to show the audience that Mars. Lin was dreaming and receiving a pill from Guanyin in her dram?

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A4: Gather ideas from children about what made Moniang different from other children when she was born, in a good way. What would it be?

A5: Group children into five or six. Assign them 4 different places. The task is to show how Moning will react differently from the other children? How do they mark her as distinct from others in such a place as, 1) school, 2) Buddhist temple, 3) playground, 4) by the seashore.

A6: Storytelling.

The narration:

In the story I have, this baby girl was born quiet. She didn't cry at all. And she was born with dark skin. Because of her unusual quietness, her parents named her *Mo Niang*, which means quiet girl in Chinese.

Apart from being quiet, she was more pensive than other children. One day, *Mo Niang's* parents took her to the Buddhist temple where they prayed. The image of Guanying Pusa mesmerised the thoughtful young girl. Gazing at the saintly statue of Guanyin, *Mo Niang* gained spiritual revelation. Soon she became a devoted Buddhist.

One early morning, an elderly monk came to visit the Lin family. He asked to see *Mo Niang* and gave her a secret charm. This charm gave her two very special powers – what do you think they might have been? What secret charms would the monk write to *Mo Niang*? (open this one to the class)

The magic power *Mo Niang* gained from the monk was to tell the future and visit a place without physically being there.

A7: Narration and group work of 3 to physicalise the following plot

A: Mazu, B: Nun, C: everything or everyone else. Do a gesture to show clearly the story. Imagine it is a silent film.

One afternoon, *Mo Niang* was praying in her chamber when an elderly nun came asking for money for the poor.

When the nun was leaving *Mo Niang's* house, *Mo Niang* came out of her chamber saying:

*Sister, the sago trees in the convent where you're from are blossoming;/ can you bring one to me? /Please?*

The nun thought the girl was being naughty since the convent was miles away from here. /She felt annoyed /but she asked Mo Niang politely: How do you know?

Mo Niang answered: *I've just been there, and I saw the flowers on the cherry trees./ I didn't want to pick them without your permission.*

The nun shook her head in disbelief /and left to return to the convent. However, when she stepped into the garden of the convent, she was stunned to see the cherry trees full of colourful blooms. /She then realised that the little girl possessed exceptional powers of extrasensory perception./ Her amazement grew even greater when she turned around and saw *Mo Niang* standing behind her,/ asking for a flower, with a big smile. /

A8: Individual writing. Write down how Moniang use her magic power to harmful things but seem to be naughty.

## Session 2

A1: Warm up. Start with individual work. Children freeze as a fisher-man. Then they pair up to show that a mother is holding a baby girl who does not cry. Next, four people in a group show that Moniang prays to the Goddess of Mercy in the Buddhist temple. In the last one, eight people in a group show that a fishing boat meets hurricane in the sea.

A2: Learning song and movements. In my lesson, I choose a Chinese song related to sea life.

A3: Story circle or story whoosh.

## The narration

Mo Niang, was now a 15-year-old young woman. Mr. and Mrs Lin thought that she was of a very suitable age to get married.

Mrs. Lin said to Mo Niang: *I have asked the match maker to find you a very hard-working husband.*

Mo Niang's father then said: *I can tell you that this young lad is the best choice you*

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*can have ever made! He has his own fish-boat and own lands as well!*

*NO, Mo Niang replied. I don't like to be a married woman. Being single allows me to have much more time to devote myself to help other people who are in need.*

One summer day, Mo Niang went out with friends to have picnic in a sunny day. Mo Niang sat on the grass, and remained quiet, while her other friends were playing Granny the foot step.

Then, her friends invited Mo Niang:

*Mo Niang, come over here to play with us.*

*Well, I would prefer to have a walk to the lake on the other side of the bridge, Mo Niang said.*

Then, Mo Niang reached the end of the lake and then sat at the edge of it. The water was as clear as a mirror, so she could see her reflection distinctly. She pulled down her hair and began to tidy it up.

Suddenly, a Chinese dragon emerged from the water. Mo Niang was not scared away, but remained calm. This divine creature gave Mo Niang two bronze tablets with encrypted incantations inscribed on them.

Mo Niang held these two tablets and walked to her friends. One of her friend asked:

*What do they say on these two heavy stones?*

Mo Niang replied: *I don't know yet, but I will study them hard and make sense of them.*

A4: Collect descriptive words for Mo Niang

Collect words from children and write them down on a big piece of paper. I choose a word to start with to demonstrate body movements, and set it up as a model. I then ask volunteers to pose for the word accordingly, and ask the children how she stand; where does she put her hands?

A5: Then children pair up and they sculpt their partner with the words on the list.

A6: Writing exercise. What could be Moniang's magic power inscribed on the

two bronze tablets? Pair the children up and then discuss, and write them down on a piece of paper. Give instructions such as: if you are going to give Mo Niang a magic power, what would it be? This magic power is going to do good, so what magic power would suit this character?

A6: Monsters' Physicality. This is an exercise to represent the characters Sharpen Ears and Sharpen Eyes. Children practice with their facial expressions. I give instructions such as: can you make your eyes sharpen? How about your ears? Nose? Mouth? Tongue?

### Session 3

A1: Physical warm up. Children use their body to form their own monster. They pair up to do Sharpen Ears and Sharpen Eyes. They then form a group of four to do 'fisherman is haunted by monsters'.

A2: Use Mazu Hand puppet to do TiR. This TiR focuses on the symbolic meanings of dress colour and embroidered patterns on the dress.

- Red: when this colour is applied to the cloth, it symbolises the colour of wealth and life-giving.
- Yellow symbolises fame, progression and advancement.
- Green is the colour of life and spring.

The combination of red and green is therefore significant, and represents youth, since Mo Niang became the goddess in a very young age, 28-year-old.

- Peony (queen of flowers): wealth and distinction. Red peony is the most admired and valued. It symbolises maidenhood (unmarried woman)
- Clouds: good fortune and happiness, especially if there're more than one colour.
- Dragon: The Chinese dragon is a good-natured and benign creature, a symbol of natural male vigour and fertility, and also a symbol of the emperor.

A3: Short storytelling:

### Narration

By studying two bronze tablets from the Chinese dragon, Mo Niang's power was enhanced. She was able to exorcise the ghosts, averting disaster and curing

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diseases. However, these peaceful days ended when two monsters Sharpened Ears and Sharpened Eyes scared people who lived in Mo Niang's village. What sort of scary things would these two monsters do to the people? (*get some ideas from children first* )

A4: Pair work to create three still images. One person plays a fisherman, and the other plays Sharpen Ears.

- How does the fisherman react when he meets the monster?
- What happens between them next?
- What is the result of their encounter?

A5: Discussion. How would Mo Niang use her power to conquer these two monsters? Ask children to do pair discussion and then share their ideas with whole class.

A6: Still Image and then mini play. Group into five people and make sure there is one Mazu, two monsters and 2 fishermen. Children build up three images first, as they did in A4. Then they develop the images into a mini play. Group in 5. Mazu, 2 monsters, 2 fish-men. No props. Remind children how Moniang will use magic power to defeat the monsters. This will not involve physical contacts.

A7: Storytelling

### Narration

Mo Niang fought the two monsters with her silk scarf. Each time she shook the scarf, it called up a huge sandstorm, and sand blew into the demons' ears and eyes, rendering them powerless. Eventually, they surrendered to Mo Niang. With her healing power, she cleaned the sand out of their ears and eyes. The Sharpened Eyes and Sharpened Ears then took a sacred vow to assist Mo Niang in fighting other evil spirits.