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Acting It Out: Children Learning English Through Story-based Drama

by

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ABSTRACT

Acting It Out: Children Learning English Through Story-based Drama By Sabina Li-Yu Chang

The purpose of this study was to explore why and how stories and drama can encourage children's participation in class and also affect their learning of English as a foreign language in Taiwanese primary schools. The author takes a strong interest in both fields, English for Young Learners (EYL) and educational drama, and attempts to propose a solution, story-based drama, to two of the more common problems faced by teachers at primary level—mixed ability classes and limited teaching hours.

The key methodological approach was action research in a case study format, using mixed methods and gathering quantitative as well as qualitative data in order to evaluate the impact of the author's teaching on the children's English learning. The quantitative research data was gathered with the aid of questionnaires responded to by one hundred and nine teachers and thirty-two fifth graders, while the qualitative data was collected from interviews, participant observation, fieldnotes, journals, artefacts, and video and audio recordings.

Quantitative and qualitative data analyses revealed that the incorporation of stories and drama into the existing school curriculum was workable, and the story-based drama assisted the pupils to have greater participation in class and a higher degree of improvements than before in terms of their four language and non-verbal communication skills. This was corroborated by questionnaire results, interviewees' responses, the co-teacher's observations, and the pupils' written work.

The author recommends that a collaborative approach to curriculum design and research methodology could be adopted by teachers themselves or between teachers and researchers in order to stimulate more research on the use of story-based drama in similar contexts, while deepening our understanding of this resourceful teaching approach.

Keywords: young learner, educational drama, story, mixed ability teaching, English as a foreign language, action research, case study

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Working on a doctoral thesis is like having an uphill climb. The journey to the top of the mountain is not always smooth, and the pain and suffering seem indispensable, though, once in a blue moon, a glow of pleasure in finding something new or lovely may be felt along the way. And the content for climbers to reach mountain peaks will be only savoured at a later time as the sheer exhaustion has already worn them out. Despite considerable hardship, I, as one of those mountaineers metaphorically, have been well aware that I am not alone in the process of climbing/writing up. There are many who have been by my side, keeping me company all the way and bringing a smile to my face when I needed it the most. Without their unwavering support and great encouragement, I would not be able to get this far.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

“The effect of story—one might say, its ‘magic’—is to offer an infinite well of vicarious experience with the capacity to transport the reader/hearer beyond all boundaries of time, space, language, ethnicity, class or gender.” (Ruth Wajnryb)

Two stories, both influencing me to inquire into the use of drama and story in primary English teaching, need to be told before I start to present this research study. One story happened long ago when I first taught English in the primary school. The other was more recent and opened the door for me to the world of educational drama. Now, let the stories begin.

STORY ONE

Teddy was a nine-year-old boy whose English ability was very limited. No one wanted to sit next to him or pick him as a team member when playing games in the English class because he could never come up with a correct answer to win points for his team. I tried many ways to encourage the other children to work with him as a pair or in groups but all my attempts proved futile. He was still left alone if I allowed the children to choose their own group members and were the groups assigned by me, I would upset the other pupils. Even though Teddy was a little boy, he knew clearly that his classmates did not like him due to his poor performance in English. Gradually, he shied away from speaking English in class, always being the last to enter my class and always very hesitant to do so.

Teddy was not like this at the very beginning, though. He used to like English very much as it was a new subject and he found it interesting to learn a new language. He had normally been the first to run into my classroom, waiting excitedly for the class bell to ring. I felt frustrated with his change, not knowing what else I could do to help him until one day, two hand puppets I brought to class seemed to bring a twist to the whole situation. I used the puppets to act out a dialogue. The children had so much fun with them that at recess time many of them did not want to go out to play. Instead they gathered around me, asking if they could borrow my puppets. Much to my surprise, Teddy was among them. Standing in the outer circle, he looked at me with anticipation. I reached out my hands, passing him the puppets. His eyes brightened but the other children grumbled, "Why Teddy?" Ignoring all the moaning, Teddy walked to a corner of the classroom, sat down on the floor, and started to play with the puppets.

After putting away my teaching materials, I went to Teddy for a little chat. He handed me one puppet, asking me to practise the dialogue with him. He surprised me again by his ability to manipulate puppets and use different voices to speak for them. I also found that he spoke English better when talking through a puppet. Some other children were attracted by the way he played with the puppets and came to watch us. I asked who would like to act out the dialogue with Teddy and most of them put up their hands. I gave one of them my hand puppet, leaving them to take turns role-playing the dialogue with Teddy. From then on, he seldom suffered the same feelings of being left out in my class.

I noticed that the use of puppets made a difference to the children's learning; however, I was not quite sure why. It was not until 2003 that I had a clear picture that drama could solve my puzzle.

STORY TWO

At a summer camp in the year 2003, a group of high school students from different parts of Northern Taiwan who were at various levels of English proficiency, gathered together for five days to learn English through drama. Some of the participants had lived in English-speaking countries in their childhood and could speak the language very fluently. There were also some who lacked confidence in their English abilities and expressed fear of speaking it, and most of them were being taught English in a traditional manner at school; that is, their class time was mostly spent listening to their teachers explaining grammatical rules and analysing sentence structures. Rarely were they given chances to use English communicatively.

While in the summer camp, the students started from developing body awareness and spatial perception through a series of warm-up activities under the guidance of their drama teachers. They learned the concept of roles and scenes and did role-play with the aid of role cards. They also learned to create stories and improvise by using pictures, objects, narration, and still images. An English drama contest was held on the last day in which the participants needed to present a short play based on their improvisation work in the drama class.

As one of their English teachers, I stayed with the students till midnight for a couple of days and saw them having spirited discussions about how to present their plays in the contest. There were certainly some heated arguments during the discussion but a consensus could always be reached. They tried every possible way to make their play a better one—calling their friends for advice, asking the camp assistants to see them rehearse, consulting the teachers about the English usage. With the support from peers and teachers, those who said they would

never ever go on stage on the first day all volunteered to give a short English speech about themselves in the drama contest. Despite the fact that the number of prizes for the best performance was limited, the joy of successfully completing a task together was remarkable. One student told me, “I really enjoy the drama contest. It exhausted me but also gave me a sense of achievement. It was more rewarding than getting high scores in exams.” Several years later, I read a similar message in McCaslin’s (2005) words:

There is probably nothing that binds a group together more closely than the production of a play and no joy more lasting than the memory of a play in which all the contributions of all participants have dovetailed so well that each member of the group has had a share in its success. (p. 322)

For the students, learning English through drama was a brand new experience and so was it to me. That was the first time that I saw students work so autonomously and cooperatively. Different as their English abilities might be, each one of them could contribute their talent, feel engaged, committed and motivated in the process of learning. For some unknown reason, Teddy’s face kept sliding into my mind when I watched the drama contest. Maybe it was because those students with lower English language proficiency looked so confident on stage. Their smiles reminded me of the day when Teddy role-played with puppets. He smiled a similar smile. I started to wonder what effect drama would have on primary school children’s English learning.

1.1 Motivations for the Research

As an English teacher and teacher trainer in Taiwan for more than a decade, I have had direct observations of children’s English learning as well as first-hand

experience of working with primary English teachers. I have also witnessed how the craze for English learning has been spreading on this island and how it has led to the inclusion of English as a required course at primary level. This new educational policy, implemented in 2001, was intended to provide equal English learning opportunities for every child and enhance Taiwan's future global competitiveness. Over the years, the effects of introducing English to school children at an early age have still not been established conclusively, and yet a number of thorny issues have already emerged. As V. W. Chang (2007) indicates, these critical problems include:

- (a) non-uniformity in terms of the starting grade for English instruction,
- (b) lack of qualified English teachers in many cities and counties,
- (c) recruitment of native speakers of English to assist teaching in remote areas, and
- (d) heterogeneity of students' proficiency in the primary English class. (p. 67)

Among the above problems, what may cause the most concern for teachers is their pupils' varying English proficiency levels which means that they are "constantly challenged by the questions: WHO to teach, WHAT to teach and HOW?" (p. 71). Placing students of different English levels in the same class is likely to result in "the self-perceived superiority of the more proficient students and the loss, however gradual, of self-confidence among the slower learners" (p. 72). I have been attempting to find a workable way to overcome this teaching difficulty. Seeing the engagement of the students in the summer camp in learning English through drama and being part of it myself shed some light on the problem. The summer camp experience not only brought me to England for my postgraduate study but also motivated me to explore the possibility of integrating drama and story into teaching children English at primary schools in Taiwan.

1.2 Purpose of the Thesis and Research Questions

The purpose of this action research study is to examine the use of story-based drama in teaching children English as a foreign language and its impact on their learning process. I sought to implement a new pedagogical approach to solve the problems of mixed-ability classes and bring about change in children's English learning. This research addresses the following key questions:

1. In what ways does story-based drama affect children's learning English as a foreign language?
2. In what ways does story-based drama encourage children's participation in class?

1.3 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One gives a general introduction to the thesis. Chapter Two depicts the background information about primary English education in Taiwan and identifies the problems that teachers currently encounter when teaching children English at school. Chapter Three presents a review of literature relating to theories and studies on characteristics of young learners, factors influencing foreign language teaching and learning, the evolution of educational drama, the relationship between drama and oracy, literacy, and paralinguistic communication, and the role of stories in language teaching to children. Chapter Four focuses on the methodology and methods used to collect and analyse data. It sets out briefly to examine qualitative paradigms, quantitative paradigms, and mixed methods research. Action research and case study are then discussed in detail and their relations to this research project are outlined. This chapter also explains how I designed and conducted the baseline

study and two action research cycles. Chapter Five consists of an analysis of collected data. The presentation of the results is a combination of qualitative data, quantitative data, and narrative explanation. Chapter Six, the final chapter of the thesis, provides a summary of the whole study, describes implications derived from the findings, and makes suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

PRIMARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN TAIWAN

2.0 Introduction

The process of language acquisition is complicated and never takes place in a vacuum. For fear of losing the sight of the bigger picture, the background information about primary English education will be introduced first, and then two serious problems that teachers in Taiwan currently encounter when teaching children English at school will be brought into sharp focus. Lastly, the major controversy over whether to have more native speaking English teachers in Taiwan is going to be discussed at the end of the chapter.

2.1 The Evolution of Language Policy

The use of languages reflects the dynamic process of social change in a country. Language planning activity, according to Halliday (1990), fulfils an “institutional” function, which regulates “what languages to use for what purposes in the community and how to ensure that people in the community have access to the languages they want” (p. 9). It may be argued that under repressive and undemocratic regimes, people’s access to languages is normally restricted to the ones designated by the government rather than the ones they truly desire. Apart from this, Halliday has formulated a tenable view of language planning and language policies as they indeed provide an institutional framework for the teaching of official languages, vernacular languages, and foreign languages in a country. Language policies and language planning are intimately related. Ho and Wong (2004) made it clear that the determining factors of “the nature of a

country's language education system are dependent on the priorities that each country has set for itself" (p. 1). The priorities, as Ho and Wong contend, may include eliminating illiteracy, establishing national unity, maintaining a national culture and identity, and boosting economy. In the past century or more, Taiwan has undergone three major political shifts—Japanese Colonisation, the administration of the Nationalist government, and full democratisation in 1987 after the lifting of martial law. Each phase is characterised by the changes in deliberate planning and implementation of language policies and is also a reflection of different priorities in various socio-economic contexts.

In 1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan as part of the Treaty of Shimonoseki and became Japan's first colony in history. Language policy during Japanese colonial rule, as P. Chen (2001) mentioned, "served the purpose of alienating the local population from their ancestral and cultural roots in mainland China" (p. 108). Soon after the occupation, it was declared by Isawa Shuji, the first Chief of the Education Bureau of the colonial government that the top priority for Taiwan's education should be given to its people's acquisition of the Japanese language. Japanese colonialism was aimed to turn Taiwanese people into docile subjects of the emperor and assimilate Taiwanese people fully into Japanese culture so its language was designated as the national one and the medium of school instruction to fulfil that goal (Su, 2005). Students who used languages other than Japanese in schools would receive corporal punishment. With the spread of Japanese education island wide, an entire generation of Taiwanese people was deprived of the abilities to communicate in Chinese for formal purpose (P. Chen & Gottlieb, 2001, pp. 16-17).

Following Japan's World War II defeat in 1945, Taiwan was returned to the

sovereignty of the Republic of China. The new political landscape had a profound effect on language policies and planning. The control of language once again became one of the major measures for the government to consolidate its power and create representations of its legitimacy. Tsao (1999) indicated that Taiwan's language education policies during the regime under the nationalist government rule have been closely affected by (1) nationalism and national unification and (2) modernisation and economic growth (p. 350). In 1946 the Taiwan Provincial Committee for the Promotion and Propagation of the National Language was established. Strict measures were taken in the promoting of Mandarin, the national language. The use of Japanese was completely banned "in order to eradicate the Japanese influence in Taiwan" (Tsao, 1999, p. 340). The historical development turned Taiwan into a region containing diverse ethnolinguistic groups. Hence, the Nationalist government placed high priority on unifying the language for fear that the great diversity of languages would hinder national unification. In 1960s, monolingualism was prevalent on the island. All indigenous languages were banned from use in public. It was also prohibited to use foreign language (i.e. English) in cinemas, flyers, and public notices.

The National Language Movement in Taiwan reached its peak in 1970s to 1987. The government put substantial funding and effort into strengthening Mandarin education and increasing people's interest in speaking Mandarin. Tough measures adopted, the promotion of Mandarin was thorough and successful. What contributed to the triumph of the National Language Movement was not only the effective implementation of strategic language planning but also the growth of nationalism, which brought serious effects on the use of foreign

languages. Take English for example. Although its importance had been widely recognised in belief of English as the key to the world of science and technology, English instruction did not take the centre stage in the education system. This is because it was a time when Taiwan was still under authoritarian rule and a concern about learning English was raised that its spread might impede the development of nationalism (Tsao, 2004). English was taught to students in high school and the first year of college but its role was never emphasised. In his articles, Tsao (1999) used a national survey done by Sedlak in 1974-1976 as a concrete instance to show that the teaching of English was of minor importance during the martial law period. Sedlak's survey report pointed out some major flaws in English education in Taiwan but little attention was received from the media or the authorities concerned. Moreover, Tse's reanalysis of Sedlak's survey data in 1979 faithfully reflected the situation of secondary English teaching in those days and pinpointed a number of shortcomings. Some of his findings included inadequately trained English teachers, low availability of in-service training, insufficient teaching hours, overemphasis on grammar and translation, poor use of audiovisual aids and limited English contact outside school. Despite this report calling for urgent action to improve English instruction at secondary level, the government reacted to the suggestions with lukewarm response. Consequently, English teaching, Tsao claims (1999), stayed almost the same for nearly a score of years after the survey was done.

Subsequent to the lifting of martial law in 1987, Taiwan was released from an almost 40-year period of one party dominance and leapt forward to a pluralistic society in which freedom of speech, of press and publication, and of association are increasingly respected. The political emancipation has been

beneficial for Taiwan's economy. Following a rapid economic growth in 1980s, Taiwan's government and people began to take a more pragmatic view towards English, the world's major language for international communication. There was a growing need for learning English which could not be met within the limited class hours in schools. As a result, a large number of private language centres for English instruction sprung up to fill this gap in 1980s. The growing popularity of English language, as Graddol (2006) asserted, has led to a fact that "English learners are increasing in number and decreasing in age" (p. 10). The burgeoning market for chain schools teaching English to children was established in mid 1980s since English was not taught at primary level. Many survey reports have also shown a high percentage of young children receiving English instruction outside of the mainstream classroom before English was made compulsory in primary schools (S.-C. Chen, 1996).

Fully aware of the importance of English to Taiwan, an island state with heavy reliance on international trade, the government started to implement a series of measures to transform its English education. The teaching of English, once a side issue in language policy thanks to nationalism, has now become high on the agenda. In *Challenge 2008*, a six-year national development plan, the government put much emphasis on enhancing its people's English proficiency and it is explicitly stressed as follows:

This project emphasizes the ability to master foreign languages, especially English, and the use of Internet. Since English is the language that links the world, the government should designate English as a quasi-official language and actively expand the use of English as a part of daily life. (Government Information Office, 2002)

Of all measures taken to promote English learning, introducing English to

primary school students is the most influential one. According to S.-C. Hsieh (2001) , the evolution of primary English policies can be divided into the following four phases.

Phase One (1987-1992)—*English learning booming in private language institutions.* After the lifting of martial law, the buds of pluralism in language policies started to appear. It was suggested by experts and scholars that English be introduced to primary school children. Many parents in urban areas would give their children a head start in learning English by sending them to private language centres.

Phase Two (1993-1998)—*Regional trial schemes being carried out.* Pupils from more than two hundred primary schools were offered the chance to learn English in extracurricular settings. Primary English teaching, either led by the local bureau or initiated by schools, was carried out on a trial basis. There was a divergence from school to school in terms of teacher recruitment, teacher training, curriculum design and teaching materials.

Phase Three (1998-2001)—*The government assuming an active role in English language planning.* The Ministry of Education sought the views and advice of the experts, general public, and other stakeholders regarding the teaching of English in primary schools and played an active part in English curriculum planning and primary English teacher development.

Phase Four (2001-present)—*Primary English education being implemented nationwide.* In 2001, English was incorporated into the formal curriculum of fifth- and sixth-year primary school students according to the new General Guidelines of Grade 1-9 Curriculum. In 2005, the MOE extended English learning to the third and above, responding to the widespread call of the public.

The real scenario of English teaching at primary level, nonetheless, may be described as the “One nation, different practices” phenomenon. Although the central government provides overall leadership in policy formation and planning, the local authorities have jurisdiction over the implementation of policies. As a result, the age for beginning the learning of English varied greatly from school to school and place to place. According to a survey released by the National Teacher’s Association and Citigroup in 2003, only 10 percent of the 1004 polled primary schools started English courses in the fifth grade in compliance with the national policy. The MOE mandate notwithstanding, the vast majority began English lessons much earlier. Statistics show that in nearly 70 percent of schools, English was taught to the first or second graders ("Primary English teaching," 2003). The chaotic situation was also exacerbated by an immense disparity in the distribution of educational resources between urban and rural schools. While primary schools in urban areas were competing to introduce English to younger age groups, rural schools were still facing difficulties in recruiting enough qualified English teachers for the fifth-graders ("Education chiefs moving to improve English," 2002).

What threw current primary English teaching into disarray may be attributed to two factors. Firstly, the low birth rate has led to dwindling pupil and class numbers in many areas. Under the pressure of competition, primary schools endeavour to develop their English curriculum because schools with sufficient resources to implement English teaching and learning have the edge in attracting and retaining pupils. As a consequence, the availability of resources and qualified English teachers is a more decisive factor than the national policy on when to start English education. Secondly, in an elective democracy, local chiefs,

intently seeking re-elections, will do their utmost to win the hearts of voters and attract publicity. English teaching especially to young learners, as a currently hot issue in Taiwan, would certainly be top of the list for local authorities so more and more local governments are joining the race to bring down the age of English learning for school children. English education in Taiwan is a highly political issue. As a result, no government officials will endanger their political career by running against the growing trend of giving children an early start in English education.

2.2 Introducing English to Primary School Children

2.2.1 Teaching Problems

■ Mixed Ability English Classes

One of the knotty problems that most primary English teachers in Taiwan have been wrestling with is teaching children with various English learning backgrounds in the same class (V. W. Chang, 2006a; Chu, 2005). Many parents in Taiwan hold that the earlier their children learn English, the more competitive they will be. Some even insist that their children cannot afford to be behind at the starting point for competition among peers is always intense. It is, therefore, a logical move that parents of higher socio-economic status send their young to private language centres at very young ages and these children would continuously receive extra English lessons after school as they grow older. In contrast, those who are socially and economically disadvantaged can hardly do anything but wait until their children enter the public school system to be provided with English instruction. It is a formidable challenge for English teachers to have pupils who have learned English for several years and pupils

who are barely beginners, not to mention the fact that children transferring from time to time between schools which start English education with different age groups further complicate the teacher's job.

It is not uncommon to see children with higher level of language proficiency respond to their teachers half-heartedly since they have already learned what they are taught, mostly if not completely, outside school. For those who fall behind, they find the lesson beyond their grasp so their minds wander. This results in a low level of student participation in class and intensifies teachers' frustration. In her paper on primary English teachers' perceptions of English language policy, Su (2005) interviewed ten teachers and all of them opined that a class with students of diverse levels of English proficiency "places a heavy burden on them" (p. 278). One of her interviewees expressed her views on mixed-ability classes as follows:

Mixed-ability students made it difficult for me to plan lessons. Every time I teach, there are always some students who tell me that they have learned skills or materials before from the private language institutions. For example, when I teach students how to pronounce and print upper case and lower case at grade 2, some of my students tell me that they have already learned them. They can even recognize some vocabulary and read some simple stories. On the other hand, others have learned little ... It took me a lot of time to determine what to teach and how to teach it. (Su, 2005, p. 278)

Some may suggest ability grouping as the cure mainly because it allows teachers to tailor instruction to individual student levels and thus ease the burden of teaching. Despite a plethora of studies conducted to evaluate the effects of ability grouping, it is still hard to draw a firm conclusion about whether or not ability grouping is beneficial to children's learning and development. After reviewing a vast amount of related studies, Gregory (1984) found that research

evidence concerning the efficacy of grouping in both secondary and primary levels is highly equivocal and inconclusive. A similar claim was made by Loveless. As he puts it, the research concerning ability grouping “is frequently summarized in one word: inconclusive” (Loveless, 1998). There are pros and cons in grouping students by ability for instruction, and opinions are widely divided. Researchers in favour of homogeneous grouping argue that it promotes the academic achievement of high ability students and boosts slow learners’ self-esteem and their learning as well (Kulik, 1985). At the opposite extreme, other researchers claim that no clear trend has been observed with regard to its superiority over mixed-ability grouping in most studies, whereas a number of negative results have been identified. For instance, ability grouping affects low-achievers’ self-esteem and motivation to learn well; moreover, it perpetuates class and racial inequalities and intensifies parental competition (Oakes, 1992; Slavin, 1988; Wheelock, 1993).

In Taiwan, ability grouping is a loaded word as a result of the negative connotations from the past. Students in junior high schools used to be streamed in accordance with their academic abilities. A classic case is that the classes for low achievers were often labelled as “cowherd classes,” a derogatory name implying that no proper guidance in school work would be offered to this group of outcast students simply because they were academically incompetent. Hence, the phrase, ability grouping, has always been cast a shadow over it in the society. Although many primary English teachers in Taiwan show a preference for streamed teaching, the negative public impression of ability grouping allows little space for its implementation. To remedy the situation, a much more flexible ability grouping, which is not solely dependent on students’ academic

achievement, may be a practical and workable solution to the problem, only if the new grouping system works on a voluntary basis. In her thesis on the implementation of flexible ability grouping in the primary school, Chiang (2003) presented a workable model which has been trialled for five years in a primary school in Taiwan with positive results. In the trial project, the students are not streamed completely according to placement test scores. Pupils and their parents are also entitled to choose which group they think appropriate to attend based on their learning backgrounds and interests. They are able to transfer to another group in the mid-term if the chosen group does not match their English proficiency levels or learning needs. In other words, a consensus on grouping is reached by all the parties involved; in doing so, the labelling effect is reduced to the minimum degree. The success of flexible ability grouping in the aforementioned research indeed offers a possible solution to the teaching problem caused by students' mixed levels of proficiency. It is also suggested in the recently amended General Guidelines of Grades 1-9 English Curriculum that ability grouping and remedial teaching should be adopted to cater for the needs of students with a wide range of English fluency levels. That said, to implement ability grouping is an arduous task and a substantial increase in the administrative workload often puts obstacles in the way of schools managing to incorporate it into English teaching. Consequently, it will remain a challenge for primary English teachers to teach mixed ability classes.

■ **Limited English Teaching Hours**

Limited hours for primary English instruction is one of the most mentioned teaching difficulties in Taiwan. In most primary schools, two 40-minute English lessons are given on two separate days weekly during the two 20-week semesters

in a school year. In schools where there is a shortage of qualified English teachers, lower grade children can only receive one English lesson per week. It is no easy task to teach English effectively with such limited time available. Careful scrutiny of the allocation of time for each English lesson would reveal that the goal of English fluency is hardly achievable. Classroom management activities such as greetings, taking attendance, giving instructions, making announcement, disciplining, or distributing and collecting assignments, can easily take up a quarter of the class period. In the remaining thirty minutes, teachers need not merely to recap on the previous lesson but to teach new phonic rules, vocabulary words, sentence patterns, dialogues, stories, songs or chants. Above all, teachers have to exploit games or activities frequently in teaching so as to keep children engaged throughout the session. If teachers talk for half the time in this thirty-minute period with thirty pupils in every class, each one of the students gets only thirty seconds to speak. Assuming that a pupil is offered formal English education from the first grade, there are, in total, 326 hours of English language instruction after six years of study, in which only 4 hours are for true communication in English. Compared with young first-language learners, who, at Lightbown's (1985) conservative estimate, may have spent about 12,000 to 15,000 hours by the age of six "acquiring" their mother tongue, the total number of hours of English instruction that Taiwanese pupils can get at school is far from sufficient. Lightbown emphasises that acquiring a language "cannot be done exclusively in a classroom—even in a classroom where the perfect magical balance between form and function, structure and communication, has been struck" (p. 179). In a similar vein, Nunan (2003) and McKay (2002) have pointed out that it requires more than the limited hours of instruction in state school

contexts to make significant progress in foreign language learning.

There is no doubt that frequency of contact is a key factor in effective foreign language learning. Singleton and Ryan (2004) underscore that “Exposure time per se is widely recognised as a crucial factor in differentiating levels of language proficiency” (p. 201) Nevertheless, opinions are polarised on whether to increase the hours of English lessons or not. Those who are not in favour of adding more sessions in English teaching assert that it will place too much learning burden on children. In response to the growing sense of Taiwanese identity, pupils have been required to study at least one local language (i.e. Taiwanese, Hakka, and Aboriginal languages) under the new Nine-Year Curriculum of Junior High and Elementary School Education since 2001. The emphasis on both “internationalization” and “indigenization” in the present language-in-education policy has been embodied in the implementation of English curriculum and vernacular education (M. Scott & Tiun, 2007). At the present time, children need to learn at least three different languages at the same time at school. All the language courses are competing for the limited teaching hours available. As the Taipei Times article "Lawmakers worry about a 'decline' in Mandarin" (Lin, 2006) reported, concerns are being raised about students falling short in their Mandarin abilities, resulting from the Ministry of Education's promoting English and native language education. According to a legislator in the news report, 72 to 96 hours of Mandarin classes had been cut since the education reforms began. V. W. Chang (2006b), the Chair of English Department, National Taiwan Normal University, argues that the overemphasis on English instruction may be counterproductive and at the cost of children's learning in other curriculum and development of life skills. He urges a

comprehensive evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of the current English curriculum, questioning if the payoff is worth all the time, money, and effort invested in studying English at such a young age. In Taiwan, where English is being learned as a foreign language and hardly used outside school, the difficulty in meeting the curriculum goals will still remain even though class hours are extended to three or four per week (V. W. Chang, 2002). In his article about the impact of English as a global language in the Asia-Pacific region, Nunan (2003) investigated the educational policies and practices in seven countries including Taiwan. He concludes, “These countries are investing considerable resources in providing English, often at the expense of other aspects of the curriculum, but the evidence suggests that these resources are not achieving the instructional goals desired” (p. 610).

On the contrary, Oladejo (2006) argues that there is a lack of strong research evidence to support the above claims and, at the same time, calls attention to societal participation and parental consultation regarding language policy issues. In his questionnaire survey with 1160 Taiwanese parents, about half of the participants disagreed that foreign language learning is inimical to mother tongue acquisition. Only less than one-third of the parents (26.9%) agreed with the view that foreign language learning has a negative effect on the mother tongue. According to Oladejo, there is a need to expand the teaching of and children’s exposure to English so that their communicative competence in the language can be accelerated.

Schools in Taiwan have been desperate to maximize the pupils’ exposure to English under the constraint of limited teaching hours. As suggested by Linse (2005), teachers should display as much environmental print as possible. In a

print-rich environment children are able to “interact with many forms of print, including signs, labeled centers, wall stories, word displays, labelled murals, bulletin boards, charts, poems, and other printed materials” (Kadlic & Lesiak, 2003, p. 38). It is believed that displays of meaningful visuals in the physical environment is conducive to peripheral learning because people perceive much more in the environment than from that on which their attention is consciously focused (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Consequently, in almost every primary school, bilingual signs, posters and decorations with English words and sentences can be seen everywhere.

Some schools choose one day in a week to be “English Day” on which children are encouraged to use English more frequently (L. Wu, 2007). Others broadcast English songs, storytelling or dialogues during break time in the hope that pupils can increase the amount of their English aural input in a fun and relaxing atmosphere (see S.-L. Wang, 2006 for example).

A more expensive way to provide children with a wider exposure to English is by setting up “English villages.” As English villages are growing in popularity in Korea and Japan in recent years (Krashen, 2006; O, 2004), Taiwan has followed suit by turning idle classrooms into a learning environment with simulations of airports, customs, flight cabins, banks, restaurants, supermarkets, and other real-life locations where pupils can immerse themselves in English by using it in various contexts. The first English village in Taiwan, costing about US\$ 1 million dollars, was inaugurated in 2007 with a Boeing fuselage donated by a local airline, allowing students to practise English to disembark from the aeroplane and go through a customs checkpoint (Hirsch, 2007). The village offers one-day, two-day, and one-week programmes for students to experience

living in an English-speaking country without leaving Taiwan at great travel expense. With the booming of the English villages around the country, Chinese Nationalist Party presidential candidate Ma Ying-Jeou was determined to create a national English village, modelled upon South Korea's experience, to coordinate activities among English villages in different corners in Taiwan (F. Wang, 2007).

Applying the notion of simulation in English villages to daily life in communities, Kaohsiung City Government Education Bureau launched an "English-friendly stores" project, offering students different real life situations to practise English listening and speaking skills (F. Wang, 2008). The bureau has awarded 23 businesses an "English-friendly mark," including fast food restaurants, bookstores, cafés, clinics, and convenience stores. Pupils can receive discounts as positive reinforcement if they make an effort to talk in English with the employees, entitled "English-friendly ambassadors" in the awarded stores. Teachers can additionally organise field trips to the stores to increase opportunities for pupils to use more English in real-life scenarios.

Whether the aforementioned measures can achieve the desired effect may still need further evaluations. Nonetheless, a clear message conveyed in these attempts is that creating meaningful contexts for language use is crucial to language learning. While it takes tremendous efforts, resources, and money to set up simulations of real-life situations outside of classrooms, it is worth a thought to contextualise the learning tasks in class.

2.2.2 Native Speaking English Teachers in Taiwan

Faced with an insufficient supply of qualified local primary English teachers, the Ministry of Education sought help from native English-speaking teachers. A

plan to recruit 1,000 foreign English teachers was revealed in January 2003 (C. Hsu, 2003) and immediately turned an already worsening unemployment situation into an eruption of protests and criticism. The employment rate for graduates of teachers college, according to a professor from National Taipei Teachers College, had dropped from 100% to 50 % within only a couple of years (Y.-P. Chang, 2003b). The MOE's large-scale employment of foreigners at state-run primary and high schools, as a result, brought on dissenting voices from local teachers. Lawmakers from across party lines also questioned the proposed plan and raised concerns that hiring foreign English teachers would crowd their domestic counterparts out of jobs (C. Hsu, 2003). Members of the ministry's English Education Advisory Committee were unanimous in their objection to the plan, arguing that hiring foreign English teachers was no "panacea" for the problem of Taiwan's English education and the challenges of globalisation. They furthermore pointed out that the plan would "do more harm than good for primary-level education" and "would ultimately fail" (Y.-P. Chang, 2003a).

In response to the increasing pressure of public opinion, the then Minister of Education, Huang Jong-Tsun, stressed that most of the foreign English teachers would be teaching in rural areas to provide students in remote schools with "better access to a decent English education and better opportunities to compete with urban students" (D. Wu, 2003). Trying to ease the local teachers' fear of losing job security, Huang added that they were still going to be the main teaching force in class where their foreign counterparts would only play an "auxiliary role" and not replace them (C. Hsu, 2003).

In stark contrast to the disputes arising over the practicality of the MOE's plan to introduce foreign English staff to public primary schools, the inclusion of

native English-speaking teachers into the language course has been a common practice in private language centres for decades. Having English as a mother tongue, nonetheless, does not necessarily guarantee a teaching position or employment in private language schools. Due to the strong preference shown by quite a few parents for white teachers, school administrators routinely advertise for Caucasian English teachers and a North American accent is a definite plus. A newspaper article entitled “English teachers wanted: must look Western” mentions that many schools feel “unapologetic” about their hiring policy, adding “a white face is needed to placate parents’ demands” (Jan, 2000). Surprisingly, the discrimination in hiring based on national origins was also seen in the job description for foreign teachers proposed by the MOE. According to the ministry’s initial recruiting plan, only teachers from America, the UK, Canada, and Australia will be recruited (“Foreign teacher plan is unveiled,” 2003). The ministry objected to importing foreign teachers from the Philippines and India in spite of the fact that they hold both university degrees and teacher’s certificates and are willing to work for about half the wage of their European and American counterparts. The reason is that they come from countries where English is not the native language and people have “non-native” accents (“Ministry cool to teachers from India, Philippines,” 2003). Although the criticism gradually ceased with the MOE’s announcement of the details of its adapted recruitment plan in March 2003, saying it would accept applicants of Indian and Philippine origin with “outstanding qualifications” from the four aforementioned countries (“Foreign teacher plan is unveiled,” 2003), it is clearly evident how popular the stereotype of “the native speaker fallacy” is in Taiwan.

The term, “the native speaker fallacy,” was used by Phillipson (1992) to

describe one of the tenets of ELT formulated in the Commonwealth Conference on the Teaching of English as a Second Language, held at Makerere, Uganda, in 1961. The conference aimed to “provide at all levels qualified teachers who are indigenous to the country where the teaching takes place.” As qualified local staff was in short supply, there would be a long-term need for expatriate teachers from the English-speaking countries. Hence, “they should be employed increasingly as teacher trainers or university lecturers rather than as school teachers in schools, since the world demand is so great that the so-called ‘resource countries’ may not be able much longer to provide a substantial supply of school teachers” (quoted in Phillipson, 1992, p. 184). Five tenets underlying many suggestions made at the conference were drawn up and re-designated as fallacies by Phillipson (1992) as follows:

- English is best taught monolingually. (the monolingual fallacy)
- The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker. (the native speaker fallacy)
- The earlier English is taught, the better the results. (the early start fallacy)
- The more English is taught, the better the results. (the maximum exposure fallacy)
- If other languages are used much, standards of English will drop. (the subtractive fallacy) (p. 185)

Phillipson concludes that the abovementioned fallacies have been manipulated to benefit the Centre (the powerful Western countries) and reinforce an ideological dependence in the Periphery (the less-developed countries). What lies behind these notions, as Canagarajah (1999) puts it, is in fact “hidden economic, ideological, and political motivations” (p. 82) rather than better qualifications for teaching English. The reason that makes teaching English their birthright, as Phillipson points out, may include the native speakers’ intrinsic grasp of their

native language—fluency, pronunciation, idiomatic usage, appreciation of the cultural connotations, which entitles them to be “the final arbiter of the accessibility of any given samples of the language” (p. 194).

Sir Randolph Quirk (1990), one of the main protagonists of Standard English, advocates for the indispensable guidance of the native speakers on teaching and learning English in that the learners’ “command of Standard English is likely to increase their freedom and their career prospects” (p. 7) . To ensure that teachers and the taught always have access to Standard English, Quirk maintains that they should have native teacher support and keep in constant contact with native language. Taking more or less an identical position as that of Quirk, people in many countries of the “Expanding Circle” consider native speakers of English as a valuable source of authentic language data. The Expanding Circle is one of the three concentric circles of World Englishes labelled by Braj B. Kachru (1992a), referring to regions where English is learned as a foreign language and mainly used for international contacts rather than intranational communication. The other two circles include the Inner Circle and the Outer Circle (or Extended Circle). The former consists of countries in which English is the first language of most of the inhabitants, such as the U.S., the U.K., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The latter exemplifies “the institutionalized non-native varieties (ESL)” in former colonies of English speaking countries such as India, Philippines and Singapore (Kachru, 1992b). In her article exploring the role of teachers in primary English education, Butler (2003) found learners in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan tend to favour English teachers from selected countries in the Inner Circle. The chance is slim for teachers from the regions of the Outer Circle to find a teaching position even though they have

attained native-like proficiency. It is likely that the lack of a sense of “their Englishes,” as Butler (2003, p. 6) reported, blinds learners in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan; as a result, they take it for granted that native speakers of English are the owners of English and should be the ideal language models.

With English implanted around the world during western colonisation, the development of varieties of English in postcolonial regions, described by Kachru (1991) as “the recognition of pluricentricity and multi-identities” (p. 4), has blurred the line between native speakers and non-native speakers of English. It is certainly arguable for the policy makers to insist on introducing native speaking teachers only from the Centre or the Inner Circle to the primary educational system in Taiwan without sufficient linguistic and pedagogical justification. Having no clear ideas about what exact role the native speaking teachers are able to play in English education at the primary level, the Taiwanese government is risking creating more problems than it can expect to solve. For instance, the proposed wage for the native English teachers ranges from NT\$60,000 to NT\$90,000 per month, which is twice as much as the salary of local English teachers (Mo, 2005b). This significant difference in payment, as Butler (2003) rightly puts it, can easily create a psychological barrier between both parties, which prevents them perceiving their roles in the classroom in an objective way and may further hinder effective collaboration. A deficiency of coordination with the domestic teachers may reduce foreign English teachers’ roles to merely “living recorders” whose only function is, in Shi’s words, to “regurgitate native-English pronunciation” (Y.-P. Chang, 2003a).

The ministry’s large-scale recruitment project failed to meet its original objectives. Aiming at hiring 1000 foreign English teachers in 2003, the ministry

later trimmed the number down to 400, and yet, only 40 job vacancies were filled in 2006. According to Bishop (2006), not generous enough was the offer of competitive salaries, house stipends, medical benefits and free tickets to and from Taiwan to attract foreign teachers to contract to work in the more rural areas. Few of those who have started teaching would like to renew their contracts. More still have left Taiwan before their contract ended. In order to seek a solution to the problem of teacher shortage, the ministry even declared that they did not rule out the possibility of having uncertified foreign teachers to teach English in Taiwan (Mo, 2005a). The changes in the plan and the unsatisfactory results of recruitment have shown clear evidence that the ministry made a hasty decision which involved no overall approach to dealing with the problem of insufficient teacher supply. Many local and foreign English teachers believed that placing native speaking English teachers in the classroom was a “band-aid solution,” which did not address directly the problem (Freundl, 2004). In Freundl’s interview with Tim Conway, the Director of English Learning Services at the British Council, Conway suggests that local English teachers should be the key stakeholders in terms of the long-term development for they are at a vantage point allowing them to have a better understanding about the curriculum, the learners, and what really goes on in school.

2.3 Summary

In this chapter, we have seen that the vicissitudes of Taiwanese society, undergoing rapid and drastic changes in the political and economic respects, have made significant impacts on the evolution of its language policy. Under Japanese colonial rule and KMT’s one-party dominance, policies towards language

principally served political ends; the real needs of people for language learning were either obviated or subjugated to the needs of the nation. It was not until Taiwan had transformed into a nascent democracy in 1987 that the individual needs for learning a foreign language, English specifically, could be partially met by the educational institutions in the private sector, and after a while, a growing demand from society forced both the local authorities and the central government to implement English education at the primary level. Since compulsory education has been falling behind the competition with private education, and is only able to meet the basic requirements, mixed ability classes plus limited teaching hours, thus, are the two main problems that English teachers in primary schools in Taiwan have to struggle with every day. Occasionally, they still have to worry about those native speakers of English, brought in by the government policy who vie for the same teaching jobs. Notwithstanding efforts being made to end those thorny problems and the aforementioned fierce controversy, optimal solutions seem difficult to obtain. As a result, a story-based drama approach to teaching primary English, intended to contribute towards solving those difficulties, is proposed and will be clearly laid out in the following chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

There has been a long heated debate, for decades, among linguists and educators over the optimal age for learning a second language. Opinions are widely divided. Some advocate an early start, some claim older is better, and still some others hold that language can be learned at any age. The arguments are diverse as they draw on different observations in various contexts. Early second language instruction was strongly advised by the neurologists Wilder Penfield and Lamar Roberts (1959), an assertion derived mainly from their observation of brain damage at differing age levels. They argued that “a biological clock” (p. 237) ticks away as far as the human brain’s capacity for learning language is concerned, and “the human brain becomes progressively stiff and rigid after the age of nine” (p. 236). The reasons for children to successfully acquire their first language at home are the results of their brains being physiologically “plastic” (p. 240) and their “psychological urge” (p. 241), which allows them to learn language as “a means to other ends, a vehicle, and a way of life” (p. 257). They further suggested that second language curricula at school should be designed in accordance with the evolution of the functional capacity in the brain, namely, starting in the first decade of life; otherwise, it becomes difficult for late beginners to attain a satisfactory result in picking up new languages “because it is un-physiological” (p. 255).

A similar notion about first language acquisition was promoted by Lenneberg (1967), who used the different recovery patterns from traumatic

aphasia for adult patients and children in asserting that physical maturation is influential in shaping language development. Before puberty, as he explains:

... the individual appears to be most sensitive to stimuli at this time and to preserve some innate flexibility for the organization of brain functions to carry out the complex integration of subprocesses necessary for the smooth elaboration of speech and language. (p. 158)

After puberty, however, the efficiency level of the human brain's language acquisition function declines so significantly that "basic language skills not acquired by that time, except for articulation, usually remain deficient for life" (p. 158). The time constraints for language acquisition capacity, in Lenneberg's conclusion, are a result of brain lateralisation and hence the time span between two years of age and puberty was marked as a "critical period" for language acquisition. Although Lenneberg's main focus of attention in this book was on the innate human ability to acquire first language from being merely exposed to a given language, he also made it clear that most people with normal faculties are capable of learning a second language after puberty. Given that much effort should be devoted to learning foreign languages in an analytical and conscious way and foreign accents may be evident in the speech, he affirmed that "a person *can* learn to communicate in a foreign language at the age of forty" (p. 176).

Notwithstanding the fact that Lenneberg's Critical Period Hypothesis was challenged by later empirical research regarding issues such as the cutoff point of lateralisation, or the relationship between cerebral dominance and second language acquisition (Krashen, 1973, 1981; Lamendella, 1977), his advocacy of early age exposure to second languages has attracted considerable interest from the field of second and foreign language learning. Over the past four decades

prolific studies have been conducted and critically reviewed to verify or disprove the claim that younger learners are better at learning language than older ones (e.g. Hakuta, Bialystok, & Wiley, 2003; Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2001, 2003; Marinova-Todd, Marshall, & Snow, 2000; Singleton, 2003; Singleton & Ryan, 2004; Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978; Swain & Sharon, 1989).

In the “younger = better” camp, it is held that the developmental change in the brain is a powerful determinant of the success in second language learning. The end of puberty switches off the mechanism of a human’s automatic language acquisition. Accordingly, being introduced to a new language after the critical period, older children need to rely on more general learning abilities that “are not as successful for language learning as the more specific, innate capacities which are available to the young child” (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 42). Much attention, as Lightbown and Spada (1993) maintain, has been drawn to young learners’ phonological achievement in the studies on the effect of age on second language learning. A good deal of immigrant studies have shown an advantage for the young child in acquiring an accent-free second language (e.g. Asher & García, 1969; Patkowski, 1990; Tahta, Wood, & Loewenthal, 1981). It is also argued that an early introduction to a new language provides learners with much more time for target language exposure which leads to better performance in the long run.

Other researchers underscore the superiority of older learners in the sense that they are faster acquirers of the second language at the initial stage of morphological and syntactic development, a well-established generalisation made by Krashen, Long and Scarcella in 1979. A number of research findings echoing this view are presented in Freeman and Long’s (1991) book. According

to them, older learners' superiority on rule-governed linguistic aspects can be found in the following studies, Ervin-Tripp (1974), Chun (1978), Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle (1978), and Harley (1986). It is believed that older children with greater cognitive maturity have built up a pool of academic skills and resources which can be applied to second language learning and speed up their learning process.

Based on the conflicting views expressed on the age factor debate, it is difficult to decide who should be awarded the title of all-round winner of language learning—the young child, the older child or the adult? It is certainly true that learners at different age levels possess different strengths and faculties in relation to language learning tasks. The success in learning a second language cannot be attributed to the age effect alone. As Rixon (1999) rightly puts it, “the optimal age is not a concept that can ever apply in a vacuum” (p. vi). Language acquisition, in this regard, “is a fascinating, but also an extremely complex, phenomenon whose course and final result are determined by a number of interacting factors” (Klein, 1990, p. 230). It is, therefore, suggested that, more weight should be placed on “optimal conditions” rather than the optimal age. In terms of optimal conditions, Rixon (1999) asserts that the following factors need to be taken into account:

... the circumstances in which the learners find themselves, the role of the new language in the society as a whole, the quality of input to which they are exposed and the chances that are available for the learners to make real use of the language they are using. (p. vi)

By the same token, Marinova-Todd (2003) calls for carefully developed foreign language programmes “that provide the best environment in which learners of all

ages can efficiently utilise their cognitive abilities in order to achieve the highest possible proficiency in their L2s” (p. 59).

The creation of optimal conditions is especially crucial to learning a foreign language through explicit teaching in a formal setting. Children are believed to be able to acquire a second language in informal environments with little difficulty. However, a foreign language taught as a school subject is obviously not the same. In an EFL setting, children can only receive limited hours of language instruction at school and obtain a scant amount of exposure to the target language out of school. On top of that, children in an EFL situation do not supposedly have the same instrumental motivation as adults. How to keep them motivated and engaged in the English class, therefore, should be focused on the design of teaching. As Dunn (1983) also suggests:

Linguistic considerations alone are not sufficient in considering how young children learn another language. Young children are still learning concepts and developing skills which affect their ability to acquire language. For this reason, Language 2 cannot be taught as an isolated subject; it has to be thought of in terms of the whole child and his individual educational needs and interests. (p. 8)

Knowledge about children’s learning is pivotal to effective teaching. While the field of teaching English to young learners has been rapidly growing in the past decade, relevant research is relatively scarce in comparison with prolific studies on other topics in English learning and teaching. To give a more comprehensive account of children’s foreign language learning, as Cameron (2001) indicates, it is essential to “draw on work from beyond language classrooms” (p. 2). Concurring with this view, I will describe and discuss in the following section how children learn, what affects their foreign language

learning, and what role drama and story can play in an EFL classroom. By examining the aforementioned factors, this chapter seeks to identify key principles and theories which should underpin the curriculum planning for children learning English as a foreign language.

3.1 How Do Children Learn?

Over the years, considerable research effort has gone into the analysis of learning behaviour in an attempt to offer an overall picture of how the mind works and to “discover general *laws* that lead eventually to a scientific theory of learning” (Wood, 1998, p. 3). Educators, very often, seek solutions to learning problems from psychology. As McDonald (1964) noted, “When a new or more comprehensive psychological theory appears, education will probably assimilate it” (p. 24). In reviewing the long history of education and psychology, McDonald has come to a conclusion that “every major position has left a deposit of ideas and procedure” (1964, p. 24). In this section, I will be examining, albeit briefly, the major theories whose deposit of ideas and procedure has helped to shape the contemporary view on how children learn and what can be done to promote their learning.

Believing in the stimulus-response pattern of conditioned behaviour, American psychologist, B. F. Skinner applied his laboratory research findings on animal learning to classroom teaching. In his essay “Why Teachers Fail,” Skinner (1968) put the blame on teachers who resort to aversive control, such as corporal punishment, ridicule, scolding, sarcasm etc., to regulate student behaviour. In opposition to the aversive practices “which have caused so much trouble” (p. 113), he promulgated “positive reinforcement” in learning (p. 103) as

it is the most influential change agent. In his book, *Verbal Behavior*, published in 1957, he put forth his theory of operant conditioning to language learning for:

... serial structure in language must be the consequence of learned associations between elementary linguistic forms (presumably phonemes or words). A sentence is thus viewed as a behaviour chain, each element of which provides a conditioned stimulus for the production of the succeeding element. (Fodor, Bever, & Garrett, 1974, p. 25)

Skinner's proposals, founded on observable behaviour patterns alone, were considered by Noam Chomsky (1967) "as a paradigm example of a futile tendency in modern speculation about language and mind" (p. 142). He strongly argued against Skinner's behaviouristic view of language learning and wrote:

The fact that all normal children acquire essentially comparable grammars of great complexity with remarkable rapidity suggests that human beings are somehow specially designed to do this, with data-handling or "hypothesis-formulating" ability of unknown character and complexity. (p. 171)

With the intuitive grammatical knowledge, also known as the Language Acquisition Device (Chomsky, 1969), human beings are able to create new grammatical sentences and to understand what others say to them, even including sentences they have never heard before. Skinner's slow response to Chomsky's detailed and thorough critique coupled with critical questioning about external reinforcement as an essential condition for learning raised by Pribram and many other psychologists of his time (Wood, 1998) led to a new chapter in the exploration of how the mind works.

It was Piaget's theory which then served as a new lens for researchers and educators to look at learning and development. Piaget argues that child

development is an ongoing process which can be universally divided into four distinct stages, from overt actions to formal, logical thinking. At each stage children are primed to develop certain concepts and skills naturally and easily. The sequence of these stages, however, is fixed; thus, children at an earlier stage are not able to understand or learn specific forms of knowledge or skills belonging to a much later stage. On the issue of how children learn, Piaget emphasises the importance of children's active interaction with the world around them since the mind is "an active, organising, dynamic system" instead of "a passive receptacle" (J. L. Phillips, 1969, p. 140). Assimilation and accommodation are two complementary elements of adaptation, which is the mechanism of cognitive growth (Piaget, 1953).

Piaget primarily concerned himself with how the child constructs knowledge rather than generating a theory of teaching, yet his ideas about intellectual development have had a significant impact on education. One of Piaget's theories, for instance, proposes that children construct knowledge through their interactions with the environment. This conception is confirmed in Phillips's (1969) claim that "Teaching is the manipulation of the student's environment in such a way that his activities will contribute to his development" (p. 139). Cameron (2001) also attaches great importance to the learning environment and what goes on in it, stressing that "we can think of the classroom and classroom activities as creating and offering opportunities to learners for learning" (p. 5). It is therefore suggested by J. L. Phillips (1969) that teaching should not be merely "telling," but must engage the listener "as an active participant in the communicative process" (p. 142). Children being viewed as active sense-makers, their natural born curiosity should be canalised in such a

way that learning can take place. Clearly, curiosity motivates children to learn new things. But if the new information and experience cannot be accommodated and assimilated into their conceptual framework, children can easily feel disheartened. What teachers should keep in mind, as Cameron (2001) has pointed out, is that children's sense-making is constrained by their experience, which is "a key to understanding how they respond to tasks and activities in the language classroom" (p. 4).

In marked contrast to Piaget's viewing development or maturation as a prerequisite to learning different tasks or concepts through various stages, Vygotsky (1978) contends that learning precedes development and gave a more central role to instruction. Intelligence, in his definition, is "the capacity to *learn* through instruction" (Wood, 1998, p. 10). In this regard, Vygotsky (1962) underscores that "the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it" (p. 104). Children, in the eyes of Vygotsky (1978), are social beings who need to interact with other people to learn better. He puts this well when explaining the relationships between learning and interaction:

... learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement. (p. 90)

Under adult guidance and collaboration with more capable peers, children can reach the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86), where social learning leads to intellectual development.

The concept of the zone of proximal development throws new light on "readiness" for learning. As Wood (1998) indicates, readiness, for Vygotsky,

“involves not only the state of the child’s existing knowledge but also his capacity to learn with help” (p. 26). This notion has been embraced with enthusiasm by educators. One of the reasons is that it explains how the individual differs in “educability.” In other words, individual differences exist in children’s aptitudes to learn with instruction. Even for a group of children who seem to be at the same level of performance, some of them, according to Wood (1998), may need more guidance in instruction in a given task because their zones of proximal development are larger than others.

Another influential Vygotskyian perspective is the attempt to build a link between learning and play. Vygotsky (1976) argues that play creates the child’s zone of proximal development. According to his observations, he found that children, in play, often have the ability to behave beyond their average ages and above their daily behaviour as if they were a head taller than themselves. Bruner (1976) shares Vygotsky’s view, stating that play as “a means of minimizing the consequence of one’s actions and of learning” (p. 38), is one of the key steps for children to make sense of the world around them. In addition, both Vygotsky and Bruner agree that language has a powerful part to play in cognitive development. Without a Language Acquisition Support System offered by adults (1983), young children fail to activate their innate capacity for acquiring language, or specifically to borrow Chomsky’s words, a ‘Language Acquisition Device’. This also shows how tutorial interactions support a child in solving a problem, completing a task or attaining a goal that would be far beyond his unaided efforts (Wood & Middleton, 1975). The tutorial process, known as “scaffolding” (Bruner, 1983), accelerates and enhances children’s learning by dividing learning into manageable steps which allow mastery of one step at a time. Gradually

withdrawing their intervention and support, adults assist children in moving on to a new ZPD. Effective instruction, as a consequence, involves recruiting the learner's interest, reducing degrees of freedom, maintaining direction, stressing critical features of the tasks, controlling frustration, and demonstrating solutions (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

The notion of scaffolding has generated fruitful implications in education. Wood (1998), for example, made suggestions on how to scaffold children's learning in the classroom in a variety of ways, which were summarised by Cameron (2001) as follows:

<i>Teachers can help children to</i>	<i>By</i>
attend to what is relevant	suggesting praising the significant providing focusing activities
adopt useful strategies	encouraging rehearsal being explicit about organisation
remember the whole task and goals	reminding modelling providing part—whole activities
(from Cameron, 2001, p. 9)	

In terms of language teaching and learning, Littlewood (1992) has advised teachers to “divide the total skill into manageable components (‘part-skills’) and order them in such a way that the learners will be able to master them in sequence.” It is also essential for language teachers to “create contexts which will provide learners with opportunities to integrate the various part-skills that they have learnt so far and perform the ‘whole’ task” (p. 47).

As discussed, educators should hence strive to scaffold children's learning

by carefully designing their curriculum materials and offering them a learning environment that encourages interaction, collaboration, and pretend play. Apart from that, to develop an English course which is suitable for young learners, the teacher should have a strong knowledge of their characteristics and needs as learners, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.2 Characteristics and Needs of Young Learners

Children are not miniature adults, either psychologically or physiologically. Their needs, abilities, and interests are greatly different from adults. What may work for the grown-ups does not necessarily apply to young learners. Halliwell (1992) argues that young learners do not arrive at the classroom door with empty hands but rather with “an already well-established set of instincts, skills and characteristics which will help them to learn another language” (p. 3). It is of vital importance to identify and accommodate their unique characteristics and needs in the process of curriculum design. The following section will thus describe what children are like and what they need in order to facilitate their language learning.

Young learners are *physically active* (Broughton, Brumfit, Flavell, Hill, & Pincas, 1980, p. 169). As Pauncz (1980) points out, it is children’s nature to fidget, jump, talk, and interrupt. Their need to move, however, is often ignored in the primary classroom and sometimes considered as a discipline problem. S. Phillips (1993) accentuates that, physically, children need to move in order to “develop balance, spatial awareness, and fine control of certain muscles” (p. 6). A similar view was held by Millar (1968), who has vividly described:

The 'need' to move, jump, shout and 'let off steam' generally recognized in the young is not, however, merely a reaction to exciting stimulation

although the latter may be an occasion for it. The fact that children find it less easy than adults to sit still for long periods, not to bang their heels against the chair, not to jump up, or move their arms, or touch objects, to execute fine movements with their fingers and modulate their voices, is not a question of having more energy to spill, but of comparative lack of integration and control of the movement systems. (p. 248)

These observations concurred with Tucker's (1977) statement that there is a "physiological basis" for "the boisterous, spontaneous play so characteristic of the young" (p. 21). That is, it is not sensible to simply place a strict control on children's movement. The teacher, on the contrary, should provide activities which allow the child's body to be in motion. As argued by Brumfit (1991), "young learners need physical movement and activity as stimulation for their thinking, and the closer together these can be, the better" (p. v). Acknowledging the importance of physical activities, Donoghue and Kunkle (1979) further claim that "The values of physical involvement far exceed those of passive practice in oral language skills" (p. 53). Children need to use language for making or doing things. By doing so, they are able to fix the linguistic input and situations in the long-term memory and strengthen recall (Kirsch, 2008, p. 56). From this point of view, it is necessary to take on board H. D. Brown's (2001) suggestion for English teachers of young learners—"Pepper your lessons with physical activity, such as having students act out things (role-play), play games, or do Total Physical Response activities" (p. 89).

As mentioned in the previous section, children are *social beings* and interaction with peers and adults is crucial to their learning. In the foreword of Lave and Wenger's (1991) book, Hanks summarises their notion of situated learning, stating that learning is "not a one-person act" and it entails "a participation framework" (p. 15). Such a framework is community-based. In the

same vein, Jones and Coffey (2006) argue that a modern foreign language classroom can be seen as a “classroom community,” coined by Behrman (2002) to refer to a learning milieu in which pupils are able to not only participate in contextualised activities with social and physical features but also have collaborative interactions with each other and their teacher or advanced peers. The element of collaboration is essential in teaching a mixed ability class. Pupils of different levels of English proficiency can benefit from interactions with others through working in heterogeneous groups to complete a task or a shared goal. Extensive research studies have found that cooperative learning is associated with gains in learners’ achievement (Bejarano, 1987; Nunan, 1992a; Slavin, 1995). Contrary to traditional instruction featuring competitiveness, independent work and passive listening, cooperative learning is a matter of “sinking or swimming together.” It is “positive interdependence,” according to D. W. Johnson and his colleagues (1994), which links students together “in a way that makes it impossible for anyone to succeed unless the entire group succeeds” (p. 27). Each individual in the group should therefore actively contribute their knowledge to the assigned task and actually get down to “doing” something. The concrete collaborative experiences and active experimentation can then feed into the young learners’ transformation of abstract language concepts into their frame of reference. However, the benefits of cooperative learning cannot be reaped without deliberate efforts made by both the children and teacher. Teachers may encounter difficulties in keeping young children on-task when having them carry out cooperative work. It is imperative to take into account the need for frameworks, scaffolding, and interim goals so as to keep them engaged.

Children are *creative* and *playful* by nature. To quote Scoffham et al (2008),

“You only have to watch a young child playing to see creative learning happening” (p. 126). Tsang (cited in Wong, 2008, p. 94) claims that children’s imagination and motivation for learning can be stimulated through their involvement in creative activities. It is a pity, however, as Read (1998) notes, that the creative potential children bring with them to class, “is often something that is missing from school life the older children get” (p. 27). In her survey study, Wong (2008) has found that teachers in Hong Kong did not pay due weight to creativity in their teaching even though they recognised its importance. She concludes that the neglect was due largely to the influence of Chinese culture, which mainly emphasises academic achievement that is normally obtained by rote learning. Creativity, as a result, has no central role to play in terms of the objective of children’s learning. Sharing the same traditional culture, the teachers in Taiwan tend to see creative learning as an optional extra. It is not surprising that relatively few studies (Cheng, 2005; L.-C. Hsu, 2002; Yang, 1997) have addressed the issue on creativity and language learning in Taiwan.

Children’s creativity can be found in the early phase of their mother tongue development. Halliwell (1992) draws attention to how excellent the youngsters are at “making a little language go a long way”:

They are creative with grammatical forms. They are also creative with concepts Children also create words by analogy, or they even invent completely new words which then come into the family vocabulary. This phenomenon is fundamental to language development. (p. 4)

Confirming Halliwell’s observation, Pinter (2006) contends that children’s immense creativity with language and enjoyment of playing with words enable them to experiment with languages by pushing their limited resources to the very

edge. Arguing against the view that language play is exclusive only to those of native-like proficiency and beyond the grasp of the beginning learners of a second language, G. Cook (2000) proposes that language play “can take place at all levels of proficiency” and “it is particularly evident in the discourse of children and the elementary stages of language learning, where repetition, pattern manipulation, and a degree of separation from the demands of work are most in evidence” (p. 204).

The human young need to be given opportunities for creativity, fantasy, and imagination which can increase ownership and make learning more memorable (Read, 1998). An overall implication for language teachers here is that children need to play with languages creatively so that they can make the language their own. As Halliwell (1992) reinforces, novice language learners, regardless of first or second language, rely on the creative use of limited resources to give and receive real messages (p. 11). Pinter (2006), accordingly, suggests that English teachers of young learners should bring their pupils various forms of language play, such as drama activities, simple poetry writing, playing with forms, sounds, rhythm, creating imaginary words or nonsense words, which “allow children’s imagination and fantasy to flourish” (p. 21). It is then the teacher’s responsibility to create a learning environment where children are able to utilise their creative language skill to the fullest extent.

The child is generally considered to be *motivated* to learn a second language with less inhibition and anxiety. Terrell describes, “children acquire their first language and a second language in order to identify and be a member of the group that speaks that language” and “this strong motivation for identification or assimilation forces them to attend to the input very carefully, so that their output

will match the input” (cited in Young, 1991, p. 428). Terrell’s claim, as Young (1991) suggests, has much in common with R. C. Gardner’s (1985) “integrative motivation,” which is associated with “positive feelings toward the community that speaks that language” (p. 83) and “the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community” (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 274). For young learners of English as a foreign language, the integrative motive does not seem to be closely related to their language learning. Investigating the fifth graders’ motivation to learn English in Taiwan, H.-Y. Hsu and Chan (2005) have found that the pupils’ integrative motivation was ranked the lowest in the questionnaire survey. While being aware of the benefits of English proficiency, the pupils placed the instrumental motivation as the most influential factor. Nikolov’s (1999) findings in her long-term ethnographic study on Hungarian children’s foreign language learning motivation give this tendency still further amplification. She indicates that there was a lack of integrative motivation in the children’s answers to the open question. The instrumental motives started to show around the age of 11 or 12 but remained vague and general. She further points out that children gradually lose interest in external rewards but remain motivated by interesting classroom activities, tasks and materials as well as the supportive teacher. Similar to this view, Ur (1996) proposes that “interest in doing the learning activity itself” contributes more to the child’s effective learning than prizes and extrinsic rewards (p. 288). Chuang’s (2007) study has also shown that the intrinsic motivation scored higher than the extrinsic motivation among 675 fifth- and sixth- graders in Taiwan, indicating the importance of applying intrinsically motivated activities in the English class.

As to how to engage learners in more enjoyable and stimulating classroom

activities, Dörnyei (2001) has formulated three types of strategies:

- Break the monotony of learning by varying linguistic focus of the tasks, main language skills the tasks activate, channel of communication, organisational format, the teacher's presentation styles, learning materials, the extent of student involvement or the classroom's spatial organisation.
- Make the tasks more interesting by providing challenges, interesting content and activities with novelty, fantasy, conceptual conflict, exotic elements or personal elements.
- Increase the involvement of the students by creating learning situations which require learners' active participation and mental and/or bodily involvement. (pp. 73-78)

For young learners, to enjoy means to “have fun,” which is an indispensable factor to enhance children's effective learning (Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, 1992; H. D. Brown, 2001; Halliwell, 1992; Hunt, Barnes, Powell, Lindsay, & Muijs, 2005; Kirsch, 2008; Nikolov & Curtain, 2000). It is often argued that children have short attention span but H. D. Brown (2001) reminds us that only when children have to deal with material they find boring, useless, or too difficult will short attention come into play. It is hard to deny that fun activities motivate pupils and keep them focused while it is easy to overlook the care teachers should take “about exactly what the children are absorbed in” (Rixon, 1995, p. 33). Fun can catalyse learning in that fun is memorable. Although drama is generally considered among the range of fun activities, I would like to underscore that, as far as language learning is concerned, it takes more than playful activities which merely entertain the child without language pay-off and learning benefits. The teacher needs to have a thorough understanding about how drama can be a means for promoting children's language learning and integrate drama games and techniques into teaching with sufficient rigour. In this sense, I will set out to discuss the features of educational drama and how they link to

young learners' characteristics and needs, and, most importantly, their roles in language learning. But before delving into the details, we need to take a closer look at what contributes to effective foreign language teaching and learning.

3.3 Features of Effective Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

In the past few decades, approaches to teaching English as a second/foreign language have undergone major transformations. Language learning is no longer seen simply as a process of habit formation from the behaviouristic view, or the study of “surface” structures of linguistic units as Bloomfieldian linguists claimed, or the acquisition of “deep” semantic structures in Chomsky’s term. Growing attention is being paid to “learning as a social process” (Nunan, 2004, p. 7) in which sociolinguistic rules are brought into play. As Hymes (1979) stresses, “There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless” (p. 15). In an attempt to add another dimension to the notion of language competence, narrowly defined by Chomsky as abstract grammatical knowledge of an ideal hearer-speaker, Hymes (1972) coined a term “communicative competence” to describe the ability “as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner” (p. 277). In response to increasing interest in the study of “the appropriate” rather than “the possible” (K. Johnson, 1982, p. 14), communication has become the main focus in the field of English language teaching which hence entered an era of communicative language teaching (CLT) in the 1970s.

Communicative language teaching is an umbrella term which “consists of a family of approaches” (Nunan, 2004, p. 7). J. C. Richards and Rodgers (1986) define communicative language teaching in the following way:

A theory of language teaching that starts from a communicative model of language and language use, and seeks to translate this into a design or an instructional system, for materials, for teacher and learner roles and behaviours, and for classroom activities and techniques. (p. 69)

Although it is generally accepted that learners' communicative needs should be prioritised in the language classroom where they can participate in various communicative activities focusing on getting meaning across, there are different views on the status of grammar in the communicative approach, e.g. the weak and the strong versions of CLT (Howatt, 1984, p. 279), which generate a range of syllabus design and teaching methodology. Despite the fact that linguists disagree about the necessity of explicit focus on form, the rise in popularity of CLT has swept the world. As J. C. Richards (2006) underscores, "Since its inception in the 1970s, CLT has served as a major source of influence on language teaching practice around the world" (p. 1). Take Taiwan for example. In a series of educational reforms starting from 1999, it has been officially announced that the primary and secondary English curriculum should be developed on the basis of the principles of CLT as a result of the students' unsatisfactory language performance under the traditional grammar translation teaching method. It has been pointed out by S. Chang and Huang (2001) that "Although some students are able to perform well on discrete-point tests, they often react incompetently when required to incorporate their linguistic knowledge in real communication" after receiving six years of English instruction at the secondary level (p. 219). According to General Guidelines of Grades 1-9 English Curriculum for Elementary and Junior High School Education published by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan, one of the

objectives is to develop pupils' communicative competence which can be transferred to the real social context. It is suggested that teaching content should revolve around daily life topics and communicative functions such as greeting, expressing gratitude, apologising, expressing agreement, making requests, giving or asking for directions, making a phone call etc.

Communicative activities are characterised by real communication, interaction, learner-centredness, and authenticity (H. D. Brown, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Little, Devitt, & Singleton, 1989; Nunan, 1991). To shape a communicative curriculum which promotes communicative language use Savignon (1983, 2003) proposes five components to be taken into account in the planning: (1) language arts, (2) language for a purpose, (3) personal second language use, (4) theatre arts, and (5) beyond the classroom. *Language arts, or language analysis*, relates to the forms of English which can be taught in a deductive or inductive fashion, or a combination of both. Most importantly, they should be integrated with the other components rather than being the only focus of the lesson. *Language for a purpose, or language experience*, emphasises "the use of language for real and immediate communicative goals" (Savignon, 1983, p. 196). Learners and the teacher are encouraged to use gestures and appropriate visual cues to assist their verbal communication. The purposeful uses of the L2 bear the following characteristics:

- The focus of the activity is content, not language learning.
- Resources to the learner's native language is seen as natural and desirable; such *code-mixing* and even *code-switching* is a feature of natural L2 use.
- Learners are not expected to give error-free, nativelike responses to teacher questions; learners should respond as they are ready and able.
- The goal is the *gradual* adoption of the L2 as a community language while support and encouragement are provided for the learners. (Savignon, 1983, p. 199).

Personal L2 use is also referred to as “*My language is me*” by Savignon (2003), who affirms that the success of a teaching programme depends on whether it involves learners both psychologically and intellectually and allows them to use the target language for self-expression. *Theatre arts* associate with activities in which learners can take on roles to try things out and “explore situations that would otherwise never come up in a classroom” (Savignon, 1983, p. 206).

Beyond the classroom activities extend the language learning experience beyond the classroom by bringing in authentic reading materials, good pictures, TV or radio programmes. Learners should also be offered opportunities to use the target language outside the classroom. In spite of the lack of hierarchic importance, as Savignon contends, it seems fair to say that to give students the ability to tackle challenges “beyond the classroom” can be regarded as the ultimate goal. Before achieving that aim, one of the commonest drama devices in theatre arts, role-playing, is able to assume the role as a real life simulator, which readies learners for the real life situation through imagination and creativity.

Speaking of role-playing, Littlewood (1981) introduces five activities which are performing memorised dialogues, contextualised drills, cued dialogues, role-playing, and improvisation, all having various degrees of teacher-control and learner-creativity (p. 50). Role-play is a popular classroom activity in Taiwan’s primary English class. The pupils are frequently asked to memorise short dialogues in the English textbooks and do the role-play in front of the class. Here, for example, is a dialogue in an English textbook for the fifth graders:

DIALOGUE A

Tom: I go to school by bike. How do you go to school, Tina?

Tina: I go to school by bus.

DIALOGUE B

May: Does he go to school by bus every day?

Tina: Yes, he does.

As Savignon (1983) points out, “Textbook dialogues are most often created not for the meaning they convey but for the grammatical forms or vocabulary they display” (p. 212). The above dialogue, though appearing functional, is in fact decontextualised. Why does Tom want to know how Tina goes to school? What happens before and after the dialogue? Most importantly, can pupils find a purpose for acting it out and also have fun? The truth is that children in Taiwan can rarely find a chance to ask someone in English about the daily transport he/she uses in real life. Dialogues like these are “of no immediate intrinsic interest” to children (Ur, 1996, p. 288) for they “do not yet have a clear perception of the situations in which they will eventually need the foreign language” (Littlewood, 1981, p. 45). Moreover, performing decontextualised dialogues with no space for creativity or physical movement fails to motivate young learners. Improvisation, in Littlewood’s categorisation, is of the least control and closely related to work in the native-language context. Improvisation, in the sense of second language teaching, relies heavily on learners’ real life experiences because they may be asked to project themselves in an everyday situation or identify with certain types of character to resolve a tension, make a decision or reach an agreement. Learners also need to possess a certain amount of vocabulary and basic grammar as tools of expression. Accordingly, for young learners whose life experiences and English vocabulary are relatively limited, improvisation may not be a feasible teaching method. In terms of providing children with sufficient L2 input and a space for their creativity, scripted role

playing appears to be an option to meet both needs. Prepared scripts comprise multi-level functions as they enable learners “to interpret, to focus, on the meaning or intent of dialogue (including pronunciation, intonation, facial expression, gestures, and a host of other paralinguistic and nonverbal features of communication)” (Savignon, 1983, p. 212). Scripted role-playing can be embodied in the form of story-based drama, using stories as scripts for children to develop their English ability through various techniques in educational drama, which will be elaborated in the following sections.

3.4 The Evolution of Educational Drama

The origins of Western drama can be traced back to the ancient Greek world around the 6th century BC in a form of religious ritual in honour of Dionysus. Since then, drama has evolved into varying forms with different purposes. However, not until the turn of the twentieth century did drama find its way into the classroom as an educational tool in the Western world. Courtney (1990, pp. 3-4) has pointed out how drama techniques, used only by isolated pioneers in education before World War I, made inroads into the British and American educational systems in the 1950s and 60s, penetrated Europe by the 1970s, and took effect in Africa and Asia by the 1980s. The burgeoning field of educational drama has thus led Courtney (1990) to envision that dramatic activities may become commonplace in the twenty-first century in which “the ability to read others and see things from their point of view” is required in post-industrial societies (p. 4).

The growing popularity of drama as a pedagogical instrument results from accumulated efforts of many drama educationalists. Nearly thirty years ago,

Robinson (1981) divided the development of drama in education into three phases:

Phase 1— From the beginnings of compulsory education to the 1950s: when drama and theatre were virtually synonyms in education.

Phase 2—From the 1950s to the 1970s: when drama began being developed as a separate specialism. Many teachers then sharply distinguished what they were doing from theatre.

Phase 3—From the early 1970s to the present: when, partly because of the pressure of public accountability, many teachers have been led to re-examine the assumptions of earlier work and the place of both drama and theatre in schools. (p. 37)

In the following section, I shall briefly discuss the many forms drama has taken in education. Based on Robinson's timeline, I will also introduce past and present influential figures who have provided inspiration for this field to explain why drama lends itself particularly well to children's learning.

Phase One: From the beginnings of compulsory education to the 1950s

Harriet Finlay-Johnson is generally acknowledged as the earliest pioneer in the field. Working as a headmistress at a village primary school in the UK from 1897 to 1909, she took a liberal approach to integrating drama across the curriculum which provided her pupils with "a degree of freedom and autonomy that was unheard of in other Victorian schools" (Bowmaker, 2002). In her eyes, children are young scholars and she believed that dramatisation can inflame children's desire for learning. She described, "When our scholars began to dramatise their lessons, they at once developed a keen desire to know many things which hitherto had been matters of pure indifference to them" (Finlay-Johnson in Bolton, 1998, p. 10).

In her book, *The Dramatic Method of Teaching*, Finlay-Johnson (1911) described her teaching experiences within which are hidden "some extraordinary

insights,” as Bolton (1984) observes, such as her belief in the child’s natural dramatic instinct, her emphasising more the process of dramatising than the product, her balanced view of improvisation and scripted work, her downgrading the relevance of audience, her disapproval of “acting for display,” her letting children take initiative in their own drama work, and her prioritising children’s happiness (p. 11).

Caldwell Cook, who was Finlay-Johnson’s contemporary, served as Head of English at the Perse School in Cambridge, where the Direct Method was used in the teaching of Modern and Classical Languages (Bolton, 1998, p. 27). In his book *The Play Way*, Cook (1917) urged the school to embrace play as part of its curriculum, stating “Let us remember that without interest there is no learning, and since the child’s interest is all in play it is necessary, whatever the matter in hand, that the method be a play-method” (pp. 3-4). Play, for Cook (1917), means “doing anything with one’s heart in it” (p. 4). Bolton (1998) interprets his definition of play as “a full engagement with the present rather than practice for the future” (p. 29).

Seeing his pupils as “young artists” (Bolton, 1993, p. 26), Cook passionately encouraged them to transform English literature into dramatic forms, for the discovery of a text’s true meaning lies “inside the action” (Bolton, 1998, p. 31). Different from Finlay-Johnson’s use of dramatisation for her pupils to gain access to a body of facts and knowledge, Cook did not take the content of drama as “an immediate objective” but as “a means to an end” (Bolton, 1984, p. 15). He thought highly of the process of experiencing:

For the Play Way is not a bunch of contrivances for making scholarly pursuits pleasurable, but the active philosophy of making pleasurable pursuits valuable. But the claim here put forward is not for the destination, but chiefly for the journey. (H. C. Cook, 1917, p. 8)

English, as a result, was neither a subject nor a method but an experience (Bolton, 1984, p. 14). Dissatisfied with the fact that pupils were rarely “treated as a conscious group,” Cook (1917) suggested that the class should be given a collective identity and treated “as a body of workers collaborating” (p. 37). His ideas of process and collaboration still hold true for current drama education practice.

Thanks to his giving drama and play a wider significance in child education, Cook was the first to stress the important link between classroom drama and play (M. Anderson, 2002, p. 30). Though revolutionary, his Play Way to education was not fully appreciated during his lifetime. Doubts, according to Bolton (1998), were raised concerning young people’s ability to dig the meaning out of a play through text recitation and crude action. Strong criticism, for example, was voiced by William Shirley Tomkinson, who approved of oral expression but rejected children’s “amateurish dramatising of an event” because it thins out the “substance” of the event (Bolton, 1998, p. 38). In fact, in the 1920s neither Finlay-Johnson’s method nor Cook’s philosophy was absorbed into the mainstream of education; it was the training of Speech, or “Elocution” as it was called, which, with official endorsements, granted drama a formal position in the school curriculum.

The importance of speech improvement was regarded as grounds for “a diet of drama” for children at school (Bolton, 1984, p. 17). As Bolton (1984) further explains, “language in context” was not yet a popularised conception at that time; educationalists, accordingly, endeavoured to impose on children a speech style (e.g. Received Pronunciation or B.B.C. speech) which was:

... a kind of external grafting that had little to do with the pupils' own expressiveness, but nevertheless created a convention of speaking (and moving) that, although artificial, in the very process of being conventionalised became the norm—affection was accepted and expected. (p. 25)

The Speech and Drama movement together with the influence of the rapid growth in amateur theatre and speech festivals dominated the way drama was taught during the 1920s and in a score of years that followed. In Robinson's (1981) analysis, the Speech and Drama tradition in secondary education was characterised by three assumptions: "the need for formal discipline," "the importance of the 'culture heritage'," and "the association of drama with English teaching" (p. 49). What lay beneath this booming speech industry, which valued conventional acting and understated the importance of language and content itself, was however an insidious trend towards children's being "natural and spontaneous" (Bolton, 1984, p. 27). Reacting against his contemporaries who advocated the artificial acting styles for showing, Peter Slade turned to children's natural play in search of an unconventional way to teach drama.

Phase Two: From the 1950s to the 1970s

Starting to fuse drama with education in 1925, Peter Slade developed his own system of Athletic-Drama-Movement (Slade, 1954, p. 359) and took the unprecedented step of offering a systematic analysis of the significance of child play in relation to drama. His analysis, as Robinson (1981) comments, founded on views about education and psychology that were current at that time, was "original in its particular reference to drama" (p. 56). In his influential book *Child Drama*, published in 1954, Slade strongly argued that "*Child Drama is an Art in itself, and would stand by that alone as being of importance*" (p. 105) and "*should be recognised, respected and protected*" (p. 68). Having roots in play

and growing “from a natural source within children” (Robinson, 1981, p. 54), Child Drama distinguishes itself from adult notions of theatre, or “the proscenium form of theatre” as Slade called it. Whilst many of his contemporaries were enthusiastic about offering pupils the chance of experiencing the proscenium theatre, Slade (1954) gave a serious warning of its “disastrous effects on the genuine Drama of the Child” (p. 44). He maintained that acting on stage not only introduces a sense of audience too early to children but also teaches them to show off and “the appalling habit of never getting into the part and of reciting lines whilst grinning at the audience” (Slade, 1958, p. 90). A clear line is hence drawn between theatre and drama, and what divides them, according to Bolton (1984), is “intention.” It is “an intention to be in an imaginary event” which matters in dramatic play while at the core of performance mode is “the intention to describe an imaginary event” to an audience (p. 32).

Slade actively promoted Child Drama for it is “a unique form of self-expression” (Bolton, 1998, p. 142) and a vital force for human development. Theatre, for Slade (1954), “is only a mirror of Life,” and drama, on the contrary, “is Life itself” (p. 338). As “doing and struggling” is the original sense of drama, it helps children to discover “life and self through emotional and physical attempt, and then through repetitive practice” (Slade, 1958, p. 2). He divided play into two main categories—Projected Play and Personal Play, out of which grow “Absorption” and “Sincerity,” key to various forms of learning and study in the future. Consequently, he earnestly recommended the balance of these two types of play, on the grounds that they are closely related to “the building of Man, and Woman, their whole behaviour and sometimes even their ability to fit in with

society” (Slade, 1995, p. 6).

Similar to Piaget’s concept of cognitive developmental stages, Slade (1954) also defined the development of Child Drama by age and the process of development consists of five phases--birth to five years, five to seven years, seven to twelve years and twelve to fifteen years. Each phase features “conspicuous differences” observed in all Child activity (Slade, 1954, p. 20) and activities suitable for each age group were discussed in detail. The notion of readiness repeatedly appears in his book. For example, regarding children aged between seven to twelve years, he says:

The surest way of developing showing off is to put the Child on a stage at one end of the room....The Child cannot move freely, nor can it move in its own way. Worst of all, as we have already seen, it is being introduced to an important experience before it is ready for it. (Slade, 1954, p. 58)

In the discussion of scripted plays for twelve-to-fifteen-year-olds, he claims that “Literature is only digested when people are ready for it. Some children are ready at this stage. Some are not” (Slade, 1954, p. 79). Speaking of writing plays for children to act, he expresses his faith in their creative ability:

No one can write for them. There is no need. There is complete acceptance of adult standards when the time is ripe. But those not ready, in their own way, and under the right conditions (which show signs of being widely extended) are of themselves supreme. They have their own Art. Ours pales before it. (Slade, 1954, p. 83)

Slade believed that the Child therefore should not be forced to learn to appreciate great masterpieces. Those with a wide and complete Child Drama experience at school will eventually develop a natural interest in literature, the study of drama or formal theatre presentation. Whether or not they will grow up to choose to be

professionals in theatrical works, “they are likely to be balanced, happy people” (Slade, 1954, p. 127).

Parallel to Slade’s child-centred philosophy but moving away from his idea of “Child Drama as Art” (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 11), Brian Way was in favour of the development of “the whole person” and significance of individuals. He affirmed that “drama is concerned with the individuality of individuals, with the uniqueness of each human essence” (Way, 1967, p. 3). Considering theatre as “communication between actors and an audience” which can only be achieved by a gifted few, Way (1967) , in a belief that every child can do drama, argued for drama because it is concerned with the majority as well as the participants’ experience (p. 3). Drama, for him, is “to practise living” (p. 6) so that attention should be drawn not to acting itself, but rather to “the practice of social or personal skill” (Bolton, 1998, p. 165). His exercise approach, offering “a clearer recipe for lesson content” (Bolton, 1998, p. 149), aims to “help children develop the senses, to express themselves more fully, and to become individual” (Martin-Smith, 1996, p. 58). By engaging children in dramatic exercises in a private, uncritical atmosphere where they are allowed to start with individual work, gradually move on to share ideas in pairs and then with the whole class, their confidence and self-worth can be boosted (Walkinshaw, 2004, p. 34). Pupils can also benefit from the frequent use of pair work because it allows for “simultaneous speech” (Hawkins, 1993, p. 59) which maximises Student Talking Time. Like Slade’s emphasis on “the actions of narrative” (Bolton, 1998, p. 141), children participated in Way’s classroom drama “in an anticipated manner” (Martin-Smith, 1996, p. 65); that is, they needed to be responsive to the teacher’s predetermined narrative with appropriate dramatic action. The blending of

narrative form and dramatic action has later become a common practice in many drama lessons.

Phase Three—From the early 1970s to the present

In the 1970s, the focus of drama work was taken away from Slade's romantic view of Child Drama and Way's child-centred developmental drama to the path of the pursuit of knowledge by Dorothy Heathcote, who raised a dissenting voice against "unfocussed and undisciplined teaching of drama" (Martin-Smith, 1996, p. 66). Echoing Finlay-Johnson's recognition of the importance of the subject matter, Heathcote gave this tendency still further amplification, attaching more significance to children's reflection on what she saw as universal truths than to the acquisition of factual knowledge. In the light of this view, she proposed that the strength of drama does not lie in direct factual teaching but in providing "a rich ground for making facts understood in action" (Heathcote, Johnson, & O'Neill, 1984, p. 10). In order to kindle among children the desire for knowledge, the teacher needs to create "living through" situations (Heathcote, 1972, p. 158) in connection with real problem solving and personal experience so that they are able to transfer the decision-making process to similar contexts in real-life settings. Heathcote's approach requires the teacher's intervention in structuring the topic-based, whole-class drama work to trap the participants into accepting "the big lie" so "they will fight through to the process of change" (Heathcote et al., 1984, p. 115). It is through both detached, distanced experience and affective engagement within an imagined context that children can gain a deeper knowledge and a new conception. "Thinking *from within* a situation," as O'Neill commented, "immediately forces a different kind of thinking" (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995, p. vii).

Two important techniques that Heathcote introduced that are still widely used today are “teacher-in-role” and “mantle of the expert.” Teacher-in-role is regarded by many current drama educationalists as one of the most effective strategies for teachers to use in whole-class drama (e.g. Neelands, 2004; O’Neill, 1985; Prendiville & Toye, 2007). Not only does taking on roles enable teachers to work collaboratively with children to shape the fiction as it proceeds, which naturally generates a sense of immediacy and spontaneity, but it also helps the child “reach beyond his own capacity in carrying out a task” (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995, p. 35) because of its socially determined learning context which functions like Vygotsky’s “zone of proximal development.” In “mantle of the expert,” children are in role as adult experts working in a fictional enterprise or an organisation. The shift in expertise roles entitles pupils to take over the power from the teacher (Bolton, 1993, p. 36) and encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning.

Many similarities can be drawn between Dorothy Heathcote’s and Gavin Bolton’s drama structure; however, Bolton insists that children should “take ownership” in the drama work (Martin-Smith, 1996, p. 71). He invites children to make their own decisions in the planning process so that the shared “dialectical thought process” and the conscious reflections on the consequences of their own choices can lead them to “a new synthesis of ‘sharper consciousness’ of the problem” (Martin-Smith, 1996, p. 71) and they will also be able to transfer the thinking skills to solve similar problems they may face in the future. The main purpose of drama education is for “bringing about change in a participant’s understanding of the world” (Bolton, 1984, p. 148), which can only be achieved through feeling (Bolton, 1986, p. 108). Opposing “verisimilitude or imitation in

drama,” which he believes will bring “inferior learning and aesthetic experiences” to pupils (O’Connor, 2003, p. 39), Bolton (1980) argues for the metaphorical experience that includes three crucial elements: “(1) a spontaneity (2) a ‘nowness’ that is tied to the future and, most importantly, (3) ME in the experience” (p. 69). He underscores that “[t]he potential for learning lies in this very ambivalence that it is happening and yet not happening” (Bolton, 1980, p. 78). Instead of exploring the polarities which split drama into “public/private, audience-centred/child-centred, product/process, performing/experiencing, and theatre/play,” he hopes to present a model in his book, *Acting in Classroom Drama*, to break down the dichotomies. Acting behaviour, for Bolton (1998):

... is an act of fiction-making involving identification through action, a prioritising of determining responsibilities, the conscious manipulation of time and space and a capacity for generalisation. It relies on some sense of audience, including self-spectatorship. (p. 270)

Since “degree or intensity of identification” is a major determinant of the success of fiction-making (Bolton, 1998, p. 254), teachers should enhance pupils’ emotional engagement and commitment to drama by means of “the theatrical elements of tension, focus, contrast and symbolisation” for them to find significance in actions and objects in their dramatic playing (Bolton, 1980, p. 73). The function of the drama teacher in this sense shares a common ground with the playwright who also uses the same tools in devising a piece of theatre.

Heathcote’s and Bolton’s conceptions of drama and methods have been adopted or developed widely. Much effort has been put into exploring the potential of drama as a learning medium for different subjects. Fines and Verrier (1974), for instance, considered drama as “a building of narrative” (p. 23) and

developed drama-based strategies for the teaching of history in the hope that children might gain insight into the past through improvisation and emotional engagement with the conflicts of historical events. Somers (1994) discussed how to integrate drama into subjects across the curriculum and provided examples of integrated work in English, science, mathematics, geography, history, music, art, physical education, technology, modern foreign languages, religious education and special education. Quite a few academics and practitioners have also been devising innovative approaches to the use of drama in the classroom, such as Booth's (1994) story drama, O'Toole's (1992) process drama, Neeland and Goode's (2000) dramatic conventions. With the increasing interest in drama as a learning medium, more and more research is being done to explore the potential of drama in different areas, e.g. medical education (Alraek & Baerheim, 2005), citizenship and human rights (Winston, 2007), child abuse (O'Connor, O'Connor, & Welsh-Morris, 2006), refugee issues (Dennis, 2008), ethics (Shaughnessy, 2005), etc. Since this thesis is concerned with drama and the teaching of English as a foreign language, in the following section the focus will fall on the role of educational drama in language education.

3.5 Drama and Oracy

Oracy, a term coined by Andrew Wilkinson in 1965 to represent spoken language ability, is generally considered as the foundation for literacy. It has later been superseded by the term, orality, referring to using speech to construct knowledge and make meaning. The importance of oracy is highlighted by Meek's (1990) claim, "Our understanding of literacy must begin with the recognition of that orality and its continuing presence in our lives" (p. 15). In his

book about literacy and talk, Corden (2000) argues that there is a close relationship between talk, learning, and literacy with the support of Vygotsky's (1962) and Bruner's (1983) theoretical models as well as a substantial review of empirical research. Kempe and Holroyd (2004) also believe that talking helps to clarify thought, stating, "It is through the act of articulating ideas that those ideas become crystallised" (p. 5). Drama, a language-based art form, is widely used in the classroom to develop students' oral language abilities. The effectiveness of classroom drama in strengthening students' oracy has been supported by empirical studies and observational evidence.

Kardash and Wright (1987) conducted a meta-analysis to evaluate the effect of creative drama on primary children's learning and a positive relationship was revealed between the children's oral language facility and drama activities. Examining thirty-two quasi-experimental or correlation research studies, Wagner (1998b) found that twenty-two of them showed a positive impact of drama on learners' improvement of their oral language. In a large-scale research project undertaken by Schaffner, Little and Felton (1984), two hundred eighty fifth- and sixth-graders in nine different schools were engaged in improvisational dramatisation on a regular basis over two terms. The findings suggest that imaginary situation drama brings out more expressive and interactional language from the participants whose discourse in normal classroom activities is mainly informational. Expressive and interactional language, which rarely occurs in regular classroom discourse, is considered to be vital for language and cognitive development. Carroll (1988) analysed the role of drama in pupil and teacher talk, concluding that drama allows children to take more initiative in speaking. De la Cruz (1995) reported significant improvement in the oral expressive and social

skills of children with learning disabilities who participated in a creative drama programme.

Research has also been done on the use of drama in the ESL/EFL classroom. In Singapore, Stinson and Freebody (2006) recently conducted a research project to investigate the role of process drama in English oral communication. Four groups of Normal Technical students from the lowest stream in the Singaporean educational structure, participated in the study which consisted of ten, one-hour lessons. The participants, at the age of approximately 16 years old, were in the last year of compulsory education and were required to take the Normal Level Oral English examination. A statistical analysis was undertaken to compare the marks of student pre-tests and post-tests which were randomly selected from the intervention and comparison groups. The students in the comparison groups received regular English instruction with an oral communication component, while the participants in the intervention group worked in and out of role in imagined dramatic contexts that “had a strong oral emphasis” and “heightened aesthetic frame” (Stinson & Freebody, 2006, p. 33). A number of activities aiming at developing language skills were included, i.e. “interviewing, collaboratively creating roles and relationships, explaining, describing, persuading, sequencing ideas, questioning and reporting” (Stinson & Freebody, 2006, p. 35). The statistical results revealed that the comparison and intervention groups scored similarly in the pre-test; however, in the post-test, the intervention group had a significant gain in scores and the comparison group, on the contrary, showed a slight decrease. The ANOVA results for group on residualised Post-test total scores also showed that the process drama intervention had a highly significant effect ($p < .001$).

Comments collected from focus group interviews explained why the students found process drama beneficial to their oral communication:

“Some people are very often at the class very quiet but through the course they speak very loud and very much.”

“I’d say that if you’re going to attend the course, you’re really going to enjoy it. You’re going to improve your English. You can really talk if you—after the lesson you can really talk fluently, nicely and it will be really smooth going and I’d say just enjoy the class.”

“You won’t be sitting, just sitting, at the class—ah—so straight and boring. You move around but you’ve got to learn things.” (Stinson & Freebody, 2006, p. 38)

In Taiwan, Kao and O’Neill conducted a teacher-researcher study in a drama-oriented Freshman English course in a university. Thirty-three non-English majors took part in this 14-week-long study which included two imaginative dramas and two reality-based dramas. Focusing on the nature of classroom interaction and how it influenced learning and teaching, Kao analysed the discourse data randomly selected from the four drama activities. Three features of the participants’ discourse in drama were revealed as follows:

- The students’ verbal performance appeared more fluent and meaning-oriented in drama than that produced when they were not in role.
- The students were very much involved in shaping the scenes and therefore possessed a certain control over the direction of the conversation as the drama unfolded.
- Various strategies to control the progress of the situation were detected in the students’ utterances. (Kao & O’Neill, 1998, p. 59)

The quantitative results further point out that the participants made a significant improvement both in expressing themselves and in the amount of speech they produced.

The above research studies would support my argument that drama with

students is effective in the development of oral skills. However, the question is: what exactly makes drama a valuable resource in teaching spoken language? To answer this question, it is vital to start by examining traditional classroom discourse. It is not uncommon to see teacher-dominated discourse in many classrooms, which might be more of a hindrance than a help to children's learning. Corden (2000) describes this type of talk as an I-R-E exchange pattern, originally proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), in which "the teacher *initiates* the discourse with a question, the student *responds* with an answer and the teacher provides feedback in the form of an *evaluation*" (Corden, 2000, p. 109). Though the students are seemingly invited to take part in the exchange of talk with the teacher, they are, in fact, expected to come up with a 'correct' answer which the teacher has already kept in mind. Corden's I-R-E exchange pattern echoes Barnes's 'presentational talk', which focuses more on the expectations of the pupils rather than their ideas. As D. Barnes (1992b) suggests, presentational talk persuades "the speaker to focus on 'getting it right', that is, on appropriate speech and the expected information ('right answer')" (p. 126). This type of talk is also categorised by Colyle and Bisgyer (1984) as "restricted language," which is demonstrated in teacher's questions in the interrogative form but with the function of evaluating the students. From their data collected from 15 adult ESL classrooms in the United States, Colyle and Bisgyer (1984) observed many more restricted questions than unrestricted ones. They found that:

1. students seldom address questions to the teacher;
2. students almost never address questions to other students;
3. students almost never initiate new topics;
4. students seldom react. (pp. 34-35)

Colyle and Bisgyer's findings are applicable not only to adult ESL learners. In primary English classes in Taiwan, the vast majority of teachers place much emphasis on mechanical drills and memorising textbook dialogues. This "over-protective," drill-based classroom world, as Stinson and Freebody (2006) maintain, "is not directly matched by the 'appropriateness' and 'comprehensibility' that operate outside the classroom" (p. 32). For real communication to happen, students should be provided with chances of working on understanding. They need genuine interaction where they can engage in discussion by linking their existing knowledge to the new set of ideas. It is 'exploratory talk' that offers room for learners to actively interrelate, reinterpret and understand new ideas and experiences. Exploratory talk is characterised by frequent hesitations, repetitions, rephrasings, false starts, change of direction, backtracking, pauses, overlaps and interruptions (D. Barnes, 1992a; Corden, 2000). Kao and O'Neill's (1998) research has provided empirical evidence on how drama promotes exploratory talk. Her descriptive discourse analysis shows that the students were able to communicate in English smoothly in a dramatic scene. It is because "all language problems (or misunderstandings) were clarified within the drama by repeating, posing questions, trying alternative expressions and other techniques of 'repair' in a rather indirect manner" (p. 63).

Drama activities normally include a variety of characters and settings in which diversity of registers are interwoven. Baldwin and Fleming (2003) put it clearly that "children are required by the drama to use language, which is appropriate to both role and situation, including different models of speech and registers" (pp. 18-19). Similar comments were made by Wagner (1998b)

supported by her extensive review of related studies. She concludes that “drama challenges students to use language in a wide range of registers and styles and for a much broader range of purposes than customary school dialogues” (p. 55).

Drama is a collectively constructed imagined world that demands a positive and supportive working atmosphere. Students need to take part in plenty of group discussions; as a result, they can learn and gain support from their peers. Moreover, the playful nature of drama is also conducive to preparing learners to take risks and share their thoughts. In a nutshell, the dramatic world lends itself well to a risk-free environment for learners to employ exploratory talk “to try out new ideas, to hear how they sound, to see what others make of them, to arrange information and ideas into different patterns” (D. Barnes, 1992b, p. 126).

Corden (2000) argues that certain types of teacher talk can generate “more extensive and educationally productive responses from children” (p. 136). He suggests that teachers should initiate through challenging, directing, inquiring, inviting, stating, suggesting, modelling, and listening/encouraging. Aside from that, they should provide feedback by appraising/praising, encouraging exploration, focusing/orienting, helping children to reflect, offering hypotheses, providing information, relating to own experience, relating to the child’s experience, seeking clarification, and urging amplification. For those teachers who have applied drama into their teaching, all these strategies for encouraging exploratory talk may sound familiar because they are commonly used skills for sustaining a make-believe world. For example, Morgan and Saxton (1987) have analysed the characteristics of a drama question and some of them are summarised as follows:

1. It is the expressive demonstration of a genuine curiosity.
2. It occurs in context and relates to the experience.
3. The words are ordered in such a way as to support the role and clarify the thinking.
4. Non-verbal signals and intonation should be used to support the intent of the question on the part of the questioner.
5. The pace of the question must relate to the situation.
6. The question should have reason, focus, and curiosity.
7. There is no right answer in drama. (pp. 70-71)

The abovementioned characteristics of drama questions bear a close resemblance to Corden's suggestions for encouraging exploratory talk. This suggests that a drama approach, therefore, is a practical way of breaking the teacher-dominated discourse pattern within the classroom.

One of the possible reasons for the teacher's dominating the class talk results from students' silence. Some teachers tend to fill the air with their own talk because the students' non-participation in classroom activities and discussion unnerves them. But what makes students feel inhibited about speaking in the language classroom? A statement on a report of The British Council-Hornby Seminars in English Language Teaching (2006) seems to provide a sensible answer: "Students often do not have a real reason to speak because the tasks do not motivate them or do not require them to say anything which they find meaningful." In a similar vein, Byron (1986) argues that it is insufficient for the teacher to provide pupils with various contexts where they can "practise their language skills." He draws a fine line between the real demands on the use of language and the learners' being requested to "practise" skills against the time they might need the skills for real. Emphasising the importance of the demands of the "as if" situation instead of the language skills, he explains:

... as human beings, we have a marked propensity to become absorbed in an ‘as if’ world, so that it begins to *feel real*: not real in the sense that it is actually happening, but real in the sense that the problems faced and the outcomes *matter* to the participant ... and because these things mattered, the participants were challenged to find the language which met their purposes with the ‘as if’ context. (p. 126)

To break students’ silence, the teacher needs to engage them emotionally by making the dramatic situation matter to them. The success of language development through drama depends on whether students “care enough about the problem in the drama to try and meet the challenges (including the language challenge) it offers” (Byron, 1986, p. 127). Likewise, Winston (2004a) explains the importance of emotional engagement in good drama:

When it works well, drama carries an emotional charge that holds children in its power. At different moments they might be intrigued, moved, amused, outraged, excited, tense, elated These emotions are inextricably linked to their understanding of what is happening, and the extent of their emotional engagement will depend upon how much they care about the people in the story.... They will draw their answers from their own experiences but, as drama is a communal art form, their understandings will immediately enter a shared arena and become a class resource for considering issues of value together, both now and in the future. (p. 12)

Role-taking and role-creating in educational drama gives students a chance to put themselves in others’ shoes in an imagined context where the class and teacher are able to “pretend, as a group, that they are *other* people, in *another* place, in *another* time” (Neelands, 1984, p. 46). Not only does the pretending bring about an immediate need for students to communicate, it also has the potential to change the power structure and interaction patterns in the classroom. Take teacher-in-role for example. When taking a role, the teacher needs to go beyond the functions he/she usually performs as “an instructor, model and resource” (Kao & O’Neill, 1998, p. 2) so that students can use language

creatively and respond differently according to how the teacher behaves and speaks in role. O'Toole (2008) suggests a number of roles, both in high- or low-status positions, which teachers can play to put pressure on students' language output. His suggestions include being someone who has information but is reluctant or unable to deliver it coherently, someone who is in need of information or help, someone who throws in a bombshell but takes no responsibility, or someone who is a provocateur (p. 26). This technique also draws the class together "in listening, thinking, and building the event with speculation and anticipation as they look for clues to the emerging dramatic world in which they participate" (J. Liu, 2002, p. 68). Since the fictional world is constructed through mutual participation, it gives students a sense of ownership toward the activity which engages them in making verbal contribution to keep the drama going and extend its scope and depth. As Kao and O'Neill (1998) state, "When students are involved in creating and maintaining dialogues in fictional dramatic situations—the primary purpose of drama—a range of significant learnings occur" (p. 2). In a well-designed dramatic situation constituted with conflicts and roles, the learners' need for communication tends to overcome their fear of inadequacy of language so that they are able to make the best use of the language skills they already possess (Somers, 1994, p. 139). The above discussion clearly shows why drama is seen by many practitioners as an economical way to maximise opportunities for pupils' oracy development, paving the way for literacy learning.

3.6 Drama and Literacy

Learning to read and write is a multifaceted and complicated process. For

young learners of a foreign language, this process can be even more challenging. Firstly, they need to familiarise themselves with the arbitrary associations between sounds and meaning in a new language; some sounds may not exist in their own first language. Secondly, it is indispensable for them to identify the sounds with a set of written signs which record the spoken words. Not many languages, however, have regular grapho-phonemic relationships that make the letter-sound association an effortless endeavour for learners. English, the target language discussed in this thesis, has undergone considerable alterations throughout history. English orthography, as Arab-Moghaddam and Sénécha (2001) point out, “is characterised by both polyphony (i.e. a grapheme representing more than one phoneme) and polygraphy (i.e. a phoneme represented by more than one grapheme) which results in a complex script to read and write” (p. 140). Both native and non-native speakers often struggle with irregularity in English spelling. Words like “bear,” “fear,” “knight,” “weight”—to name but a few—can be very confusing to young EFL learners.

There is a tendency that learners will transfer their knowledge and skills of first language literacy to their second language learning. The brain/mind, according to Cameron (2001), “automatically tries to apply the first language experience by looking for familiar cues” (p. 136). Children from countries with the Roman alphabet know how to sound out words and divide words into syllables. These transferable skills are likely to help reduce difficulty in their learning to read and write in English. Children with Chinese as first language (L1), by contrast, need to learn to recognise the English alphabet and the complex letter sound correspondence from scratch. The chance to find “familiar cues” in English is rare for the L1 learner of Chinese. As a pictographic writing

system, Chinese writing symbols represent ideas and concepts, which are hugely different from English alphabetic system where the symbols stand for sounds. When learning English, the Chinese L1 learner “has to learn not only another language, but also a completely different conception of what the writing system is and does” (Kress, 2000, p. 2). To pave the way for pupils to succeed in reading and writing in English, primary English teachers in Taiwan tend to spend a large amount of time on phonics instruction, hoping their pupils will be able to sound out and spell words effectively. It is debatable whether phonics-based teaching is the most suitable way to teach reading to young learners. Placing excessive emphasis on “word attack” skills, however, may cause children to “bark at the print” without fully understanding what they are reading. In addition, phonics alone is not an adequate clue to all the ‘irregular’ symbol/pronunciation relationships in English. Becoming literate in English is more than memorising sound/letter combinations. In the following section, I will discuss what it means to become literate, what learning approaches should be involved in the teaching of literacy, and how drama affects literacy learning.

Becoming Literate

Definitions of literacy range widely. For some, literacy is simply the ability to read and write various types of texts to meet the basic need for communication. For others, being literate involves thinking and the capacity for manipulating language and utilising modes of discourse for language for a specific purpose and audience. As Corden (2000) puts it, “literacy is a problematic concept, dependent on a number of factors and what a particular culture of society deems to be important and relevant” (p. 28). How literacy is defined leads to how literacy is taught. Before exploring how drama can facilitate the development of literacy

skills, some of the meanings underlying the term, literacy, need to be untangled first.

When being literate means being able to read and write, literacy teaching entails the mastery of a set of discrete linguistic skills which enable students to decode meanings from texts as well as produce texts. In such a scenario, literacy teaching features the imparting of knowledge of three cueing systems—graphophonic (letter/sound relationships), syntactic (grammar and structure of sentences), and semantic (meaning of the text). Regarding language merely as a body of skills to be mastered and deployed, claims Winston (2004a), results in a divorce of language exercises from context, “as it is the skill rather than the experience that is seen as important” (p. 20). Though skill-based literacy is important as in Cameron’s (2001) belief that “learning the detail of how texts are written and can be understood is crucial to children’s educational and personal development” (p. 125), it should not be considered the one and only aspect in the teaching of literacy. Literacy is about language and the cueing systems are only part of language.

Halliday (1970) has proposed an influential theoretical framework in which language is analysed in terms of four strata: Context, Semantics, Lexico-Grammar and Phonology-Graphology. He maintains that language performs three metafunctions:

- Ideational function: used for the expression of content;
- Interpersonal function: used to maintain and establish social relations;
- Textual function: used to provide cohesive relations within spoken or written texts. (p. 143)

He goes on to argue that social context, a decisive factor in one’s choice of

register, includes three situational variables:

- Field: an ongoing social activity or a subject matter of a text;
- Tenor: the relations among the participants;
- Mode: physical medium adopted for communication including the channel and the rhetorical mode. (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 12)

These three variables which realise context are correspondingly related to the three metafunctions of language. That is, the ideational function is effectuated by means of the field, the interpersonal by means of the tenor and the textual by means of the mode. Halliday's theoretical framework suggests that language is a socially constructed system. Viewing language in a social semiotic way, he suggests that it is essential to bring contexts of situation into focus in order to understand the functions of specific linguistic structures and examine meaning potential. He writes,

We do not experience language in isolation ... but always in relation to a scenario, some background of persons and actions and events from which the things which are said derive their meaning. This is referred to as the 'situation', so language is said to function in 'contexts of situation' and any account of language which fails to build in the situation as an essential ingredient is likely to be artificial and unrewarding. (Halliday, 1978, pp. 28-29)

According to this view, being literate is a more complex concept which goes far beyond the acquisition of a set of decontextualised coding and decoding skills. It involves the ability to produce and interpret texts in a given context where the realisation of meaning potential deeply depends on one's social and cultural identity. As a result, the context of situation should not be separated from literacy teaching.

The importance of contextualisation in language learning has been stressed

by Donaldson too. She contends, “ the child does not interpret words in isolation—he interprets situation” (Donaldson, 1978, p. 88). Operating in an “as if” world, drama provides abundant choices of contexts for language use beyond the bounds of the classroom. As Byron (1986) states, “Drama cannot function at the level of generalities—it requires a very specific setting in time, place and action” (p. 44). In drama, additionally, time can be altered, space changed, and identity shifted. By means of drama conventions, an imagined context can be created in which the class and teacher are able to suspend their disbelief “in order to pretend, as a group, that they are *other* people, in *another* place, in *another* time (Neelands, 1984, p. 46). The transformations of space, time and identities make it possible for children to “try out and experiment with new ideas, concepts, values, roles and language in action,” as Neelands (1984, p. 6) suggests.

Multiple Ways of Learning

People approach learning situations in different ways. Everyone has his/her personal preferences in processing information and solving problems. These personal preferences can be treated as different learning styles. Some theorists categorise learning styles in terms of polar opposites such as wholist/analyst and verbaliser-imager. According to Adey (1999), wholists tend to get an understanding of the general structure and reach a conclusion on the basis of the ‘big picture’, while analysts prefers to look at the detail of what is to be learned. Verbalisers are inclined to learn from words, either spoken or written; imagers feel more comfortable with information presented in pictorial or diagrammatic fashion. Some classify learning styles in terms of sensory channels. Fielding (1996), for example, describes learning styles as follows:

Auditory students prefer to learn mainly through talking or hearing ... Visual learners are helped most when they can see a visual equivalent or encounter the thing or process itself in a visual way ... Kinaesthetic learners have a need to touch and get physically involved in the work. (1996, p. 88)

Engaging in multiple ways of learning enables children to fix the learning experience more firmly in their mind. For instance, visual learners, who usually have good spatial awareness, welcome drama activities like creating still images and sculpting their partners. These activities can also be enjoyed by kinaesthetic learners who like to touch, to move around, and to manipulate objects. For them, miming and acting out attract them to take part in. Drama conventions such as voices in the head, conscience alley, hot-seating, and sound collage, if well conducted, can keep auditory learners engrossed because of their capacity for verbal exchange and mimicking sounds.

Another well-known and widely applied taxonomy of learning preferences has been defined by Gardner (1983), who identified at least seven multiple intelligences, including logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, body/kinaesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and verbal/linguistic. It is likely that every individual possesses these seven intelligences; nevertheless, they do not develop at the same rate or to the same extent in each person. The key point here is, as Fielding (1996) posits, that “different styles of learning are of equal value and of equal worth” (p. 83). It is suggested that the teacher should cater for students’ diverse learning needs in classroom practice to assist them reach full potential with their multiple intelligences. What very often happens in the classroom is that only certain types of intelligences, e.g. verbal/linguistic and logical/mathematical, are most prized. Entwistle (1991) points out the dangers of favouring one particular teaching approach at the expense of the exclusion of

others when he writes:

The decision to adopt an extreme teaching method, or to espouse a particular philosophy of education to the exclusion of any other, could be seen as an unjustifiable self-indulgence. That style of teaching might well be personally satisfying to the teacher and to like-minded students, but would impose on other students an alien way of learning. (pp. 144-145)

Gardner's argument implies that, in order to promote children's literacy learning, it is important for teachers to incorporate as many intelligences as possible into their teaching. The greater the variety of multisensory learning tasks, the more likely for children to learn efficiently. Drama, as Nicholson (2000) notes, is a multitextual art form which combines visual, aural, verbal, and kinaesthetic languages in such a way that offers children with different points of entry into the work and different ways of engaging with the text. Working in drama, therefore, would inevitably demand a wide range of intelligences; therefore, it provides a venue for each individual to contribute and to gain confidence as well.

Research on Drama and Literacy

Numbers of studies attest to the value of integrating drama in developing students' reading comprehension. Wagner (1998b) reviewed 27 quasi-experimental studies and discovered, in 16 of them, a causal effect for drama on story recall, comprehension, and/or vocabulary. Podlozny (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of 80 experimental comparisons selected from two hundred studies conducted since 1950, investigating the relationship between drama instruction and academic ability. The results of her meta-analyses have shown drama to be positively correlated with improved story comprehension, reading achievement, reading readiness, and writing, indicating a promising

feasibility for teachers to apply drama to promoting “deeper learning in a variety of verbal domains” (p. 268). In Parks and Rose’s (1997) study, fourth-grade students of various racial and ethnic backgrounds participated in a ten-week drama programme which included drama games and acting skills training. The participant students showed significant gains in reading comprehension scores on the Iowa Test for Basic Skills, in grade-equivalent terms of three months more than the comparison group, which received no special teaching. The growth of reading comprehension skills was also found in DuPont’s (1992) research. After receiving instruction combining creative drama and children’s literature reading material, the fifth-grade remedial students in the control group achieved consistent gains on a standardised reading comprehension test, and moreover, they demonstrated the ability to transfer skills acquired in the process of creative drama to new, unrelated reading material.

A growing body of evidence also shows the effect of drama on writing development. Wagner (1986) found that role playing in partners is more productive of audience-oriented persuasive letter writing composed by fourth- and eighth-graders than no instruction or direct instruction with discussion and models. Roubicek’s (1983) study compared the effect of story dramatisation and structured discussion on fifth graders’ compositions. The story enactment group consistently composed better essays than the control group. Moore and Caldwell’s (1993) use of drama and drawing as planning activities in narrative writing significantly enhanced second- and third-grade students’ writing quality in comparison with that of the control group adopting the traditional discussion method. Cremin and her colleagues (2006) carried out a year-long, qualitative study to examine the relationship between writing and drama. Two approaches

were employed in the pilot study. One was “genre specific” in which the pupils worked towards a predetermined text type during a more teacher-led, writing goal-oriented drama process. The other was “seize the moment”, which allowed writing to emerge naturally as a way of responding to the situations encountered within the fictional frame and gave the learners free choice of their written form. The “seize the moment” approach produced more adventurous and inventive writing among the pupils in the pilot study; therefore, it was later employed in the main study. The major features of drama identified to be associated with children’s high quality writing were “the presence of tension, full affective engagement, time for incubation and a strong sense of stance and purpose gained in part through role adoption” (p. 287). The researchers also found that drama provided the ideational and interpersonal support to motivate the pupils who were exceptionally dedicated and committed to their writing composed in the imaginary situation. Neelands, Booth, and Zeigler (1993) conducted a six-month study, utilising a naturalistic observation method to explore how drama impacts upon adolescents’ writing development. The results indicated a small but significant increase in the students’ attitudes towards writing. Writing in drama, as the students replied, provided them with a more relaxed atmosphere without the stress of assessment, more opportunities for personal response writing/ownership of topic, a clearer purpose for writing, more opportunity to collaborate on ideas, etc (p. 22). Crumpler and Schneider’s (2002) cross-case analysis revealed that participating in drama enabled children to take on multiple perspectives and stimulated their vocabulary use, which added more depth and detail in their characters and stories.

Drama and Literacy Learning

The research that has been conducted and cited thus far indicated that drama methods foster literacy growth in varied perspectives. From the discussion above and in Section 3.5, some conclusions about literacy learning can be drawn. First of all, oracy is considered as a seedbed for literacy; more exploratory talk, therefore, should be encouraged in the classroom. Secondly, as language is socially constructed, teachers should take into account how they create relevant “contexts of situation” (Halliday, 1978, pp. 28-29) in the teaching of literacy. Lastly, teachers ought to allow for a variety of different learning styles and intelligences to ensure the effectiveness of literacy teaching. The following part of this section is concerned with how drama can contribute to literacy development on the basis of the conclusions drawn here.

■ **Drama as a Context for Reading**

Unlike spoken language which is normally accompanied by paralinguistic features and interpersonal exchanges that aid the child’s comprehension of the utterance, written text “operates through only one kind of sign—written words on a page” (Byron, 1986, p. 77). The reader needs to discover and construct the context embedded in the print on the page which is “featureless and does nothing visually to capture the attention or involve the emotions” (Reid, 1991, p. 73). For beginners, according to Reid (1991), “there is loss and change in the transfer to print—loss of immediacy of relevance, loss of vividness, loss of support in the search for meaning” (p. 73). Facing the written text alone, the readers themselves can only rely mostly on their background knowledge and decoding skills to infer meaning from the text. Young learners of a foreign language, however, will need more visual and aural assistance in order to understand a text (Brewster, 1991). Byron (1986) observes that young learners in general are “stronger at reading

action, or words-embedded-in-action, than they are at reading words alone” (p. 79). Images, both still and moving, play an influential part in children’s perception of meaning. Acknowledging the importance of the visual in children’s lives and the increasing use of multi-modal texts in today’s technological world, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) urge that children’s ability to use elements of “visual grammar” should be developed further at school by encouraging them to “actively experiment with the representational resources of word and image, and with the ways in which they can be combined” (p. 113). Images also have a significant function in language learning since they create new linguistic links in the target language (Jane Jones & Coffey, 2006). Drama makes the literary world more accessible for children because it permits them to turn the abstract written words into concrete images and to construct meaning from the text based on collective experience. Winston (2004b) contends, “Language can therefore be experienced—heard, interpreted and used—in contexts that seem real to children” (p. 26). To Neelands (2004), “drama provides pupils with an immediate and physical means of getting to grips with texts and textual representation” (p. 34). Through drama, children enter a fictional world created by the writer’s descriptions, taking on roles to be in the character’s shoe. This emotional engagement can motivate them to keep on reading and their participation in drama activities, furthermore, brings life into the written text, which is no longer dull and featureless print on paper.

Skilful writers often leave gaps in the text for readers to fill in. The teacher can use drama activities like hot-seating, thought tracking, interviews, interrogations, gossip circle (Neelands, 2004, pp. 100-105) for children to mine the text’s potential gaps such as unrecorded conversation, unmentioned thoughts,

off the page scenarios, possible but undescribed meetings (Grainger, 2004, p. 96). In so doing, children are able to enter the character's inner life and gain "a sense of co-authorship of the text and collaboration with the author" (Baldwin & Fleming, 2003, p. 19) from the dramatic experience. This experience also helps to build a context for learners to actively construct meaning from the text. It is also the value of drama in literacy that Winston (2004a) argues for—the exciting contexts drama provides "to stimulate higher order skills of inferring meaning from text, of critically engaging with it and, where appropriate, of expressively articulating it" (p. 26).

■ **Drama as a Catalyst for Writing**

Writing requires a clear Audience, Purpose and Topic to be "APT" (Cameron, 2001, p. 156), without which writing is reduced to a task of skill building aiming at mastering the rules of punctuation, spelling, grammar, and writing structure, as "textual function" in Halliday's theoretical framework of language. It is believed that this toolkit approach "will produce competent, though, *disengaged*, writers" (Packwood & Messenheimer, 2003, p. 145). The importance of including Halliday's ideational and interpersonal functions in the process of composition has been emphasised by Bearne (2002), who proposes that "text, sentence and word level work must be informed by the world of ideas and the social world, by a writer's ideas and urge to meaning" (p. 13).

Accordingly, writing should be seen as a process for writers to "find their own voices" and "try out ideas, thoughts, emotions, oppositions" (p. 13). Within the dramatic framework, children take on roles, interact with other characters, and enact the situations to experience the characters' dilemma of choice, feel the tension, and share their happiness or sadness. Grainger (2005) argues that this

emotional engagement and identification with characters enhances “authenticity and often a real sense of audience” (p. 82). When writing is embedded in part of a drama, children tend to express “a more authentic voice than when they write as themselves” (Wagner, 1998b, p. 122). Grainger (2004) describes the benefit of writing in role:

Genuine writing in role, during or after some dramatic engagement, can provide a clearer than usual stance or sense of perspective. Through alignment with a particular character in a text ..., the voice and views of the author are shaped and formed. (p. 92)

Steele (2003) also views working in role as a unique way for learners to think, talk, respond and interact for a change of perspective to occur. She claims that slowing down action by using drama activities such as thought tracking, hot-seating, and freeze-framing, can help children “delve deeper and more reflectively” (p. 184). Through drama, children link together the “there and then” in stories and the world of “here and now,” building up their understanding upon their experience in drama, which “can bring vividness and an authentic voice” (p. 185) to their writing. The role of drama in children’s writing development is made clear in the following figure.

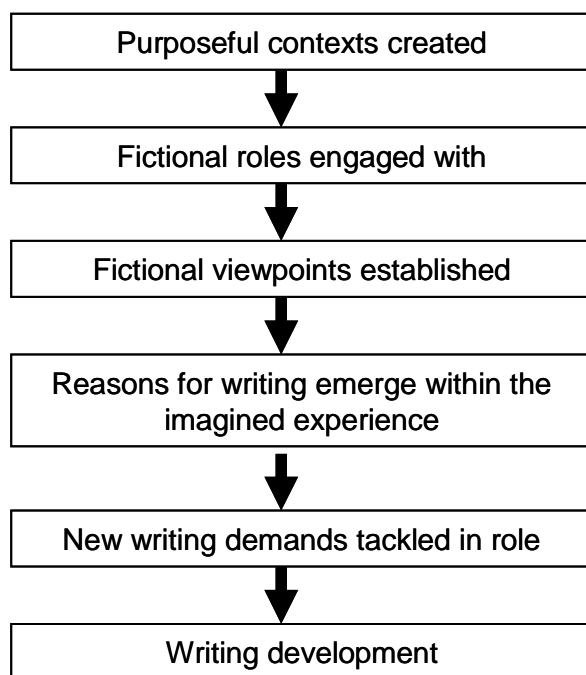


Figure 3.1 Writing through drama (adapted from Baldwin & Fleming, 2003, p. 21)

The above figure implies that writing demands tackled in role facilitate writing development. To be more specific, children are able to practise writing in various registers and genres in accordance with the situation of context created in the imaginary world. Take the story of *Chicken Licken* for example. If the children are asked to write in role of the animals to tell the King that the sky is falling, they need to express their worry and anxiety by words. In the meantime, they also need to learn how to compose a formal letter including appropriate greetings, complimentary closure, and polite wording. In other words, both appropriate vocabulary and appropriate registers should be selected in tune with the status of characters in the imagined context. This fictional writing demand—a letter to a person of authority, presents itself as a context which requires pupils’ extra attention to spelling, grammar and punctuation. Writing in drama thus makes skills-based language activities “not only purposeful but even fun and exciting to children” (Winston, 2004a, p. 20).

Different drama conventions can act as catalysts for varied forms of writing. In her article, Grainger (2004, pp. 96-103) suggests a list of drama activities which naturally generate different kinds of genres. Freeze frames, for instance, lead to narrative writing. Thought tracking supports writing in the reflective mode such as diary or letter writing. Questions and answers in hot seating have the potential to prompt news articles or magazine interviews. Formal meetings in court and public events can be turned into the raw materials for meeting minutes, official records or posters. Research has shown that discussion method in a more traditional classroom is less effective in improving children's writing skills. Talk in the drama world, on the contrary, is an interplay of each pupil's background knowledge and social interactions, which can serve as oral rehearsal for writing. Composing within a dramatic frame involves "thinking, listening, creating, and doing and engaged learners' repertoire of strategies," and most importantly, gives them the freedom to "use their whole being in meaning-making (Crumpler & Schneider, 2002, p. 62).

Learning to become literate is not a static process but a dynamic progression of meaning negotiation. Provided that children can fully participate in it as a whole being—with the whole body as well as the brain, they will learn to the maximum degree. Literacy skills should not be viewed narrowly as linguistic abilities. It is the context of situation that should be placed at the heart of literacy curricula. Oracy provides the basis for children's growth in reading and writing. A great number of studies have suggested that learning with the dramatic framework embraces all these important factors in literacy development. Drama embodies the words and ideas, brings the written texts off the page, and makes them happen here and now. It encourages children to listen to each other, have

their own say, and try out a range of registers to communicate in the context.

3.7 Drama and Non-verbal Communication

Research on various aspects of paralinguistic communication is gaining a growing awareness among teachers and theorists in the field of second language teaching and learning. The title of a recent special issue of the journal *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (2008), ‘Gesture and SLA: Toward an Integrated Approach’, reflects such a trend. Gesture studies look into paralinguistic features of language. Although the paralinguistic label, as Gullberg and McCafferty (2008) mention, might carry an underlying assumption that gesture is not the central part of linguistic meaning, research findings of gesture studies suggest the opposite. Their review of gesture studies show gestures are of both communicative and psychological importance in second language learning. They conclude that “gestural enhancing of input leads to greater comprehension and, possibly, acquisition” (Gullberg & McCafferty, 2008, p. 137).

Verbal messages alone cannot lend themselves to successful communication. Getting messages across requires not only linguistic expressions but also paralinguistic signals. Abercrombie (1968) expressed this complementary function very clearly:

We speak with our vocal organs, but we converse with our entire bodies.... Paralinguistic phenomena...occur alongside spoken language, interact with it, and produce together with it a total system of communication. ... The study of paralinguistic behaviour is part of the study of conversation: the conversational use of spoken language cannot be properly understood unless paralinguistic elements are taken into account. (p. 55)

Bavelas and her colleagues (1992) are right when they conclude that “referential

acts convey meaning, depict events, and represent ideas. They specify and often clarify verbal references and they can denote meanings that may not be in the accompanying words” (pp. 470-471). There is a tendency that one’s visual and aural signals carry more messages than one’s utterances. These paralinguistic signals include use of facial expressions, gestures, and voices. The significance of non-verbal elements of language is widely recognised in the research perspective and awareness has been raised in designing curriculum. For instance, in H.M. Inspectorate’s papers on *The Curriculum 11-16*, published by the Department of Education and Science (1977) in the United Kingdom, the importance of non-verbal behaviour has been highlighted—“At all stages it must be appreciated that the spoken word cannot be realistically taught unless there is scope for the bodily and paralinguistic features on which all effective communication heavily relies” (cited in Evans, 1984, pp. 45-46). However, when it comes to real teaching practice, the body, as Powell (2007) observed, in “education in general has been largely still” (p. 1083). She writes:

Our predilection for theories of teaching and learning that treat the mind and body as discrete entities ignores the ways in which mind is always embodied through interanimation with the world, in which eyes, hands, ears, and nose enable us to make meaning—embodied knowledge in which body-mind dualism becomes bodymind unity. (p. 1083)

In a traditional L2 classroom, very often, teachers cram their students with vocabulary and grammar while the learners remain seated, listening passively most of the time. There are certainly some language activities for them to move around and practise orally but more frequently, as Jensen and Hermer (1998) have claimed, “all the vocabulary and grammar was in our heads and not in our arms, mouths, eyes or feet” (p. 178). Such kinds of disembodied language “do

not carry language learning far” (Lee, 1986, p. 1). Kao and O’Neill’s (1998) observation has also shown that L2 learners use less body language in more traditional classroom activities such as answering teacher-led questions or drill-like exercises. Their interviews with L2 learners indicate that the learners believe dramatic body movement and changes of intonation help to bridge the gap of communication which results from their lack of language ability. Kao and O’Neill (1998), therefore, argue for the “inclusion of non-verbal episodes” in language teaching as it is part of daily communication in the real world (p. 30). Drama, in Maley and Duff’s (2005) words, “attempts to put back some of this forgotten emotional content into language and to put the body back too” (p. 7).

Some language teachers may argue against sparing precious class time for physical activities since language learning and teaching itself should be the top priority. For them, it is more practical to present, explain, and have learners practise language items such as vocabulary, sentence structures and dialogues. Culham’s (2002) experience of sharing her non-verbal drama activities with language teachers reveals such a doubt:

When sharing this work with teachers of ESL, I often sense that although they enjoy drama activities and see their value as group “ice breakers,” they question the benefits of the activities in terms of language enhancement or enrichment. (p. 109)

Especially for primary school English teachers in Taiwan, time is always a main concern. With only two 40-minute classes each week, they often have to work under the pressure of catching up with the teaching schedule. As a result, non-verbal activities which do not seem to generate too much language tend to be excluded from the teaching plans. Nevertheless, what they are in danger of

missing is the broader benefit that physical activities can bring to their students. Learners with lower language proficiency levels especially “need to rely on their body language to express their thoughts and ideas” (J. Liu, 2002, p. 61). Learning how to express themselves by using facial expressions and body language is helpful to remove their inhibitions in communicating in a foreign language and make themselves better understood.

Young learners, as discussed in Section 3.1, are physically active in nature. Their energy should be channelled and utilised properly so that they can absorb and concentrate on language lessons (Pauncz, 1980). In other words, physical involvement for children is far more important than passive oral practice alone. Donoghue and Kunkle (1979) explain that active practice, such as acting out commands in the target language, benefits children’s language learning in two aspects. Firstly, it enhances listening comprehension by activating both the internal semantic systems and psychomotor systems, which improves recall of the second language. Secondly, it helps to reduce young learners’ fidgeting in class. In the words of Pauncz (1980), “not only is this energy actively directed to the learning of the language but it also reinforces the concepts which are being discussed” (p. 207). Similarly, Wagner (1998a) notes that children’s understanding is reliant on enactive knowing and kinesthetic experience. Culham (2002) also attests that the incorporation of movement into children’s learning experience can facilitate their recall of a new word, concept or sequence of information.

Physicality is at the core of drama in education. In educational drama, learners often participate in a variety of physical activities, which cater for children’s need to be physically active as well as providing them with

opportunities to be fully aware of non-verbal elements of language. Through dramatising a text, as Rastelli (2006) argues, “we give life to the words written on the page and help students become aware of speech features, paralinguistic and extra linguistic features” (p. 82). Drama, to quote Evans (1984), “has the capacity for tuning the ear to the nuances of meaning by encouraging pupils to look behind and beyond the face value of words” (p. 49). In drama activities such as “still image” or “tableau,” pupils, either as individuals or as a group, create a frozen image using their own bodies to capture a moment in time, depict a picture, or crystallise an idea. It is a highly controlled way to suspend time in drama which gives the participants “pause to gaze and reflect and to inquire into human behaviour” (Winston & Tandy, 2009, p. 34). Pupils learn how to condense meaning into a single concrete image and the way meaning is delivered through subtle changes in non-verbal signals such as expression, gesture and position (Fleming, 1994, p. 93). The stillness of tableaux makes it a useful means for pupils to represent “tricky” situations like fights or riots in drama (Neelands & Goode, 2000). The open interpretation of the body language presented in the freeze frame, according to J. Liu (2002), encourages students’ linguistic output:

As a frozen image will compel the observers to come up with informed guesses and multiple possible meaning interpretations, it encourages students’ linguistic output to be free from anxiety, and thus allows the teacher to identify the forms the students have already mastered as well as those they still need to learn in order to convey their thoughts and ideas appropriately and idiomatically, and to introduce and reinforce these forms based on the needs of communication. (p. 62).

Other than conceptual meaning, referring to “the overt or face-value meaning of a text” (Leech, 1974, p. 50), language also carries an expressive function to “express its originator’s feelings and attitudes” (Leech, 1974, p. 47).

To be more specific, Elam (1980) maintains:

Qualifiers like pitch height and intensity, as well as vocalizations such as laughing, crying, shouting and whispering, are taken to be indices of the speaker's emotional or psychological state and of the 'attitudinal colouring' (Lyons, 1977, p. 65) that he lends to his language. (p. 80)

Very often, paralinguistic vocal elements reinforce the spoken messages (G. Brown, 1977). Elam (1980) goes on to explain how vocalic features help to clear up the ambiguity of the speech act. He states:

Intimately related to the speaker's parakinesic 'orchestrating' of his discourse are those vocalic characteristics with which he endows it over and above its phonemic and syntactic structure—e.g. such factors as pitch, loudness, tempo, timbre and non-verbal sounds—and which have come to be known as *paralinguistic* (or suprasegmental) features. Such features supply essential information regarding the speaker's state, intentions and attitudes, serving further (in conjunction with kinesic factors) to disambiguate the speech act. (p. 79)

Voice can convey mood, personality, and atmosphere, too. Working in drama encourages children to explore various ways of vocal expression. They can incorporate a great many of vocal elements to represent characters, create a mood, increase vocal dynamics, or respond to different circumstances in the dramatic context. They also need to exhibit clear articulation and diction when presenting drama to their peers. Different from dialogues in many English textbooks which are normally read out in a monotonous voice by children, the dialogic texts derived from drama or stories have a better chance of engaging children's emotions so that they can enhance their vocal interpretation.

Only when teachers are aware of the role that non-verbal features play in oral communication, will they be able to effectively incorporate appropriate

classroom activities into their teaching. Drama can be one of the most suitable ways to help children to “speak with more confidence, with better articulation and resonance (quality and volume)” and learn how to use voice to “convey different emotions (inflection, tone/pitch and intonation)” (Almond, 2005, p. 64). Almond (2005) suggests that learners are able to practise the broader aspects of communication in drama, such as “gesture and gesticulation, facial expression, eye contact and eye movement, posture and movement, proxemics, and prosody” (p. 11), which may assist them to become a better communicator.

3.8 Story as Vehicle for Teaching Children English as a Foreign Language

People tell stories for various reasons. Some stories are told to entertain and some to pass on wisdom, knowledge, morals to future generations. For young children, stories are an important part of their lives. Not only do children learn about the world around them through stories, and above all, they build up a foundation for future learning as well. Research has shown that there is a strong association between children’s success in school and their experience with storybooks and storytelling in their mother tongue from an early age. In his longitudinal study, Wells (1985) found that all the children who outperformed on the Knowledge of Literacy tests had stories read or told to them before they started their formal education. He argues that the content of the school curriculum which is presented in a more and more symbolic writing style moves children along the continuum of academic achievement. In other words, the level of a child’s mastery of literacy is a major determinant of his/her educational achievement. Wells (1986) explains:

Without the ability to cope with this literate form of language, therefore—that is to say, with the linguistic representation of ideas that are disembedded from a context of specific personal experience—children become progressively less able to meet the demands of an academic curriculum and, whether justly or not, are judged to be intellectually limited. (p. 193)

With regards to the significance of stories in children's literacy development, Wray and Medwell (1991) maintain that most of the new vocabulary children pick up in their school years is acquired through stories they read or listen to (p. 48). The value of stories, however, is not limited to language gains. Hester (1983) declares that stories also bring personal, emotional and learning gains to children beyond those of language.

The benefits of stories on a child's first language acquisition have been well established. But can the use of stories facilitate young learners' foreign language learning, too? On the subject of the increasing popularity of stories in EFL classrooms, the answer seems positive. Many claims have been made about the advantages of learning English through stories. Gerngross (2001), for instance, points out that stories in a foreign language are "an important source of language experience and help children to assimilate and process the language holistically" (p. 194). Kirsch (2008) argues that stories, serving as a good starting point for developing all four language skills, help to foster a child's concentration span and learning strategies. To meet the teachers' need for integrating stories into their English teaching, a number of commercial coursebook writers have produced teaching materials, such as *Playway to English* (Gerngross & Puchta, 2009), *English Land* (Nakamura & Seino, 2006), *New Chatterbox* (Strange, 2006), and *Hip Hip Hooray* (Eisele, Eisele, Hanlon, Hanlon, & Hojel, 2004), which include a variety of stories as a framework for unit planning. It is also not

difficult to find resource books with detailed guidance on the use of stories in the primary English lesson (G. Ellis & Brewster, 1991; G. Ellis & Brewster, 2002; Hester, 1983; A. Wright, 1995, 1997).

Even though children generally enjoy listening to stories, understanding stories in a foreign tongue can sometimes be so challenging a task that it may bring no delight but frustration to young learners. “Simply reading a story aloud to a class without preparation,” note Brewster, Ellis, and Girard (1992), “could be disastrous, with a loss of pupil attention, motivation, and self-confidence” (p. 158). Consequently, they emphasise that careful planning is indispensable to a successful lesson with storybooks or storytelling. To bring about the best outcomes possible from the adoption of stories, teachers need to have some basic concepts about how stories can be an effective tool in children’s English learning. The succeeding paragraphs will discuss suitable types of stories for the primary EFL classroom, criteria for choosing stories, and linguistic functions of stories.

Stories for Young Learners of English

■ Picture Story Books

One of the impacts of the communicative approach, in which classroom goals are focused on preparing students to use the target language in real situations, is an increased call for “[using] authentic texts whenever possible” (Grellet, 1981, p. 7). The necessity of authentic materials, in D. F. Clarke’s (1989) words, is almost “a moral *sine qua non* of the language classroom” (p. 73). Compared with the artificial, prefabricated language specially produced for the purpose of language teaching, an authentic text is “created to fulfil some social purpose in the language community” (Little et al., 1989, p. 25) and therefore, offers students exposure to language which “is uncompromising towards the

learner and reflects real-world goals” (D. F. Clarke, 1989, p. 73). A number of potential advantages of authentic materials have been proposed as the following (D. F. Clarke, 1989; Kilickaya, 2004; Peacock, 1997; J. C. Richards, 2001):

- They have a positive effect on learner motivation.
- They encourage learners to gain a global understanding of texts without attempting to understand every detail.
- They enhance learners’ levels of on-task behaviour, concentration, and involvement.
- They increase cultural understanding about the target language.
- They support a more creative approach to teaching.

The adoption of authentic materials is greatly encouraged, yet there are still teachers who hesitate to take the plunge and give it a try. For most, the main concern is “the linguistic demands of authentic texts” (Pinter, 2006, p. 120). Authentic materials often contain difficult vocabulary and mixed sentence structures that may be beyond the learners’ current English proficiency level (J. C. Richards, 2001, p. 253). Special care, as pointed out by Guariento and Morley (2001), should be given to “lexical and syntactic simplicity and/or content familiarity/predictability” (p. 348) when selecting authentic texts for lower level students. Otherwise, the teacher may not be able to elicit meaningful responses from students, and even worse, they may feel frustrated and demotivated when “[getting] bogged down in a morass of unfamiliar lexis and idiom” (Swan, 1985, p. 85).

Authentic materials include instructions, timetables, menus, brochures, newspaper and magazine articles—the list goes on and on. Among them, storybooks, or so-called real books, which are originally written for

English-speaking children to enjoy at their leisure, are considered to be “a great source of interest and motivation for young learners” (Pinter, 2006, p. 124).

Convinced that children’s literature can benefit learners in both the first and second language classroom, Parker and Parker (1991) even stress that “Real reading needs real books” (p. 178). Real books offer teachers a wide variety of levels, themes, and text types to choose from and use flexibly in class.

Storybooks for children are also normally accompanied with “aesthetically pleasing illustrations,” helping to crystallise the meaning of the text and allowing for the teacher and students to use the key vocabulary for discussions (Ghosn, 2002, p. 174). Sipe (1998) describes the text-picture relationship as “the synergy of words and pictures”:

In a picture book, both the text and the illustration sequence would be incomplete without each other. They have a synergistic relationship in which the total effect depends not only on the union of the text and illustrations but also on the perceived interactions or transactions between these two parts. (pp. 98-99)

The inseparable bond between the text and illustrations in picture storybooks lends them particularly well to supporting beginning EFL learners. As discussed earlier in the section on Drama and Literacy, images help to create new linguistic links in the target language. Pictures, as a form of images, have a significant part to play in aiding children’s general comprehension of the text (G. Ellis & Brewster, 1991; Parker & Parker, 1991). Artistic illustrations can add to their enjoyable reading experience as well. Claiming that children’s literature is in particular suitable for 9-14 year-old students with limited English proficiency, Smallwood (1988) proposes a set of ten criteria for selecting storybooks appropriate for EFL. Among the criteria, Smallwood regards the quality of

illustrations as the most important because, for a language teacher, simplifying or retelling a story may not be a difficult task but creating illustrations surely is.

In Taiwan, with the commencement of educational reform, teachers are entitled to choose books and teaching materials for their students. This decision-making power has subsequently increased primary English teachers' familiarity with the use of picture books over the years. Researchers, too, are paying closer attention to the role of storybooks in the primary English class. C.-H. Liu and Chou (2004) interviewed current primary English teachers and found that suitable storybooks for their students are simple, short with fascinating plots, repetitive sentence structures, colourful illustrations and themes related to the textbook. As a teaching reference, they listed 80 picture books which are in accordance with the themes in the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum Guidelines and designed activities and learning tasks for 25 of the books listed. Sheu's (2005) study revealed three perceived educational values of English picture books, including linguistic value, the value of the story, and the value of the pictures. But on the other hand, she also found that the students considered vocabulary as the main challenge in reading the picture books. It is true that "to adapt or not to adapt" has been an ongoing debate in ELT. It is also true that authentic texts may make beginning level students flinch. Pinter (2006) suggests that some changes and adaptations to authentic texts are necessary to suit learners' competence level. The "How" part will be addressed later in this section.

■ Traditional Tales

Another type of stories that are often told to young learners of English is traditional tales. It is generally agreed that stories children are familiar with are easier for EYL teachers to start with (Dunn, 1984; Jane Jones & Coffey, 2006;

Kirsch, 2008; Tierney & Dobson, 1995). Young learners' existing knowledge of the story in their first language can work as a scaffolding to enhance their understanding of the story and target language use. Kirsch (2008) adds that "Familiar tales (e.g. Hansel and Gretel, Three Little Pigs) encourage children to concentrate on the language (the sound, the vocabulary, the structures) rather than the content" (p. 97). Although children already know what to expect in the familiar tale, this does not make it less interesting to listen to it again because "it seems different in the foreign language" (Tierney & Dobson, 1995, p. 2). Pupils would be curious to find out how the story is told in the English counterpart. In addition, traditional tales often contain natural repetition of events and language which aids memorisation and language learning.

Pupils, in general, are fond of alternating story endings (Kirsch, 2008) and they can discover that folk tales have the potential for fun in terms of rewriting. Traditional tales usually reveal social values and depict stereotypes which can appear obsolete and need to be recognised and adjusted to the present time. Offering the children a chance to play with the text by revising the story ending allows them to link their life experience to the tradition without being straightjacketed. As Zipes (1995) indicates, "to play with authority, to play with strict models of 'classical' literature, and to explore and question them will give children a sense of power, autonomy, and self-certainty" (p. 18).

Criteria for Choosing Stories

When choosing stories for the purpose of teaching English as a foreign language to young learners, teachers need to take into account various aspects of the story. The first aspect to be discussed is the linguistic features in stories. In an EFL context, most children do not have a rich exposure to English outside the

classroom; and limited English teaching hours, as discussed previously in Section 2.1.3, impose another constraint on pupils' absorption of what is taught in class. Hence the amount of new language items presented in the story should be limited in order not to overwhelm young learners. Curtain and Pesola (1994) suggest that teachers use stories with a large proportion of pupils' previously learned vocabulary, which can help them revise language they already know. Smallwood (1988) maintains that the use of metaphorical language should be limited and sentence structures should be simple, controlled, and repetitive. Moreover, rhymes need to be included for they enhance memorisation and language learning. Echoing her view, Curtain and Pesola (1994) also agree that stories should include repeated elements as they "will provide language that children can later use for their expressive purposes" (p. 116). Cameron (2001) stresses the importance of "a balance of dialogue and narrative":

Dialogue in a story may lend itself to acting out and to learning phrases for conversation. Narrative may offer repeated patterns of language that will help grammar learning through noticing of new patterns or consolidation of patterns already met. (p. 168)

The second aspect of stories for consideration is their structures. According to Cameron (2001), there are two key organising features of stories for children. One is how events happen in a temporal sequence; the other is a story's thematic structure i.e. the resolution of a problem. These two features, nowadays regarded as prototypical of children stories, can be further divided into a number of components:

- an opening: often formulaic in fairy tales e.g. 'Once upon a time...';
- introduction of characters;
- description of the setting;
- introduction of a problem;

- a series of events;
- that lead to—
- the resolution of the problem
- a closing: often formulaic in fairy tales—‘They all lived happily ever after’;
- a moral: which may or may not be explicitly stated. (pp. 161-162)

However, teachers may find that texts entitled “stories” in many primary English course books, in fact, only present a series of activities characters move through. The lack of a plot in such “non-stories,” will fail to “capture children’s imagination” as stories can do (Cameron, 2001, p. 162). In terms of plot, or storyline, Smallwood (1988) notes that it should be age-appropriate, straightforward, clear, and in chronological order with action-packed descriptions. Good stories also require characters that children can relate to and engage with so that they can “become personally involved” in the story (G. Ellis & Brewster, 1991, p. 1). Additionally, suspense, surprise, predictability, and repetition of events are all helpful to strengthen children’s involvement with the story (Cameron, 2001).

Story Adaptation

After choosing a story with linguistic features and content structure suitable for young learners, teachers may need to adapt it to their pupils’ language levels. One of the problems of simplified stories is that they may become “a watered-down version of the English language” (G. Ellis & Brewster, 1991, p. 9) and “destroy the original” (Pinter, 2006, p. 120). Widdowson (1978) disapproved of simplifying texts, arguing that adjusting syntax and lexis to accommodate to learners’ language levels can often lead to “a distortion of use” (p. 88). He preferred simple accounts for they represent “a genuine instance of discourse, designed to meet a communicative purpose” by concentrating on “a

reformulation of propositional and illocutionary development” rather than “linguistic elements” (Widdowson, 1978, p. 89). The boundary between simplifying texts and simple accounts, however, is sometimes hard to draw in that most rewritings are likely a combination of both (Davies, 1984). Holding an eclectic view, Swan (1985) argues for the use of “both scripted and authentic material at different points in a language course for different reasons” (p. 84). He further defends the creation of specially scripted dialogues or written texts for specific groups, with which teachers are in total control of lexis, syntax, and context so that learners will be able to absorb all the high-frequency linguist elements they need to learn in an economical and effective fashion. But he also urges that bad scripted material “does nobody any good” and teachers “must be careful about quality” (p. 84).

In order to ensure the quality of adapted stories, many teachers and researchers make suggestions on how to revise stories based on the characteristics of young learners of English. G. Ellis and Brewster (1991) wrote a useful checklist of points, including vocabulary and general meaning, grammar, organisation of ideas and story length, to be examined when adapting stories:

1. Vocabulary and general meaning
 - Check unfamiliar content or words to see if it is necessary to replace unfamiliar words with more familiar ones.
 - Check idioms to see if rephrasing is needed.
 - Check clarity to see if the meaning can become clearer with more examples.
2. Grammar
 - Check tenses to see if they need to be simplified.
 - Check use of structures to see if the quantity of structures needs to be reduced.
 - Check word order to see if it is confusing even though it helps to create dramatic effect in stories.
3. Organisation of ideas
 - Check length and complexity of sentences to see if any of them need to

- be split into two.
- Check time references to see if time markers should be added to present a clear sequence of events.
- Check the way ideas are linked to see if it is necessary to insert some linking words.
- Check the way ideas are explained to see if narrative and direct speech are in proper proportion.
- 4. Check length
 - Check the number of ideas in cumulative stories to see if it is possible to shorten the story by excluding some characters or events but still keep the same effect. (pp. 18-20)

Simplifying the narratives is an option too; nevertheless, it is worth keeping the essential lines of the original stories. Sentences such as “Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin” in the story of *The Three Little Pigs*, or “All the better to hear you with, my dear” in *Little Red Riding Hood* include sounds and words which children may have fun to play with.

Linguistic Functions of Stories

Children enjoy stories and “[s]uch enjoyment creates its own justification” (Wray & Medwell, 1991, p. 50). “Stories in the foreign language have, however, even more to offer” (Gerngross, 2001, p. 194). Stories support learning English as a foreign language in several ways. The following discussion is divided into two parts to explore how repetition and contextualisation, two characteristic features of children’s stories, help children to learn English.

■ Repetition

For many language teachers, repetition is a familiar teaching method, featuring in the audiolingual based instruction of the fifties (J. C. Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The communicative movement from 1970s onward, however, directed language teachers’ efforts more towards creating a learning context for authentic communication, which has made repetition, often in association with “redundancy, boredom, lack of originality,” almost a taboo word in the classroom

(Ponterotto, 2001, p. 59). But research on first language acquisition has shown that repetition is of frequent use in mother-child discourse and has “precise pragmatic functions” and “specific grammatical structures” (Ponterotto, 2001, p. 60). Tannen’s (1987) analysis of ordinary conversations has further pointed out that repetition, pervasive in daily talks, “is a resource by which conversationalists together create a discourse, a relationship, and a world” (p. 601).

Repetition supports young children’s language learning and retention. It may be easy for young learners to pick up new sounds and words effortlessly, but “they are forgotten just as quickly as they have been ‘learned’” (Pauncz, 1980, p. 208). Children therefore need more repetition than adults do for memorising and internalising new language. It is widely observed that children seem to enjoy repetition as it gives them a sense of satisfaction and achievement, which motivates them to learn (Dunn, 1983). Children’s stories are often embedded with elements of repetition that not merely help to reinforce key linguistic elements but encourage young learners’ participation because of “patterns that ring in their ears and seduce them into joining in” (Booth & Barton, 2000, p. 13). Parallel to this view, Ponterotto (2001) affirms that stories with a combination of rhyme, rhythm, and repetition “should more likely guarantee stronger traces in the memory structure” (p. 67). This conception is supported by Kolsawalla’s (1999) study, demonstrating that new vocabulary words learned from rhythmic refrains in stories were more easily recalled by young learners than in the prose narratives. She maintains that formulaic utterances, being heard over and over again in a story, will later “become templates for the learners’ own ‘customised’ utterances” (p. 20). In their study on the effect of using predictable stories on EFL beginners’ oral and literacy development, Chien and Huang (2000) found

that children were able to assimilate repeated patterns into their language repertoire and use them creatively in producing language output. The following episodes in their study show how the children incorporated what they learned from stories into their real life conversation with the teacher:

EPISODE A

The teacher read *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* to students and elicited their comments on Goldilocks. One day, the teacher stayed and had a snack with the children after English class. They had hot oyster noodles that morning. The researcher asked the children about their food.

Researcher: How is it? Do you like it?

Nicole: Oh! This “O-a-mi-sua” (oyster noodles) is too hot!

Researcher: Oh! Really? My “O-a-mi-sua” (oyster noodles) is hot, too!

Wendy: No! No! No! Just right.

EPISODE B

The Three Little Pigs was read in the middle of the second semester. All of the children loved to play the roles of the little pigs, especially the part, “door answering.” Weeks later, the children could still clearly remember the lines in the story—“Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin.” Moreover, they adroitly applied it in the following context:

Teacher: I am a mail carrier and I deliver mail to people. Oh! This is Steve’s mail. Knock, knock, knock, anybody home?

Steve: He is not here.

Teacher: I know you’re Steve. There’s a letter for you. Let me in.

Steve: Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin.

Teacher: I’m not the big bad wolf. I am the mail carrier. There’s a letter for you. Please let me in.

All kids: No, no, no! Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin. You’re the big bad wolf. (Chien & Huang, 2000, pp. 267-268)

Predictable and repetitive narratives, as Barratt-Pugh (2000) suggests, encourage children in the early stages of English to predict what is about to happen next in the story and re-read it by themselves (p. 91). “Following meaning and predicting language,” argued by Ellis and Brewster (1991, p. 2), are indispensable to successful language learning. As discussed, the frequent repetition of certain language items within a meaningful story-based context should be a central classroom strategy in teaching English to young learners.

■ Contextualisation

According to Rivers (1981), “There is no meaning without context” (p. 231). A similar argument is put forward by H. D. Brown (2001), “Language needs to be firmly context embedded” (p. 90). What is being emphasised by both assertions is the importance of contextualisation in language learning. H. D. Brown (2001) goes on to argue that children are less capable of comprehending “context-reduced language in abstract, isolated, unconnected sentences” (p. 90). Stories are presented in a way which contains meaningful contexts for pronunciation, vocabulary, structures and functions of language. In stories, children can see how these language elements are interrelated to construct meaning. Furthermore, it is claimed that the use of stories as a holistic approach to teaching children English helps to enhance their comprehension due largely to “contextual factors” in stories. Taking fairy tales as an example, Ponterotto (2001) explains that children are able to “activate their knowledge of narrative conventions, anticipate the events of the *fabula* and interpret the character motivations as the story proceeds” (p. 69). With the support of contextual factors, children learn how they can understand a story without laboriously decoding each and every word. Only when sounds, words, and sentences are “fully integrated into meaningful language use,” as Kirsch (2008) states, does detailed work on these items become relevant and practical (p. 105). Traditional English teaching puts much emphasis on vocabulary and structures, encouraging the application of bottom-up strategies to comprehend texts. A lack of top-down processing skills in the beginning stages of English learning tends to result in children’s frustration when they need to read or listen to longer texts. Stories with elements of text level work offer young learners “opportunities to hear

extended pieces of language within a familiar and meaningful context” (Cheater & Farren, 2001, p. 51). Hence, children can concentrate on meaning rather than on form of language so that they will gain confidence and feel motivated to read even more.

Language use in a story context is richer than language of daily speech. Cameron (2001) remarks that uses of language in children’s stories are full of poetic and literary texts. Some of the devices which are beneficial to foreign language learning are summarised as follows:

- *Parallelism*: A pattern combines predictability + surprise, or repetition + change. This repeated parallel pattern provides a natural support for language learning. An example is the well-known dialogue between Little Red Riding Hood and the big bad wolf disguised as Grandma.
- *Rich vocabulary*: Children’s stories foster young learners’ vocabulary growth by including unusual words, or words that have a strong phonological content, with interesting rhythms or sounds that are onomatopoeic.
- *Alliteration*: Phrases like *red riding* and *big bad*, are a good source for learning letter sounds.
- *Contrast*: Strong contrasts between characters or actions or settings are commonly seen in children’s stories. For language learning, the lexical items that are used in connection with each idea will also form contrasting sets that may help understanding and recall.
- *Intertextuality*: A term used to describe making references within one text to aspects of other texts that have become part of shared cultural knowledge. When creating their own stories, children may incorporate

characters or language from other stories they know, which can improve their language learning. (Cameron, 2001, pp. 163-165)

Similarly, Wray and Medwell (1991) believe that experience with stories has a significant role to play in developing children's use of language. In their article, they describe how a child once read Ted Hughes' story which begins with:

The Iron Man came to the top of the cliff. How far had he walked? Nobody knows. Where had he come from? Nobody knows. How was he made? Nobody knows. Taller than a house, the Iron Man stood at the top of the cliff, on the very brink, in the darkness.

Later the child wrote:

Bigger than a bedroom, the dinosaur swung his head. Where were his friends? He did not know. Where was his home? He did not know. What should he do now? He did not know.

As Wray and Medwell (1991) comment, "He had internalised the sentence structure and order, and the use of repetition from Ted Hughes' story and later made it his own" (p. 48). Words encountered within a story frame encourage children to engage with the use of language at a deeper level. This is a merit that traditional course books do not possess.

Story-based Drama for Teaching Children English

Story telling and drama share similar features. To quote Winston (2000), "Drama is essentially a form of communal story sharing" (p. x). However, there also exist some differences between them. Booth and Barton (2000) acknowledge that simply recounting the plot does not create drama. The most essential part in combining story and drama is that "there must be a new discovery, a new learning, for drama to be happening during the enactment of

a story” (p. 81). Beaty (1994) encourages teachers to place pupils in the shoes of the characters through classroom dramatics even though they may experience no difficulty in creating images in their heads simply from hearing stories read out loud. The value of story re-enactment, as she maintains, lies in children’s actually trying on the roles themselves. In drama, children are able to enact and live through key events of the story by taking on roles to interact with others. They work collectively to make sense of the story, and the process of working together allows them to see how everyone thinks in a similar or different way. It is the images created in drama that unlock the meaning and heart of the story and turn them into part of children’s cognitive framework. The journey of exploring stories in a dramatic world motivates children to use the target language to argue, to persuade, to plead, and to negotiate. After the journey, it is likely that they become eager for reading the printed text because their multi-sensory engagement with the story has paved the way for reading. To effectively develop young learners’ English language proficiency, Hughes (2001) suggests:

In general, activities for young language learners will be more successful if they are contextualized and related to the learners. It is also helpful if they combine both verbal and non-verbal language, and linked to immediate and visible action. Furthermore they should be purposeful and real, meaningfully repetitive, and recycle a great deal of language. (p. 22)

In the light of this view, story-based drama can be a suitable approach to beginning-level foreign language classes.

3.9 Summary

This chapter gave a detailed account of those key internal and external

factors, which affect children's learning, and it is suggested that the teacher has to take them into consideration so as to design an effective curriculum. Unlike adult learners, children possess specific qualities that are unique to their own in terms of learning.

Once adequately applied, the combination of drama and stories, as their development and respective features indicate, appear to be an ideal tool to fill those special needs and facilitate their language learning as well.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

What is research? The definitions are many and varied. In the simplest form, “research is a way of finding out answers to questions” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 1). It is an activity, as Dörnyei (2007) reminds us, that all of us often do to find out more about the world we live in. When it comes to doing good research, however, it requires discipline and serious effort. In this regard, research is an organised, systematic search for answers to a problem (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006; Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991). In the academic field, researchers show different preferences for approaches to their “disciplined inquiry” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 15). Roughly speaking, they can be grouped into three major camps: (a) quantitatively oriented researchers (QUANs), (b) qualitatively oriented researchers (QUALs), and (c) mixed methodologists (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Holding alternative paradigm stances or worldviews, a great many of QUANs and QUALs have been embroiled in intense dispute, hotly debating whose research strategies are superior. Mixed methodologists, to the contrary, believe that only through combining both the quantitative and qualitative methods can researchers “answer research questions that could not be answered in any other way” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. x). Being a researcher, I need to have an overall understanding of research approaches and techniques adopted by these three camps. Being a teacher, on the other hand, I also need to acknowledge that “Research contributes to more effective teaching, not by offering definitive answers to pedagogical questions, but rather by providing new

insights into the teaching and learning process” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 1).

Hence, the following discussion will briefly discuss the paradigm debates, the third methodology movement, and my personal position in doing research.

Over the past four decades several salient changes in research methodology have taken place within the social sciences. The first half of the 20th century was dominated by a quantitative orientation and the positivist paradigm, emphasising value neutrality, objective measures and basic research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Adopting fixed research designs which are considered to be scientific, QUANs tend to exert “deliberate and active control over what is done to people” (Robson, 2002, p. 4) in order to gather facts (Blaxter et al., 2006) or test hypotheses and theories in a deductive fashion (Punch, 2005). In the real world, as Robson (2002) maintains, “a kind of control is often not feasible, even if it were ethically justifiable.” He goes as far as to claim that real world inquiry very often involves “a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally ‘messy’ situation” (p. 4). During the 1960s, accordingly, there was an increasing recognition of “a more qualitative, naturalistic and subjective approach” to social research (R. B. Burns, 2000, p. 3), deriving from constructivist philosophy. Many researchers, as Rossman and Wilson (1985) describe, “have taken the stance that their trade is a single-method enterprise” (p. 628) and criticised the research methodology implemented by the rival camps. In the 1970s and 1980s, the paradigm war reached its peak and debates were raging regarding the conventional distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods identified by Hammersley (1992) as follows:

1. Qualitative versus quantitative data.
2. The investigation of natural versus artificial settings.
3. A focus on meaning rather on behaviour.

4. Adoption or rejection of natural science as a model.
5. An inductive versus deductive approach.
6. The identification of cultural patterns as against seeking scientific laws.
7. Idealism versus realism. (pp. 40-41)

In his article, Hammersley strongly disputes the above mentioned contrasts, arguing that they are merely oversimplified versions of two polarised standpoints. He underscores that “what involved is ... a range of positions sometimes located on more than one dimension”; therefore, “there is no necessary relationship between adopting a particular position on one issue and specific positions on the others” (p. 51). His assertion has been amplified by similar voices which have chimed in on these acrimonious epistemological debates over the superiority of either approach. For instance, an editor of a major journal once wrote that most researchers were tired of philosophical arguments and showed more interest in doing actual research (J. K. Smith, 1996). Duff (2006) also regards the competing and polemical discussions about different approaches to empirical research as “overstated binaries” (p. 66). Denzin (1970) on this point writes:

No single method is always superior. Each has its own special strengths, and weakness. It is time for sociologists to recognize this fact and to move on to a position that permits them to approach their problems with all relevant and appropriate methods, to the strategy of methodological triangulation. (p. 471)

Denzin’s notion of methodological triangulation has been embraced by those who became increasingly discontented with the paradigm war along with “the purist perspectives,” (Rossman & Wilson, 1985) which, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), “had lost its edge in the 1990s and mixed methods researchers gained ideological confidence by drawing on the philosophy of pragmatism” (p. 44). In the hope that research practice will move beyond the relentless disputes

between QUANs and QUALs, a growing number of researchers have been publishing books and articles to recommend mixed methods research as a third research paradigm (Brannen, 1992; Dörnyei, 2007; Jick, 1979; R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Rossman & Wilson, 1985). As L. Richards (2005) rightly puts it, “qualitative and quantitative data do not inhabit different worlds. They are different ways of recording observations of the same world” (p. 36).

Although some paradigm purists still voice doubts about mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches “due to the incompatibility of the paradigms’ underlying the methods” (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2003, p. 7), mixed methodologists believe that mixed methods design will become the mainstream of social science during the 21st century, for “this combination (a whole or gestalt) is more than the sum of its qualitative or quantitative components” (Tashakkori & Teddle, 2003, p. x). Miles and Huberman (1994) have identified the strengths of mixed methods as:

- Increasing the strengths while eliminating the weaknesses
- Providing for a multi-level analysis of complex issues
- Improving validity
- Reaching multiple audiences (pp. 45-46)

In addition, Tashakkori and Teddle (2003) affirm that mixing methods is superior to a single-method approach in that:

- Mixed methods research can answer research questions that the other methodologies cannot;
- Mixed methods research provides better (stronger) inferences;
- Mixed methods provide the opportunity for presenting a greater diversity of divergent views. (pp. 14-15)

Tashakkori and Teddle (2003) argue that the paradigm war has left a

pernicious residue on research students who suffer from “a fractured ‘dual-lingualism’, which represents a split personality in methods of study and ways of thinking” (p. 699). Ercikan and Roth (2006) suggest that qualitative and quantitative methods should be viewed as a continuum of research types instead of a clear-cut dichotomy of generalisability. Blaxter et al. (2006) further elaborate this conception, taking research techniques, such as questionnaires, interviews and observations as examples. They argue that questionnaires are traditionally seen as a quantitative strategy; interviews and observations as qualitative methods. In the real practice of research, however, it is sometimes necessary to structure and analyse interviews in a quantitative manner and add open-ended responses in questionnaire surveys for in-depth investigation of individual cases. This phenomenon echoes Punch’s (2005) claim that there is “more overlap between the purposes behind the two approaches than is sometimes recognized” (p. 235). As both types of data have the potential for “descriptive, reconnoitring, exploratory, inductive, opening up purposes” and also for “explanatory, confirmatory, hypothesis-testing purposes” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 42), Punch reminds us that we should not allow a stereotyped view of methods to confine our thinking but rather hold a more open attitude toward the possibilities inherent to both approaches.

In the discussion of methodology, it is also important to address the researcher’s position in the continuum of methods. This point has been expressed very clearly by O’Toole (2006):

Nobody comes to research neutral, and it is necessary for researchers to identify where we stand in relation to the topic and subjects of the research (particularly necessary in research involving human behaviour). For the integrity of the research and for the reader’s benefit, as honestly as we may we must acknowledge our personal position. (p. 34)

More consideration needs to be given to “the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather being derived from methodological or philosophical commitments” (Hammersley, 1992, p. 51). In the light of this view, researchers need reflectively to consider a situation to be studied and their own views of life” (Arbnor & Bjerke, 1997, p. 5). Moreover, this study belongs to the field of TESOL, in which a large proportion of research is applied research. As McKay (2005) notes, applied research “does not attempt to define a theory of language learning that accounts for all language learners; rather it sets forth findings that apply to a particular time, place, and context” (p. 5). Summing up the above discussions, I would conclude that a combination of various approaches and methods can be productive for my research in terms of data collection and analysis. In the following sections I will further discuss my action-based case study in terms of research methods, research design, the context of the study, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

4.1 Action Research

The main purpose of my research is to solve the problems of mixed-ability English classes and bring about change by introducing story-based drama for children to learn English. Action research is about finding solutions to real life problems and causing change (Levin & Greenwood, 2001; O’Toole, 2006; White, 1988). It aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice. It also highlights the concept of “teachers as researchers” (Stenhouse, 1975) and “teacher as reflective practitioner” through “reflection in action” (Schön, 1983; Taylor, 1996). Zuber-Skerritt (1996) makes it clear that action research can bring about

practical improvement, innovation, change and practitioners' better understanding of their practices. With the attributes mentioned above, action research serves as an appropriate methodology for the identification and resolution of my research questions.

Nowadays action research has been applied to a wide range of professional fields, including education, social work, health care, and business. The increasing popularity of action research is significantly driven by "its potential contributions to improving professional practice through critical enquiry and reflection" (N. Burton, Brundrett, & Jones, 2008, p. 127). However, the interest in action research has waxed and waned since the 1940s. The following section will therefore set out how action research has evolved in educational settings and the field of ELT. Major definitions and characteristics of action research will also be discussed, followed by an examination of key criteria for action research projects.

4.1.1 The Historical Context of Action Research in Education

Action research has its origins as long ago in the Science in Education movement of the late nineteenth century (McKernan, 1996). In the earlier part of the twentieth century, John Dewey's (e.g., 1916) progressive educational notions, such as the importance of integrating practice with theory, laid the philosophical ground for the development of action research. But it is not until the mid-1940s the term "action research" was coined by Kurt Lewin (1946), claiming, "Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice" (p. 35). He was the first to develop "a spiral of steps each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of action" (p. 38) in pursuit of

“more precise theories of social change” (p. 39). During the early 1950s, American educationalists such as Stephen Corey attempted to legitimise the use of action research in the field of education. He believed that “teachers would likely find the results of their own research more useful than that of ‘outsiders’ and thus, would be more likely to question current curricular practices” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 19). However, his “cooperative Action Research movement” (Corey, 1953) was under fierce attack for its lack of generalisability. As Foshay (1993) observed:

The chief limitation of cooperative Action Research, from the point of view of the educational researchers of the time, was that it was not possible to generalize from the examined populations to others.... In addition, since much of the research was designed and carried by classroom teachers, who were not trained in research, the data often were flawed. (p. 3)

Failing to fight its corner in the then current atmosphere of hostility and rejection towards “nonpositivist research of any kind” (G. L. Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007, p. 21), action research fell into decline in the United States by the end of 1950s.

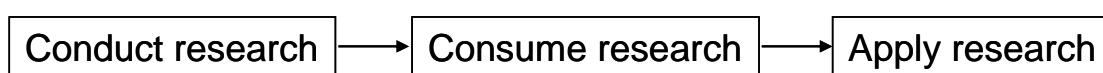
In the 1960s and 1970s, action research staged a comeback in the educational context due largely to movements in curriculum research and development. Work of Schwab (1969) and Stenhouse (1975) on both sides of the Atlantic provided a major impetus. Schwab (1969) expressed dissatisfaction with the scientific model’s deficiencies in improving curriculum, asserting, “The stuff of theory is abstract or idealized representations of real things. But curriculum in action treats real things: real acts, real teachers, real children, things richer and different from their theoretical representations” (p. 12). He went further to argue that “renewal of the field of curriculum would require diversion of the bulk of its

energies from theory to the practical, the quasi-practical, and the eclectic” (p. 10). Schwab’s claim was reinforced by Stenhouse’s well-known notion of “teacher as researcher.” In his highly seminal book, *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*, Stenhouse (1975) maintains, “all well-founded curriculum research and development... is based on the study of classrooms. It thus rests on the work of teachers. It is not enough that teachers’ work should be studied: they need to study it themselves” (p. 143). His emphasis on teachers’ critical and systematic examinations of their own practices, as A. Burns (1999) comments, “provides a particularly powerful rationale for the role of collaborative action research in contemporary professional teaching practice” (p. 29). Stenhouse’s Humanities Curriculum Project (1967-1972) along with the work of John Elliott and Clem Adelman in the Ford Teaching Project (1972-1975) kindled a resurgent interest in action research in the United States and attracted a growing number of researchers and practitioners in many parts of the world to apply or theorise action research. In Australia, for instance, Stephen Kemmis became a principal figure because of his oft-cited book, *The Action Research Planner*, co-written by Robin McTaggart (1988). In North America, Donald Schön has gained worldwide influence through his 1983 book, *The Reflective Practitioner*, which has made a notable impact on teacher education.

4.1.2 Action Research in ELT

Action research became a buzzword in the 1980s in the educational world. In ELT settings, however, it was not until the 1990s that more serious attention started to be paid to action research (A. Burns, 2005a). Much has been published to guide ELT teachers how to incorporate action research into their practices and

illustrate its importance in second language teaching and learning (e.g. A. Burns, 1999; Crookes, 1993; Freeman, 1998; McDonough & McDonough, 1997; Nunan, 1990; Wallace, 1998). The emergence of action research in the field of language teaching is partly attributed to the change of teacher's status in "the learner-centred curriculum" (Nunan, 1988), one of the major features of communicative language teaching approach. As A. Burns (2005b) notes, the rise of communicative and learner-centred language teaching inevitably entailed teachers' repositioning "as a reflective, enquiring and self-motivated practitioner" (p. 60). On the other hand, increased calls for teachers to take part in classroom research (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Bailey & Nunan, 1996; van Lier, 1989) in a sense foreshadowed the development of action research. In traditional classroom observation studies, teachers have been regarded as "subjects and a source of data" (Widdowson, 1993, p. 263) by researchers who are not involved at any level in the actual teaching process. As D. M. Johnson (1992) points out, "It is often assumed that research is conducted, teachers read research, and then teachers attempt to apply the findings of research" (p. 6). He portrays this relationship between teachers and research knowledge in a "consumer model" indicated below:



It is similarly described by Widdowson (1990) as "a client activity" in which language teachers are merely consumers of "findings that are retailed by research" (p. 47). Although researchers have put a massive amount of endeavour into generating theories in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), teachers in

general view conventional research findings “insufficiently relevant to their day-to-day problems” (Crookes, 1993, p. 135) and unable to “make visible the rich complexity of classroom life” (F. R. Burton & Seidl, 2005, p. 195). Moreover, placing teachers in a role as “passive recipients of researcher knowledge” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 194) has not been successful in terms of improving their teaching. In his personal account, Rod Ellis (1997), widely known as the foremost thinker in SLA research, points out the flaw in the traditional consumer model of applying research:

As I left the classroom, first for a job as a teacher trainer...and later for a series of more academic positions in universities ... I began to treat SLA as an object of enquiry in its own right. That is, I began to pay less attention to how the results of research, including my own research, might aid language pedagogy and more attention to trying to produce good research.... Increasingly, though, I have had to recognize that the gap between what second language acquisition researchers do and what teachers do has grown wider and that the former spend an increasing amount of time talking to each other in a language only they understand. (pp. vii-viii)

Accordingly, R. Ellis (1998) put a strong case for action research in that it can not only inform quality teaching practice but also overcome “the ‘dysfunctions of the theory/practice discourse’ that M. A. Clarke (1994) objects to” (p. 56).

Different from clinically objective and value-free research designs which attempt to control and isolate variables in the classroom in order to make generalisation that can be applied to all contexts, action research values “the importance of attending to the complexities of classroom reality as experienced by teachers and students” (M. A. Clarke, 1994, p. 17). Teachers normally have firsthand knowledge about their students and the teaching context. Carrying with them such a full range of insider knowledge to the research process, teachers can provide “a unique perspective on the dynamics of second language learning and

teaching” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 216). Additionally, through conducting action research, classroom teachers become “active change agents” (MacIntyre, 2000, p. xii) who are able to “contribute toward the building of educational theories of practice” (A. Burns, 2005a, p. 251). Being a teacher researcher means to take on a role as “teacher-learner,” a term used by Freire (1985) to acknowledge “the impossible separation of teaching and learning”:

Teachers should be conscious every day that they are coming to school to learn and not just to teach. This way we are not just teachers but teacher learners. It is really impossible to teach without learning as well as learning without teaching. We cannot separate one from the other; we create a violence when we try. (pp. 16-17)

For ELT teachers, there should also be no separation of practice and theory. As McNiff and Whitehead (2005) emphasise, “Practice (what you do) informs theory (what you think about what you do), and theory (what you think) informs practice (what you are doing)” (p. 4). It is a continuous process in which theory and practice can inter-relate and continuously transform each other.

The ways of conducting action research in the ELT field take many different forms. It can be undertaken as an individual enterprise or group projects. Nunan (1992b) holds an individual focus on action research, defending teachers who are interested in researching their own classrooms and teaching practice but “are either unable, for practical reasons, or unwilling, for personal reasons, to do collaborative research” (1992b, p. 18) . More voices, nevertheless, are raised in favour of group oriented work in support of Kemmis and McTaggart’s (1988) notion of action research as “a group activity” (p. 6), which can include cooperation between teachers within one school, or teachers’ collaborating with researchers or other interested parties for a prolonged period of time (Holly &

Whitehead, 1984). A. Burns (2005b) has categorised different ways of conducting and reporting ELT action research into four types: (1) action research in teacher education, (2) action research by classroom practitioners, (3) collaborative action research in educational programmes, and (4) action research by teacher educators.

A majority amount of action research publications derive from the first type of action research activities. Some are research work published by academic researchers, reporting the process and outcomes of introducing action research as a component in tertiary teacher education courses or describing their students' experiences in undertaking action research. This approach is exemplified in the work of Tsui (1996), Thorne and Qiang (1996), Markee (1997), Crookes and Chandler (2001), and Jones (2004). Others are graduate dissertations written by individual teacher-researchers for tertiary qualification, e.g. Mingucci (2001), Ogane (2003), Araki-Metcalfe (2006), Lai (2007), and Y.-C. Chen (2007).

The second type, research accounts by individual language teachers, as Burns (2005b) points out, is less prominent in the literature. Richards' (1998) and Edge's (2001) collections of case studies undertaken by teacher action researchers worldwide offer practitioners access to the work of "first-person investigators of their own practice in their own situations" (Edge, 2001, p. 7). Although more and more language teachers are motivated to conduct research for professional development, the time factor and work demands very often leave them little time for writing. Agreeing with Greenwood's (1999) remarks—"writing is a major tool of action research," and "by putting off writing, practitioners fail to consolidate their own learning for themselves and other AR [action research] practitioners" (p. 92), Cowie (2001) pointed out a weakness of

his own research:

I have not done enough writing throughout the process. Of course, there are various kinds of writing: field notes, reflective journals, chapters in books such as this one, and so on. At all levels I have not done enough regularly and it is something I want to improve. I tell my students often enough that writing is thinking, but I still have not followed my own advice. (p. 30)

He goes on to suggest that collaborative reporting with an external push will facilitate more regular writing.

The third type of collaborative action research is normally funded projects conducted by university researchers in collaboration with classroom teachers. Burns (2005b) provides a list of research projects of this type from different parts of the world: A. Burns & Hood (1995), A. Burns and de Silva Joyce (2005), J. Burton (1998), Mathew (1997), Tinker Sachs (2002), Coles & Quirke (2001), Kitchen & Jeurissen (2004), and Lewis & Anping (2002). Burns has worked with approximately 150 teachers in the Australian Adult Migrant English Programme on a range of collaborative action research activities and received very positive feedback in general. One teacher from New South Wales made the following comment:

Collaborative action research is a powerful form of staff development because it is practice to theory rather than theory to practice. Teachers are encouraged to reach their own solutions and conclusions and this is far more attractive and has more impact than being presented with ideals which cannot be attained. (Linda Ross in A. Burns, 1999, p. 7)

The fourth type of action research is undertaken by applied linguists who impart knowledge about language (KAL) in teacher education programmes. However important it is for teachers of KAL to investigate rigorously the effect

of their applied linguistics instruction on language teachers' learning and practice (Bartels, 2005), the number of related studies is noticeably small. Bartels (2002) surveyed 20 linguists and applied linguists from heterogeneous backgrounds in Germany and found that none of them had carried out any research on their teaching of KAL. He raised the issue of double standards by questioning, "Is action research only for language teachers?" He wrote:

Knowledge of the target language alone does not qualify someone as a language teacher, but knowing applied linguistics qualifies someone as a teacher of KAL. The hypocrisy of this apparent double standard should be alarming, especially as KAL teachers typically have more time, resources, and training for engaging in researching their own classrooms than language teachers do. (2002, p. 74)

In the hope that more endeavours will be made to lessen the divide between KAL taught in class and language teacher practice, Bartels (2005) collected 21 studies by teacher educators to provide "an insider perspective" of how they perceived and investigated their own teaching (p. ix).

4.1.3 Definitions and Characteristics of Action Research

Action research nearly always begins with identifying a problem by asking, "What can I do about it?" (Gray, 2009, p. 312) or "How can we improve this situation?" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 11). Hence its approaches are essentially "problem-focused" and its intended outcomes "practical" (Wallace, 1998, p. 15). As McKernan (1988) puts it, "The aim of action research ... is to solve practitioners' immediate and pressing day-to-day problems" so as to "improve their understanding of events, situations, and problems" and "increase the effectiveness of their practice" (p. 173). There is a myriad of definitions of

action research and some of them are widely accepted. One of the most quoted definitions is given by Carr and Kemmis (1986), who maintain that action research is “a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practice in which the practices are carried out” (p. 162). Emphasising action researchers’ role as a change agent, Halsey (1972) defines action research as “small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world” and “the close examination of the effects of such intervention” (p. 165). Adding the element of collaboration to the definition, Stringer (2007) underscores, “Action research is a *collaborative* approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems (p. 8, italics added). McDonough and McDonough (1997, p. 27) have concluded that “pure” action research is characterised as follows:

- it is participant and reflective
- it is collaborative
- it leads to change and the improvement of practice, not just knowledge in itself
- it is context-specific

The participatory process and reflective nature place reflexivity at the core of every stage of action research. Brannick and Coghlan (2006) describe reflexivity as a concept for exploration of “the relationship between the researcher and the object of research” (p. 143). Action research is value-laden in that researchers, instead of being detached observers, bring with them their personal belief systems, motivations, and experiences to the research process. They are “implicated in the construction of knowledge” (Gray, 2009, p. 498); for that

reason, they need to be self-consciously aware of the impacts that “the participants-as-practitioners-and-researchers are having on the research process” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 310). Reflexivity, in Brannick and Coghlan’s (2006) words, is “a continuing mode of self-analysis” (p. 145), which, according to Gray (2009), takes at least two forms—epistemological reflexivity and personal reflexivity. Through epistemological reflexivity, the researchers reflect on the relationship between their epistemological assumptions and inquiry practice by asking themselves: “how has the research question limited or distorted what was found? How could the study have been conducted differently?” (Gray, 2009, p. 499). By means of personal reflexivity, the researchers reflect on the mutual impact of their personal stance in research, or “positionality” (Herr & Anderson, 2005) and the process of research. Elliott (1993) argues that “a distinctive form of reflection” is indispensable to developing practitioners’ “situational understandings” that “are conditioned by a practical interest in realizing professional values in a situation” (p. 67). He then characterised the form of reflection in terms of three main dimensions: “personal (reflexive),” “problematic,” and “critical” (pp. 68-69), which, summarised by Somekh (1995), “focus respectively on: the self as a *de facto* component of the situation under study; the self as an actor who evokes responses and reactions within it; and the self as an unconscious exponent of ‘taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions’” (p. 348).

The notion of action research being collaborative is strongly argued by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), who claim, “Action research is not individualistic. To lapse into individualism is to destroy the critical dynamic of the group” (p. 15). Their view resonates in Lewin’s earlier emphasis on

“collaboration between researcher and researched and between practitioner and professional researcher” (A. Burns, 1999, p. 27). From a critical-emancipatory point of view, collaboration creates a “dialectic relationship” (A. Burns, 2005a, p. 244) in which everyone’s opinion is valued in understanding the situation. As an action researcher, one should be “intellectually independent, but not an isolationist” (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003, p. 40). It is therefore suggested that in second language classrooms, teachers and learners should work collaboratively with each other and with researchers to improve language education (van Lier, 1989). Recent action research projects have increasingly included pupils’ voices, without which, as N. Burton et al. (2008) stress, “opinions and experiences many questions posed by teachers would remain unanswered” (p. 128). Through collaborative action research, the findings on practice can then “be fed back into the educational system in a more substantial and critical way” (A. Burns, 1999, p. 13).

The aim of action research is to bring about change, which distinguishes itself from the purpose of the traditional research as to describe, understand, and explain (Robson, 2002). Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) depict action research as “an approach to improving education by changing it and learning from the consequence of changes” (p. 22). Such changes are initiated by the practitioners’ “felt need” (Elliot, 1991, p. 53) and followed by their direct involvement in the research process. In other words, action research is undertaken “*by or with* insiders to an organization or community, but never *to or on* them” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 3). Consequently, changes may occur in attitudes and conduct, which were Lewin’s early concerns, as well as “within the setting and/or within the researchers themselves” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 4).

Action research has a contextual focus because “generalized solutions may not fit particular contexts or groups of people” (Stringer, 2007, p. 1). It then attaches weight to the practitioner’s investigation into his or her own situation to generate “locally-valid understanding of problems” (Crookes, 1993, p. 134) which can be fed back into the setting. This characteristic has long been criticised by positivists, yet advocates of action research have argued on alternative grounds and developed specific qualitative criteria for action research. These are important and will be discussed in more depth later.

4.1.4 The Action Research Process

Flexibility features in action research since there are, unavoidably, plenty of unpredictable situations in the research process (A. Burns, 1999). It can be a process fraught with “messy bits” or “jumble” (T. Cook, 1998), characterising itself by “u-turns, cul-de-sacs, off-shoots of new, emerging issues, which may also be worth pursuing, but which would detract from the original focus of the enquiry” (N. Burton et al., 2008, pp. 132-133). Although it is well perceived that action research “is not a neat, orderly activity” (Stringer, 2007, p. 9) in which researchers are able to proceed according to a series of concise, logically sequenced steps without any confusion, hesitation or adaptation, many step-by-step working models have been proposed as conceptual frameworks for scrutinising the complex process of action research.

For Lewin (1946), action research contains a spiral of steps of planning, action, observation and reflection. Adding more details to Lewin’s spiral steps, Kemmis and McTaggart (1981 as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 305) suggest that action research cycles should be carried out as follows: the process starts with a

general idea on a field of action which promotes a reconnaissance of the circumstances of the field. Based on that preliminary reconnaissance, a general plan is decided upon and divided into achievable steps for the first step of action; meanwhile, a way of monitoring the effects should be set up and operated. After that, evaluation of new data collected from the implementation of the first step can then be used to revise the general plan, which provides a basis for the second step. The second step is implemented and the spiral of action, monitoring, evaluation, and replanning is launched again. Lewin's spiral of self-reflection has been clearly delineated by McDonough and McDonough (1997, p. 27) in the following linear diagram:

Initial idea → fact-finding → action plan → implementation → monitoring → revision → amended plan → and so on through the cycle

Stringer proposes a more straightforward framework consisting of basic research routine—look, think, act (see Figure 4.12)—which allows researchers to “build greater detail into procedures as the complexity of issues increases” (Stringer, 2007, p. 8)

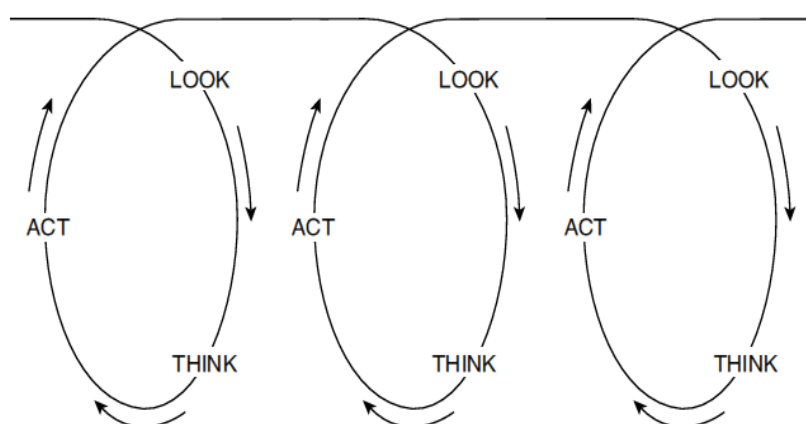


Figure 4.1 Action Research Interacting Spiral (from Stringer, 2007, p. 9)

He also makes a comparison between the routine phases and traditional research

practices such as gather data, define and describe, analyse, theorise, and report, shown in parentheses in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 A Basic Action Research Routine

Look	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather relevant information (Gather data) • Build a picture: Describe the situation (Define and describe)
Think	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and analyze: What is happening here? (Analyze) • Interpret and explain: How/why are things as they are? (Theorize)
Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan (Report) • Implement • Evaluate

(from Stringer, 2007, p. 8)

Somekh has observed that the action research process is often presented in graphic models with successive action research cycles, containing recurring steps of identifying problem, collecting data, analysing data and taking action. Her concern for this structure is that it may be taken “too literally as representing a set of very distinct steps, rather than broad stages in an integrated process” (Somekh, 1995, p. 343). She expresses a preference in the following model (see Figure 4.2) introduced by Altrichter, Posch and Somekh (1993, p. 7) because there is no artificial separation between data collection, data analysis and interpretation in the process.

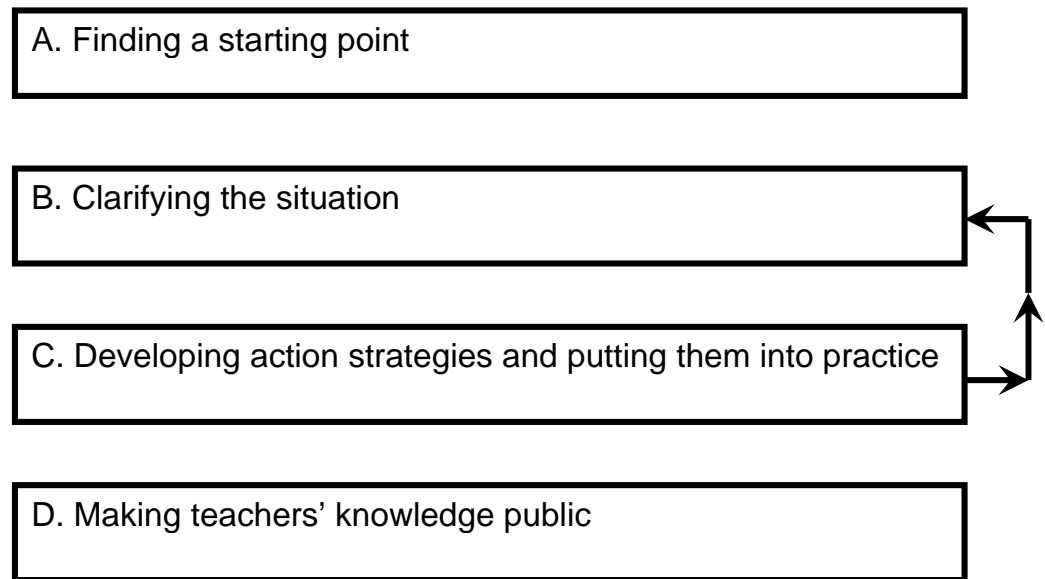


Figure 4.2 Diagrammatic Representation of the Action Research Process
(from Altrichter, Posch and Somekh, 1993, p. 7)

Sharing a similar view, Gray (2009) accentuates that stages of planning, action, observation and evaluation overlap; that is, some activities occur at the same time. It is necessary to be responsive to the situation and modify accordingly through constantly monitoring each step taken (see Figure 4.3).

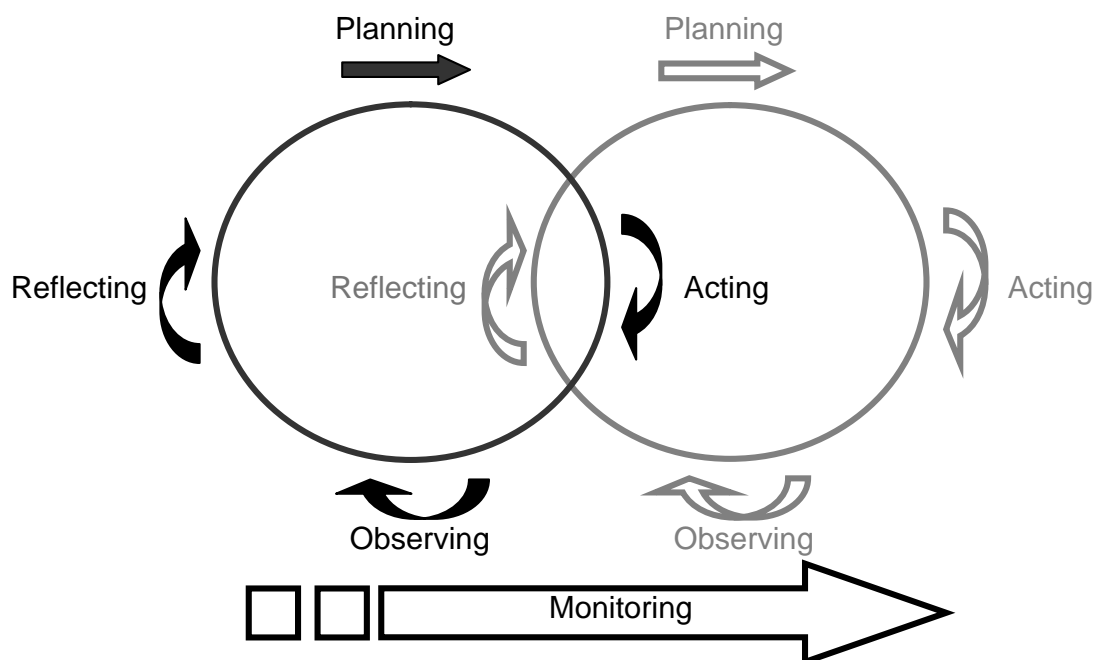


Figure 4.3 The Action Research Model (from Gray, 2009, p. 318)

It is not surprising to see that different models of action research are composed of almost the same set of activities. “There are, after all,” according to Stringer (2007), “many ways of cutting a cake” (p. 8). What should be borne in mind is that action research is a learning-by-doing process. One needs to personally engage in the conduct to gain a full picture. As Jane Hamilton, a teacher researcher in Australia comments:

My experience of action research is that it is difficult to grasp or explain the concept until one is in the process of doing it. It is in the doing that it starts to make the sense and become clear. (Cited in Burns, 1999, p. 20)

4.1.5 Concerns Expressed About Action Research and Responses

Action research has gained credence in recent years as a legitimate research approach in the educational context, but it is still challenged and criticised by those who subscribe to a more traditional empirical view of research. As any other research method, action research produces beneficial effects on research itself but also has potential drawbacks. One of the major criticisms is that action research has a general tendency for being small-scale and subjective; it, therefore, lacks generalisability (external validity). In addition, its low control of research variables may result in losing sight of concerns with reliability and validity (Gray, 2009) and fail to make a contribution to causal theories of learning and teaching. In the TESOL field, some doubt has also been cast on teachers’ capacity for researching and theorising, as “lay persons” are not able to meet the quality criteria of traditional research (Altrichter, Feldman, Posch, & Somekh, 2008, p. 278). Disapproval of action research is expressed in an article in the TESOL Research Interest (RIS) Newsletter:

The Board of TESOL does seem to recognize the value of carefully conducted hypothesis-based empirical research, but they also emphasize (even overstate) the limited usefulness and accessibility of such research for professional teachers. Their solution is to get professional teachers to think of themselves as researchers—not by training them in research techniques that would help them carry out rigorous, publishable studies that would be of value to the entire profession, but by expanding the definition of research to include reflecting on and theorizing about one's own teaching for the purpose of improving one's own teaching ... whether action research really does (or can) consistently lead to better teaching practices remains an open empirical question that has not yet been resolved and I (as well as many fellow members of the RIS) feel that all of the hype about action research in the TESOL organization is simply not warranted at present. (S. Jarvis, 2001, p. 2)

Other concerns are associated with action researchers being over-involved in action, which leads to personal bias (A. Burns, 2005a) and the lack of critical distance (Altrichter et al., 2008). Moreover, the rigour of action research has also been questioned regularly. These critical arguments should be taken seriously if action researchers determine to increase the quality of their research projects (Altrichter et al., 2008). Instead of exhausting themselves in futile debates on the superiority of action research or positivist approaches to research, many action researchers have devoted their energies “to define and meet standards of appropriate rigor without sacrificing relevance” (Argyris & Schön, 1978, p. 85). From this perspective, the following section will examine different criteria for guiding the quality of action research.

4.1.6 Key Criteria for Action Research

It is argued that action research should not be judged in the same light as that of experimental or normative research which requires reliability, validity, replicability and trustworthiness because the goal of action research is to establish local understandings rather than maximal generality (Bailey, 1998;

Crookes, 1993). Mackey and Gass (2005) proceed even further to argue, “action research might best be considered as an independent genre with its own features and standards, and a legitimate rejection of quantitative paradigms” (p. 219). Still some maintain that action researchers should strive to disseminate local knowledge beyond the immediate setting and present it “as public knowledge with epistemic claims” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 52). As Altricher et al. (2008) point out, action research not only concerns those who are in the practice situation but also all practitioners in the practice field as a whole. Agreeing that the validity criteria for positivistic and naturalistic research should not be applied to action research, Herr and Anderson (2005) add, “That is not to say that there is no overlap or that it is less rigorous” (p. 53). What they argue for, in effect, is a new way to define rigour which “does not mislead or marginalize action researchers” (p. 53).

In an attempt to open up dialogue with practitioners and academics concerning indicators of quality action research, Herr and Anderson have formulated a tentative set of validity criteria (outcome, process, democratic, catalytic, and dialogic) and connected them with the generally agreed goals of action research as shown in Table 4.2. Each of these criteria will now be addressed respectively below.

Table 4.2 Anderson and Herr’s Goals of Action Research and Validity Criteria

<i>Goals of Action Research</i>	<i>Quality/Validity Criteria</i>
1. The generation of new knowledge	Dialogic and process validity
2. The achievement of action-oriented outcomes	Outcome validity
3. The education of both researcher and participants	Catalytic validity
4. Results that are relevant to the local setting	Democratic validity
5. A sound and appropriate research methodology	Process validity

(from Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 55)

Outcome validity is for measuring action research on the basis of “whether actions that arise from it solve problems (workability)” (Levin & Greenwood, 2001, p. 105). From the pragmatic perspective, “ideas and practices should be judged in terms of their usefulness, workability and practicality” (Reason, 2003, p. 104). The equivalent of workability is “skilfulness” for action research (Brooks & Watkins, 1994) and “credibility” for naturalistic enquiry or “validity” for positivist research. As Herr and Anderson (2005) suggest, “Action researchers must be competent at both research procedures and moving participants towards successful action outcomes” (p. 55). And practical theories, according to Altrichter et al. (2008), need to be tested by putting them into practice so that the practitioner’s new knowledge and understanding can be claimed as valid.

Process validity raises questions regarding the adequacy or dependability of the research process which determines outcome validity. Research findings should derive from a series of reflective cycles. A. Burns (2005a) stresses that the iterative nature of action research can enhance its rigour as iterations in the cycle allow data collection to:

- (a) build on evidence from previous cycles;
- (b) expand the scope of the study;
- (c) triangulate the data across different episodes, sites, and subjects through multiple data sources;
- (d) test new findings against previous iterations of the cycle; and
- (e) avoid the bias inherent in cross-sectional research. (p. 250)

Action researchers must exercise caution when collecting data, checking understandings and interpreting evidence. In this respect, triangulation from diverse data sources and the inclusion of multiple voices are also crucial to process validity.

Democratic validity concerns “the extent to which research is done in collaboration with all parties who have a stake in the problem under investigation” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 56). It is similar to Cunningham’s “local validity” (1983), in which the problem domain “is best defined by taking account individual perceptions and underlying values and beliefs” in order to produce solutions or improvements with situational appropriateness (p. 406). Democratic and cooperative relationships among those who are concerned in the research process help to bring about effective change with local validity. Altrichter et al. (2008) suggest action researchers can develop such relationships by:

- (a) being governed by ethical principles;
- (b) negotiating an ethical code; and
- (c) allowing all aspects of the research to be open to negotiation among the participants and the researcher. (p. 154)

Catalytic validity lies “in the desire to consciously channel this [reality-alerting] impact so that respondents gain self-understanding and, ultimately, self-determination through research participation” (Lather, 1991, p. 68). It requires that all involved in the research be moved to take action to change social reality with their understandings of it deepened by their participation in the research process. It, therefore, calls attention to “the transformative potential of action research” and is particularly appealing to those who adopt a critical-emancipatory stance.

Dialogic validity refers to the peer review process commonly used in academic publication to critique the research methods, data and interpretations. It also includes critical and reflective conversations with fellow action researchers,

colleagues, stakeholders, or critical friends who are familiar with the research setting and willing to play devil's advocate.

Much action research is qualitative in design. Stringer (2007) thus borrows Lincoln and Guba's notion of trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry to the criteria for establishing rigour in action research. According to them, trustworthiness of research should demonstrate the following attributes:

- Credibility—the plausibility and integrity of the study
- Transferability—the possibility of applying the outcomes of the study to other contexts
- Dependability—research procedures that are clearly defined and open to scrutiny
- Conformability—evidence that the procedures described actually took place (Stringer, 2007, p. 57)

Among these criteria, transferability should be evaluated more fully; as O'Toole's (2006) observes, "Perhaps most importantly, might the findings be *transferable* to other contexts beyond the project? (If not, what is our purpose for doing the project, other than solipsistic?)" (p. 37). It is possible for the outcomes of an action research project to be applicable to other settings given that "the *detailed description of the context(s), activities, and events*" are provided (Stringer, 2007, p. 59). Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe this kind of in-depth description is essential for transferability.

The original inquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do. The best advice to give to anyone seeking to make a transfer is to accumulate empirical evidence about contextual similarity; the responsibility of the original investigator ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgments possible. (p. 298)

Checkland and Holwell (1998) propose the notion of "recoverability" to justify

the transferability results from action research. They advise action researchers to

... achieve a situation in which their research process is *recoverable* by interested outsiders” through reporting “the epistemology (the set of ideas and the process in which they are used methodologically) by means of which they will make sense of their research, and so define what counts for them as acquired knowledge. (p. 20)

Since the field of action research is continually evolving and there is a plethora of ways to implement action research depending on its goal and setting, the indicators of quality action research are still “in flux” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 57) and keenly discussed. I have necessarily limited myself here to a discussion of those aspects most relevant to my own inquiry and my research study will be examined in the light of the above-mentioned criteria.

4.2 Case Study

Both being umbrella terms for research methodologies, case study and action research share many common features, as both are concerned with gaining in-depth insights into particular phenomena in real situations and embrace a variety of perspectives and research designs (Blichfeldt & Andersen, 2006). The important role of case studies in action research has received widespread recognition. Stenhouse (1983) includes teacher research in his typology of case studies, which is “classroom action research or school case studies undertaken by teachers who use their participant status as a basis on which to build skills of observation and analysis” (p. 21). Nunan (1992b) argues that case studies are ideally suited to action-oriented research projects. McDonough and McDonough (1997) also maintain that case studies “are arguably most appropriate for teacher-generated research” (p. 203). Wallace (1998) agrees and emphasises that

“the specific focus of the case study” meets teachers’ professional needs for they are generally “interested in their own unique situations: their students; their lessons; their classes” (p. 161). Given the appropriateness of case study to the needs of action researchers, the following section will examine definitions and characteristics of case study research, case studies in English language teaching and learning, strengths and controversies of case studies, and case study design process.

4.2.1 Definitions and Characteristics of Case Studies

A case is defined by Louis Smith, one of the first educational ethnographers, as “a bounded system” (Stake, 1995, p. 2). Representing the case with the Greek symbol letter Θ (theta), Stake (1995) highlights that it has boundaries and also working parts and regards case study as “the epistemology of the particular” (2005, p. 454). Walker (1993) refers case study to “the examination of an instance in action” (p. 165). Similarly, Stake (1995) asserts that it is “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). With an emphasis on the participants’ views in the research process, Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) give their definition of case study research: “the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (p. 545). After reviewing a number of definitions of case study in the fields of education, sociology, psychology, political science, Duff (2007) has found that the frequently used terms in defining case study include “boundedness or singularity, in-depth study, multiple perspectives or triangulation, particularity, contextualization, and interpretation” (p. 23).

What characterises case study research is its qualitative inclination, “being emic (from within the case) and holistic (the whole system in its context)” (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 206). Case study researchers do not seek to make statistical generalisation to the whole target population. Instead they are more interested in identifying not only the uniqueness but also the commonality of the case (Birnbaum, Emig, & Fisher, 2005). Such interest leads them to look into “episodes of nuance, the sequentiality of happenings in context, the wholeness of the individual” (Stake, 1995, p. xii). As Walker (1993) points out, the intensive analysis of a particular case, in Malinowski’s (1922, p. 17) terms, “puts flesh and blood on the skeleton” (O. Lewis, 1959, p. 3). Gall et al. (1996) summarise four characteristics of case study research as follows:

- (1) the study of phenomena by focusing on specific instances, that is, cases;
- (2) an in-depth study of each case;
- (3) the study of a phenomenon in its natural context; and
- (4) the study of the emic perspective of case study participants. (p. 545)

4.2.2 Case Studies in English Language Teaching and Learning

Over the past few decades, case study research has gained widespread acceptance in teaching and learning English both as the first language (e.g. Birnbaum et al., 2005) and the second or foreign language (e.g. Duff, 2007). Having its roots in psychology and linguistics, much of earlier case study work in TESOL and SLA focused on the linguistic aspects, such as phonology, morphology, lexis, syntax, semantics, which, according to Chapelle and Duff (2003), are “analyzed by an ostensibly objective researcher” (p. 164). They have also observed that a “more subjective and interpretive stance” has been taken by TESOL case study researchers:

with less emphasis on the acquisition of discrete linguistic elements and more emphasis on such issues as learners' and teachers' identities, skill development and its consequences for learners, teachers' professional development experiences, and the implementation of language policies in programs and countries. (Chapelle & Duff, 2003, p. 164)

Nunan (1992b), too, sees the potential of case study in "its suitability to small-scale investigations" which are often undertaken by graduate students and classroom teachers (p. 89).

Case study is "a choice of the object to be studied" rather than a methodological choice (Stake, 1994, p. 236). For case study workers, there is a wide range of choices among what can be studied providing the case "constitutes a single entity with clearly defined boundaries" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 151). Thus, cases can be individuals, programmes, curricula, institutions, concepts, issues, or responsibilities. In the TESOL field, cases range from young children to adults with various language learning experiences and purposes either in the naturalistic setting (e.g. R. Schmidt, 1983) or in a teaching context (e.g. R. Ellis, 1984).

Case studies have taken a place in SLA research because they recognise the "embeddedness of social truths" and draw attention to "the subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right" (Adelman, Kemmis, & Jenkins, 1980, p. 59). As Duff (2007) clearly puts it, "SLA involves linguistic, cognitive, affective, and social processes. That is, it is an ongoing interplay of individual mental processes, meanings, and actions as well as social interactions that occur within a particular time and place, and learning history" (p. 37). Comparing SLA and the new science of chaos/complexity science, Larsen-Freeman (1997) has discerned close similarities between them. She, therefore, argues that language acquisition should be seen "as a dynamic, complex and nonlinear process" (p. 142) by stating, "in complex nonlinear systems, the behavior of the whole emerges out of

the interaction of its parts. Studying the parts in isolation one by one will tell us about each part, but not how they interact” (p. 157). By the same token, Gattegno (1987) stresses that the most vital way of knowing in modern times should be “the one that can respect complexity while examining it” (p. 80). Case study demands thick description and rich contextualisation, which, as Mackey and Gass (2005) see it, “can shed light on the complexities of the second language learning process” (p. 172).

4.2.3 Strengths of and Controversies about Case Studies

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, no single research method or approach is always superior in all aspects and in every situation. Case study research, without exception, has its merits and demerits. The apparent downside of case study, as stated by its positivist critics, is a lack of generalisability and external validity, the same charge faced by action research. It is a problem described by Nunan (1992b) as “a major stumbling block for the case study researchers because of the obvious difficulty of arguing from the single instance to the general” (p. 81). However, it is necessary to point out that case study methodology and traditional experimental methods provide different perspectives on reflecting the everyday reality of the world. The charge, accordingly, “is inappropriate and rather unfair because the two types of methodologies are intended to achieve different goals” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 155). All the more important for researchers is to bear in mind the strengths as well as weaknesses of case study methodology and to include both in presenting their claims. By so doing, researchers are able to produce “robust, rigorous, informative, and significant studies” (Duff, 2007, p. 43).

Adelman et al. (1980, pp. 59-60) have indicated a number of advantages of case studies which are summarised by McDonough and McDonough (1997) as below:

- (1) Case study data is 'strong in reality'.
- (2) Case studies allow generalizations about an instance, or from that to a class.
- (3) They recognize the complexity of 'social truths' and alternative interpretations.
- (4) They can form an archive of descriptive material available for reinterpretation by others.
- (5) They are a 'step to action' (for staff/institutional development; for formative evaluation).
- (6) They present research in an accessible form. (p. 217)

Among these advantageous features, generalisation may cause many raised eyebrows among those who hold strong views about conventional research criteria of generalisability and external validity. Hence what counts as generalisability in case study research requires further clarification.

Yin (2003b) proposes "analytic generalisation" to be the principal vehicle for constructing and testing theories in case study. He cautions, however, "A fatal flaw in doing case studies is to conceive of statistical generalization as the method of generalizing the results of the case" (p. 32). In analytic generalisation, "a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study" (pp. 32-33). That is, it aims at "generalizing from a single case to a theoretical proposition" (Rolfe, 1998, p. 79). If chosen carefully, the cases should produce similar or contrasting results which, respectively, lead to a literal replication or a theoretical replication. In this respect, Yin suggests researchers should have two or more cases (multiple-case designs) because they increase the possibility for establishing a direct replication

so as to generate more substantial analytic conclusions than a single case.

Stake (1980), on the other hand, argues for “naturalistic generalisation” from more intuitive and empirical perspectives. He maintains that single case design attempts “to optimize understanding of the case rather than to generalize beyond it” (2005, p. 443). People’s qualitative understanding, or “experiential knowledge” as Stake (2005, p. 454) called it, can be enhanced through case reports which “provide a maximum of vicarious experience to the readers who may then intuitively combine this with their previous experiences” (Stake & Trumbull, 1982, p. 1). He further points out the close relationship between naturalist generalisations and action:

Naturalistic generalizations develop within a person as a product of experience. They derive from the tacit knowledge of how things are, why they are, how people feel about them, and how these things are likely to be later or in other places with which this person is familiar. They seldom take the form of predictions but lead regularly to expectation. They guide action, in fact they are inseparable from action. (Stake, 1980, p. 69)

While acknowledging the necessity of scholarly research into discovering law-like generalisations in certain fields, Stake (1980) insists on the priority of practicability in the fields of education and social work, “where few laws have been validated and where inquiry can be directed toward gathering information that has use other than for the cultivation of laws, a persistent attention to laws is pedantic” (p. 70). He concludes, “The better generalizations are often those more parochial, those more personal” (p. 70).

Stake’s notion of naturalistic generalisations is strongly related to “transferability” as discussed in Section 4.1.6, which explores the key criteria for action research. The meticulous accounts of real world activities in case reports

“take the reader into the case situation, a person’s life, a group’s life, or a program’s life” (Patton, 1990, p. 387). Walker (1993) takes a step further to argue that generalising should not be a problem for the author since readers are the ones who make the connections by inquiring themselves, “what is there in this study that I can apply to my own situation, and what clearly does not apply?” (p. 167). However, Stake (2005) has also detected another potential challenge for case study workers when passing their knowledge to readers through writing:

As reading begins, the case slowly joins the company of cases previously known to the reader. Conceptually for the reader, the new case cannot be but some variation of cases already known. A new case without commonality cannot be understood, yet a new case without distinction will not be noticed. Researchers cannot know well which cases their readers already know or their readers’ peculiarities of mind. They seek ways to protect and substantiate the transfer of knowledge. (p. 455)

The transfer of knowledge can be secured by providing a holistic view of the case which demands multi sources of data and multiperspective analysis, also an important criterion for process validity in action research.

4.2.4 Conducting a Case Study

The first step in conducting a case study is to develop a provisional hypothesis or identify a problem. Gray (2009) mentions that the hypothesis is provisional in that it is “open to further improvement or modification” during the research process (p. 250). Gall et al.(1996) indicate that the research problem is often “grounded in the researcher’s personal experience with a particular type of student, instructional program, or other phenomenon” (p. 551).

Next, the researcher needs to consider what type of case study should be used. Blaxter et al. (2006, p. 74) point out that case study research can be

classified into the following categories according to Yin's (2003a, 2003b)

taxonomies:

- (1) In terms of the number of cases: single or multiple
- (2) In terms of the purpose of the study: exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory

With regard to the second category of case studies, Yin (2003a) offers his definitions:

An *exploratory* case study (whether based on single or multiple cases) is aimed at defining the questions and hypotheses of a subsequent (not necessarily a case) study or at determining the feasibility of the desired research procedures. A *descriptive* case study presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context. An *explanatory* case study presents data bearing on cause-effect relationships—explaining how events happened. (p. 5)

Case selection and sampling, as Duff (2007) highlights, should be taken highly into account when conducting case study research. For Dörnyei (2007), feasibility issues and saturation considerations are also important factors in designing the sampling plan. He recommends the use of purposive sampling and argues that “if conducted well, several of these strategies—such as typical, criterion, extreme/deviant, and critical case sampling—will lead to cases whose study can have a lot to offer to the wider research community” (p. 153).

The following step in the research process focuses on how to gather data. Case studies are “methodologically eclectic” (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 207). Nunan (1992b) regards the case study as a “hybrid” (p. 74) because of its use of various methods for data collection and analysis, which renders it fit for action-based research and “being combined with other research approaches... in mixed methods studies” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 155). Yin (2003b) puts forward six

main resources of evidence in case studies, including documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts and gives an overview of their comparative strengths and weaknesses. He underscores that “no single source has a complete advantage over all the others” and case study researchers should fully exploit the potential of each source since “the various sources are highly complementary” (p. 85). Whereas case studies sit at the more qualitative end of the spectrum, they can also make use of quantitative data collection techniques “allowing for numerical analysis of elicited data, particularly questionnaires and structured interview schedules” (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 207). Most importantly, evidence should be triangulated where possible. Chappelle and Duff (2003) elaborate on this point:

Draw data either from one primary source (e.g., oral interviews, journals, or essays) or from multiple sources. As in ethnography, bringing together (triangulating) multiple perspectives, methods, and sources of information (e.g., from interviews, observations, field notes, self-reports or think-aloud protocols, tests, transcripts, and other documents) adds texture, depth, and multiple insights to an analysis and can enhance the validity or credibility of the results. (p. 165)

In order to obtain a thick description of a particular case, context or situation, case studies normally generate a tremendous amount of data, most of it qualitative. A case, however, “is not simply the report of an event or incident” (Shulman, 1986, p. 11). A balance should be struck between “presenting information about individual participants (cases) in sufficient depth and the need to elaborate on emergent themes and consider theoretical implications” (Duff, 2007, p. 55). Case study reports rely heavily on narrative form which offers readers vicarious experience to “extend their perceptions of happenings” (Stake, 2005, p. 454). The goal of case study workers, as argued by Gall et al. (1996, p.

574), is to achieve “verisimilitude,” which “draws the reader so closely into subjects’ worlds that these can be palpably felt” (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 381). Narratives and situational descriptions are essential for action research, too. As Elliott (1978) states, “In explaining ‘what is going on’ action research tells a ‘story’ about the event by relating it to a context of mutually interdependent contingencies” and the story it tells “is sometimes called a case study” (p. 356). There are varying ways of reporting case study data and Altrichter et al. (2008, pp. 229-232) suggest the following list:

1. Following the chronological sequence of the research
2. Developing a case study from an issue
3. Portrayal
4. Shedding light on a case from different perspectives
5. Reporting action research through the use of key statements

Before leaving this section, it is worth looking at Table 4.3 to have a general overview of the process of constructing case studies.

Table 4.3 The Process of Constructing Case Studies

Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Assemble the raw case data.</i> <p>These data consist of all the information collected about the person or program for which a case study is to be written.</p>
Step 2 (optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Construct a case record.</i> <p>This is a condensation of the raw data organizing, classifying, and editing the raw case data into a manageable and accessible package.</p>
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Write a case study narrative.</i> <p>The case study is a readable, descriptive picture of a person or program making accessible to the reader all the information necessary to understand that person or program. The case study is presented either chronologically or thematically (sometimes both). The case study presents a holistic portrayal of a person or program.</p>

(from Patton, 1990, p. 388)

4.3 The Study

4.3.1 Context and Participants

This research was carried out in a public primary school in Tamsui, a suburb of Taipei in Taiwan, approximately 30-40 minutes drive from the city centre. Tamsui is a town with a four hundred year history and a population of around 200,000. There are now 3 universities, 2 general and vocational high schools, 4 junior high schools and 14 primary schools in Tamsui (Tamsui Township Office, 2008). River Hill Primary School (a pseudonym), where the research was conducted, had about 1200 pupils studying in 36 classes, six classes in each grade. While some other schools were facing the problem of dwindling class numbers due to the decreasing birth rate, the admission of children to first grade in this school needed to be decided by drawing lots because of its popularity among parents. The high registration rate of new students, however, meant that the school did not have enough spare space for an English classroom. All the English classes were therefore taught in the home room with movable chairs and desks. Since drama activities often require more floor space, the school let me use the basement hall for my teaching project. Sometimes I also taught in the home classroom when the basement hall was in use for other purposes. There were portable carts with multimedia projector, VCR/DVD combo, laptop and speakers on demand, providing many instructional application options.

An entire class consisting of a total of thirty-two pupils (16 girls and 16 boys) participated in the study. They were fifth graders aged between 11 and 12 and had begun to take English as a compulsory subject in grade five with two forty-minute sessions a week. As mentioned in Section 2.1.3, primary school children in Taiwan often have different English learning experiences before

receiving formal English instruction at school and this class was no exception. While some of the children were in their first year of learning English, some had already taken English classes outside of school for more than four years. The pupils had limited opportunities and no immediate need to use English outside of school as it is a foreign language in Taiwan.

4.3.2 The Research Process

This research study mainly consisted of a baseline study and two action research cycles. The baseline study was conducted in February and March 2006, aiming to investigate the status quo of primary English teaching in Taiwan as well as primary school teachers' classroom practices and beliefs about applying story and drama into English teaching. During my stay in Taiwan for the baseline study, I also attempted to find suitable schools for my teaching project. As Stake (1995) suggests, due to the constraint of time and access for fieldwork, researchers should, if possible, "pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to [their] inquiry, perhaps for which a prospective informant can be identified and with actors (the people studied) willing to comment on certain draft materials" (p. 4). Being an alumna and previous lecturer in a university in Tamsui, I returned to my alma mater, seeking advice and assistance from my supervisor of MA Studies in TESOL, who was then serving as Chair of the Department of English as well as Director of the postgraduate programme. She has been keeping close contact with local primary schools, providing consultancy in English teaching and establishing collaboration with some of the schools where her students carry out their teaching practice. After briefing the Chair on my research plan, I was referred to the director of counselling at River Hill

Primary School, who had been active in introducing different teaching approaches to the teachers at her school. She expressed her genuine welcome for my research on the phone and agreed to my request for classroom observations and interviewing. I made several visits to her school at the end of March, meeting the Principal, having a guided tour of the school, observing English classes, and interviewing teachers. The director agreed that I would start my project work in the second semester of the next academic year, starting from February 2007. My research plan would be circulated to the English teachers in order to find someone who would like to join my project as a co-teacher. I would be notified of which class to teach before the end of June 2006 so that I could have sufficient time to discuss my schemes of work with the co-teacher.

Yin (2003b) recommends that researchers apply multiple-case designs when the choice and resources allow, claiming that there are greater possibilities of doing a good case study with using even only a “two-case” design than doing a single-case study. Single-case designs carry a potential risk of putting all the eggs in one basket because there usually is “attrition” among participants (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 152). Duff (2007) goes on to argue that “having more than one focal case can provide interesting contrasts or corroboration across cases” (p. 124). Accordingly, my original research plan was to include two schools, one in an urban area of Taipei, one in a suburban area, as case study sites. My previous work experience as a teacher trainer had given me the opportunity to make friends with primary English teachers. Some of them were interested in using drama in their classrooms. Therefore, I also sought collaboration with them on my teaching project. One of the teachers, Ms Hsu, teaching in a public primary school in Taipei City, was enthusiastic about my project and invited me to teach

one of her classes in which she would act as a participant observer for the research purpose. My teaching at this case site started at the same time as River Hill Primary School and progressed well at the initial stage; however, unfortunately, Ms Hsu had a serious car accident in the middle of the semester, which brought a halt to the research. Although I was not able to complete my study at Ms Hsu's school, her observations and comments on my teaching and the pupils' learning performance have indeed provided me with valuable insight into my research questions. Hence, I will still draw upon them when relevant throughout this study.

The following table shows the timeline of the key research actions in this study. The details of the baseline study and action research cycles will be described in Sections 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9.

Table 4.4 The Key Research Actions in the Study

Date	Research Phase	Research Actions	Participants
20-28 Mar, 2006	Baseline study	Class observations Interviews	River Hill Primary School
22-24 Mar, 2006	Baseline study	Class observations Interviews	Ms Hsu's and her colleague's classes
30-31 Mar, 2006	Baseline study	Interviews	Three primary English teachers
Mar-Apr, 2006	Baseline study	Questionnaire survey	Primary English teachers
25-26 Sep, 2007	Baseline study	Class observations	Ms Hsu's and Ms Lin's classes, also the classes for my teaching project
Oct 2006-Feb 2007	Action research	Developing schemes of work	My supervisors
22-23 Feb, 2007	Action research	Meetings	Ms Hsu and Ms Lin
26 Feb-26 Mar, 2007	Action research	Teaching	Ms Hsu's class
02 Mar-26 Jun, 2007	Action research	Teaching	Ms Lin's class

4.4 Data Collection

For action researchers, data is “the material for their reflections” (Altrichter et al., 2008, p. 95). In Stringer’s (2007) action research routine—look, think, act (see Section 4.1), data gathering enables researchers to build a picture that expands “their understanding of the experience and perspective of the various stakeholders” at the “Look” stage of the research process, through which “a viable solution” will be found (p. 65). For teachers conducting action research, collecting data helps “to investigate practice critically and to work towards changing it within the context of the teaching situation” (A. Burns, 1999, p. 78). Data, according to Altrichter et al. (2008), possess two distinctive features:

- They are material traces or representations of events and therefore are givens in a physical sense (from the Latin *datum* for ‘the thing given’), which can be passed on, stored and made accessible to many people.
- They are regarded as relevant by a researcher, providing evidence with respect to the issue investigated. (p. 96)

Although action research is generally regarded as qualitative inquiry (K. Richards, 2003), quantitative methods can be applied to data collection in order to “complement or extend the findings” of action research projects (A. Burns, 1999, p. 78). As discussed in the earlier section of this chapter, this action-based case study adopted a mixed methods approach in which both quantitative and qualitative techniques were incorporated to collect a wide range of evidence so as to provide a more holistic understanding of the effects of the planned intervention and “secure a more penetrating grasp of the situation” (Elliott, 1991, p. 77). Cohen et al. (2007) point out that researchers can use “the full *gamut* of techniques” for data collection in undertaking action research (p. 309) since “important insights may only emerge once the data are being analysed” (Gray,

2009, p. 302). It is also important to bear in mind that some changes may need to be made in the data collection plan as the study progresses on account of “the organic nature of action research” (Altrichter et al., 2008, p. 101). Elliott (1991) suggests a variety of instruments for gathering evidence in reconnaissance and monitoring phases of action research, including diaries, profiles, document analysis, photographic evidence, tape/video recordings and transcripts, using an outsider observer, interviewing, the running commentary, the shadow study, checklists, questionnaires, inventories, triangulation, and analytic memos (pp. 77-83). Figure 4.5 is adapted from Mills (2007, p. 73), showing the data collection methods adopted in this study.

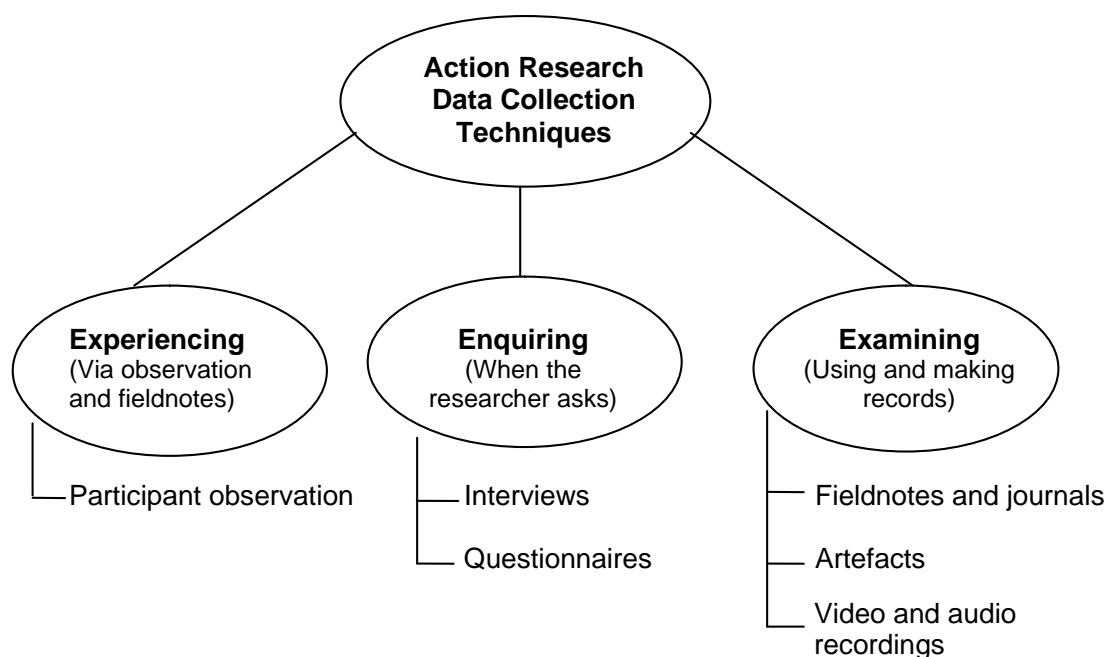


Figure 4.4 Taxonomy of Data Collection Techniques (adapted from Mills, 2007, p. 73)

■ Interviewing

Kvale (1996) regards interviews as *inter views*, using Rubin’s vase (see the figure below) to illustrate the dual aspect of the interview. He explains that when

focusing on the two faces of the figure we can see two people as the interviewer and the interviewee, which emphasises the perspective of “personal interaction” in the interviewing process. Alternatively, the focus can be set on the vase between the two faces, which acts as a container of “the knowledge constructed *inter the views* of the interviewer and the interviewee” (p. 16). Interviewing has been a common technique in qualitative research because it helps researchers to “investigate phenomena that are not directly observable” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 173). Through interviews, people can “articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings” (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 32) so that researchers are able to access interviewees’ “ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 19).

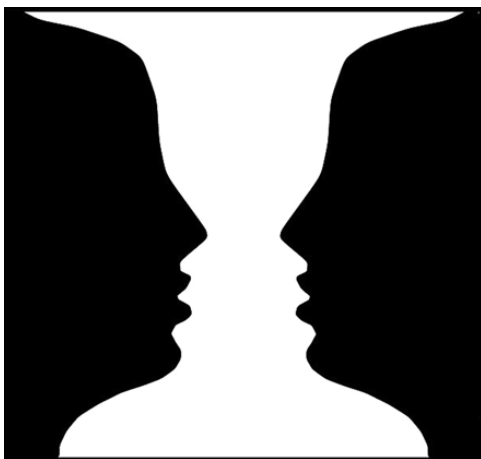


Figure 4.5 Rubin's Vase

There are varying types of interviews in terms of the amount of structure (e.g. structured, semi-structured or unstructured) and the number of interviewees (e.g. individual interviews, group interviews, or focus group interviews). Semi-structured interviews were implemented in this study for their flexibility which “allows for richer interactions and more personalized responses than the quasi-automaton interviewer armed with entirely pre-coded questions”

(McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 184). Moreover, with a list of prepared guide questions or a structured overall framework in mind, researchers are able to reap the benefits of semi-structured interviews “but not at the cost of a reduced ability to make systematic comparisons between interview responses” (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 93). Individual interviews and group interviews were used in a semi-structured manner in the baseline study for detecting the problem of teaching English at primary schools in Taiwan. Although it is argued that the focus group interview is “a highly efficient technique for qualitative data collection since the amount and range of data is increased by collecting from several people at the same time” (Nicola, 1999, p. 909), the five interviewees of this study all had a busy teaching schedule, which made it problematic in getting them together at a specific time as Walliman and Buckler (2008) have indicated. As a result, three of the teachers were individually interviewed, a more time-consuming way but more advantageous in “enabling the researcher to follow up in more detail particular issues which have been identified, or insights or observations already made but not fully reflected upon” (A. Burns, 1999, p. 119). The other two teachers, who have been friends for many years, asked for a group interview, which, as Cohen et al. (2007) remark, can produce a broader range of responses than in one-on-one interviews. They go on to argue that “having more than one interviewee present can provide two versions of events—a cross-check—and one can complement the other with additional points, leading to a more complete and reliable record” (p. 373).

In order to let the pupils “give voice to their own interpretations and thoughts” (Eder & Fingerson, 2001, p. 181) of learning English through stories and drama, all of them were interviewed in groups of five or six in the action

research process. They were encouraged to form their own groups for interviews to create an atmosphere conducive to interaction. Group interviewing is ideally suited for children in many respects. It is less intimidating than being individually interviewed by an adult and children may feel more relaxed and comfortable with their peers' presence (Eder & Fingerson, 2001). Group interviews also enable children to challenge each other and use their own styles of language (Cohen et al., 2007). When interviewing children, it is strongly advised that researchers should be fully aware of the power differential between children and adults and adopt strategies to reduce the power imbalance (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Eder & Fingerson, 2001). Arksey and Knight (1999, pp. 116-118) offer some useful tips on conducting interviews with children. For instance, the researcher should establish trust with children, make it clear that there are no right and wrong answers, ask age-appropriate questions, talk in plain language, allow time to think, and employ different methods to generate conversation (e.g. drawing, pictures, games, and sentence completion). Accordingly, the pupils were asked to draw two pictures, one depicting a scenario of an English class they had before and the other showing an English class instructed by me. Their drawings were then used as visual stimulus for interviews, with which the pupils shared their feelings and reflected on their learning experiences in two different settings.

■ Observation

The context-specific nature of action research renders observation a core method for data collection. Observation, and participant observation in particular, as Mason (2002) states, provides researchers with access to experiencing and observing at first hand different aspects of a particular setting in which they

immerse themselves. What they can observe in or of that setting includes social actions, behaviour, interactions, relationships, events, spatial, locational and temporal dimensions as well as experiential, emotional and bodily dimensions (p. 84). Through empirical observations, researchers are able to gather “authentic accounts and verification of ideas” (McKernan, 1996, p. 63). For teachers, observing students is a common teaching practice but for a teacher researcher doing action research, observation should move beyond “just looking” to being “more systematic and precise” (A. Burns, 1999, p. 80). Spradley (1980) clarifies six features of being a participant observer. To begin with, participant observers will have to maintain a *dual purpose*—to seek to engage in activities and simultaneously observe themselves and others. Then, they should be *explicitly aware* of things that are normally taken for granted, which requires them to take mental pictures with a *wide-angle lens*, looking beyond the immediate focus of activity. They will also fill in a role of being an *insider* and an *outsider* at the same time. Finally, in order to achieve a fuller understanding of the meaning of their experience, they will need to engage in *introspection* and *record-keeping*.

In the baseline study, I observed how English was taught at primary schools in Taiwan and how the pupils responded to the activities as a participant observer using an informal approach. This, according to Robson (2002), is “less structured and allow[s] the observer considerable freedom in what information is gathered and how it is recorded”(p. 313). Unstructured observation can be helpful in generating hypotheses (Bell, 2005) and, as Mulhall (2003) points out, it:

- provides insight into interactions between dyads and groups;
- illustrates the whole picture;
- captures context/process;
- informs about the influence of the physical environment. (p. 307)

The data were collected through field notes and audio recordings. Two teachers agreed to be interviewed by me after observation; therefore, I was able to have a further discussion about their teaching to complement my observation notes.

In the action research cycles, observing my own teaching practice became less straightforward. Being fully immersed in teaching, on the one hand, means that I was not able to systematically record my observation in class. On the other hand, teaching requires “full attention or emotional involvement,” which makes it “difficult to achieve the ‘distance’ necessary for systematic observation” (Altrichter et al., 2008, p. 105). Two methods were adopted to overcome the problems. One was to have my co-teacher act as a passive participant observer and critical friend, to offer, as Burns (1999) suggests, “a more objective, distanced and broadly contextualised viewpoint on classroom interaction” (p. 85). The other was to record the classes by using a fixed video camera with a wide-angle lens, positioned on a tripod at the corner of the classroom. By doing so, the pupils’ verbal and non-verbal behaviour, interaction patterns, and classroom performance could be captured and kept as “a relatively holistic record” of the situation (Altrichter et al., 2008, p. 123). Videotapes also made it possible for me to revisit my classroom and research issues after the actual event (Shagoury & Power, 1999) and to observe the pupils’ interactional behaviour which I might not have noticed while teaching (A. Burns, 1999). Additionally, the use of recordings in “stimulated recall interviews” (Gass & Mackey, 2000) with children could encourage them to voice their interpretations of events and thoughts about the instruction. One possible concern about the presence of a video camera in the classroom is that it might distract the pupils’ attention or elicit strange behaviour (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). Mills (2007)

suggests that the researcher introduce the recording equipment into a classroom at the initial stage of an action research project. It is believed that the abovementioned problems will gradually disappear when the children become increasingly accustomed to the presence of the equipment (A. Burns, 1999).

■ Questionnaire Survey

Questionnaire survey is a popular method in ELT research for investigating attitudes and opinions of a large number of people. Some of the advantages of questionnaire survey include:

- The knowledge needed is controlled by the questions; therefore it affords a good deal of precision and clarity.
- Data can be gathered in several different time slots and is comparable.
- Self-completion questionnaires allow access to outside contexts so information can be gathered from colleagues in other schools and even other countries. (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, pp. 171-172).

The data generated from the questionnaire survey can provide both qualitative and quantitative information about the respondents depending on the types of questions asked. Closed-item questions, for instance, involve “a greater uniformity of measurement” and lead to answers which can be quantified and analysed (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 93). Open-ended questions invite the respondents to express their opinions and feelings in their own words, which can provide “graphic examples, illustrative quotes, and can also lead us to identify issues not previously anticipated” (Dörnyei, 2002, p. 47). Types of questions used in this study included dichotomous questions, multiple choice questions, rating-scale questions and open-ended questions.

Questionnaire surveys were administered in both the baseline study and action research cycles. The respondents in the baseline study were recruited through convenience sampling, the most common sample type in second

language research according to Dörnyei (2002). He explains that the participants are selected based on the convenience for the researcher in terms of practical criteria such as “geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, or easy accessibility.” Convenience samples are “purposive” too; that is, respondents “have to possess certain key characteristics that are related to the purpose of the investigation” (p. 72). “By taking advantage of personal or professional contacts and relationships” as Burton, Brundrett and Jones (2008, p. 47) suggest, I posted and emailed questionnaires to the primary English teachers whom I have associated with and asked them to distribute the questionnaires to their colleagues. At the beginning and the end of the action research process the pupils were asked to fill in two questionnaires respectively, aiming to obtain information about their background, preferred ways of learning English, attitudinal change and self-assessed improvement.

■ **Field Notes and Journals**

Field notes and journals play a prominent part in action research because “they build a picture of classroom participants and interactions and provide a record of the processes of problematising and elucidating the teaching and learning issues” (A. Burns, 1999, p. 85). Field notes, as A. Burns (1999) sees them, are accounts of events conveying factual information in a relatively objective tone. Written on the spot or shortly after the events have happened, field notes may consist of symbols, key words, or fragments jotted down in shorthand as a reminder of what occurred (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993). Journals, by contrast, written with more sufficient time, can record “the personal side of the fieldwork equation” (e.g. hopes, fears, confusion and enlightenment) and allow the researchers to have a dialogue with themselves (Hitchcock &

Hughes, 1995, p. 134). According to McKernan (1996), journaling enables teachers to take “a reflective stance” (p. 87), alerting them to “developing thought, changes in values, progression and regression for learners” (p. 84). Journals can also be kept by students to inform the teacher about their responses to classroom tasks, learning difficulties or changing thoughts (G. L. Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994; A. Burns, 1999). In this study I took quick notes on my lesson plans in class or right after class if time permitted. I too kept teaching journals for reflection and recording “critical incidents” (Tripp, 1993). The pupils were asked to keep their learning journals where they were able to reflect on their learning and had a conversation with me.

■ **Artefacts**

The above discussed methods for data collection are mainly related to what the participants have said and how they have behaved. Another valuable source of data derives from what has been made, namely, artefact collection (LeCompte et al., 1993). As Mills (2007) points out, classrooms are replete with artefacts in written or visual forms, which help us to know more about what is going on in the classroom and school. Shagoury and Power (1999) regard student work as an invaluable source of evidence for its tangibility, showing “what kids are able to do and of the range of responses kids make to different learning tasks” (p. 102). To be more specific, A. Burns (1999) takes student texts as an example, maintaining that collecting student writing over time is conducive to analysing and assessing students’ progress as well as the impact of deliberate interventions made in action research. Artefacts also include organisational, institutional, and personal documents, referred as “unobtrusive measures” or “non-reactive sources” (Gray, 2009, p. 444). Through examining documents, researchers are

able to “complement other observations by building a richer profile of the classroom or institutional context for the research” (A. Burns, 1999, p. 140).

In the baseline study, I collected a wide range of documents in order to better my understanding of the current teaching practices in primary English education. My collection of documents is composed of:

- Most used English textbooks at primary schools
- Grade 1-9 English Curriculum Guidelines
- News clips about English language policy and issues relating to English teaching and learning in Taiwan
- Demonstration video clips of how to teach English through storytelling and drama for primary teachers produced by National Institute of Educational Resources and Research in Taiwan

In the action research phase, a variety of pupils’ work was gathered as evidence of their learning, including cards, letters, mini books, dialogue recordings, and finger puppets.

4.5 Data Analysis

This action-based case study, as indicated earlier, incorporated a mixed method approach to addressing the research questions. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously during one data collection phase and this approach is referred to as concurrent embedded strategy by Creswell (2009):

a concurrent embedded approach has a primary method that guides the project and a secondary database that provides a supporting role in the procedures. Given less priority, the secondary method (quantitative or quantitative) is embedded, or nested, within the predominant method

(quantitative or quantitative). (p. 214)

In this research project, quantitative data, i.e. data from questionnaire surveys, were used as a secondary database to substantiate and triangulate the findings present through the qualitative data such as interview transcriptions, video recording, the pupils' work, my observation notes and journals. This mixed methods model allows researchers to "gain perspectives from the different types of data or from different levels within the study" (p. 215). However, the challenges that mixed methods researchers tend to face are "extensive data collection, the time-intensive nature of analyzing both text and numeric data, and the requirement for the researcher to be familiar with both quantitative and qualitative forms of research" (p. 205). Analysing quantitative data is more straightforward because the analysis procedures are well-defined and many statistical software packages nowadays can carry out the complicated mathematical tasks for researchers (Dörnyei, 2007). Dealing with qualitative data, by contrast, is "a major headache" as in "[s]orting and searching through all these data while at the same time creating a consistent and perceptive analysis that remains grounded in those data" (Gibbs, 2007, p. 2).

4.5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Three questionnaire surveys were conducted in this study. One was administered to the primary English teachers in Taiwan in the baseline study phase to investigate their attitudes towards and application of stories and drama. The other two were carried out in the action research cycles to gather information about the participants' background, preferred ways of learning English, attitudinal change, and self-assessed improvement. The major questionnaire

content consists of multiple-choice items and Likert scale items. Some open-ended questions were included in the hope that “[t]he open responses can offer graphic examples, illustrative quotes” and also lead the researcher “to identify issues not previously anticipated” (Dörnyei, 2002, p. 47). All the respondents’ answers to close-ended questions, as suggested by Dörnyei (2007, pp. 198-203), were converted to numerical data by means of coding procedures, entered into computer files to run initial data check and cleaning, and analysed via SPSS 16.0 for Windows for descriptive statistical analysis. The descriptive statistics in this research project were used to enhance my understanding of the role of drama and stories in the current primary English classroom in Taiwan and examine how my participant students responded to the story-based drama English course. Therefore, no general conclusions will be drawn from the quantitative results in this study.

The processing of the responses to open-ended questions, according to Dörnyei (2002), is less straightforward than that of closed-ended items due to the lack of precoded response options. He points out that responses to specific open questions inquiring factual information such as the respondent’s personal information, preferences, or past activities can be easily categorised and coded as nominal or ordinal data. However, categorising responses to clarification questions, sentence completion items, and short-answer questions requires the coder’s subjective judgement which may bias the analysis. To mitigate the effects of such coder subjectivity, I followed the two-phase process proposed by Dörnyei (2002):

1. Taking each person’s response in turn and marking in them any distinct content elements, substantive statement, or key points.

2. Based on the ideas and concepts highlighted in the texts (cf. Phase 1), forming broader categories to describe the content of the response in a way that allows for comparisons with other response. (p. 117)

By doing so, the researcher is able to numerically code the categories formed in the second phase and process them as quantitative data. The key points highlighted in the first phase can also be used as verbatim quotations “for the purpose of illustration and exemplification, or to retain some of the original flavour of the response” (p. 117).

4.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) make it clear that “[t]he process of qualitative data analysis takes many forms, but it is fundamentally a nonmathematical analytical procedure that involves examining the meaning of people’s words and actions” (p. 121). The process can be “labour intensive and time consuming” (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008, p. 429) and involves a wide range of analytic strategies for researchers to choose from. Accordingly, Creswell (2009) recommends the following step by step procedure for qualitative data analysis to provide a clear overview of data preparation, data coding, data interpretation and validation. The procedure is presented in a linear form but he stresses that it works more interactively in practice. That is, “the various stages are interrelated and not always visited in the order presented” (p. 85). Creswell’s proposed procedure which offers a feasible and comprehensive framework for qualitative data analysis was adopted in this study.

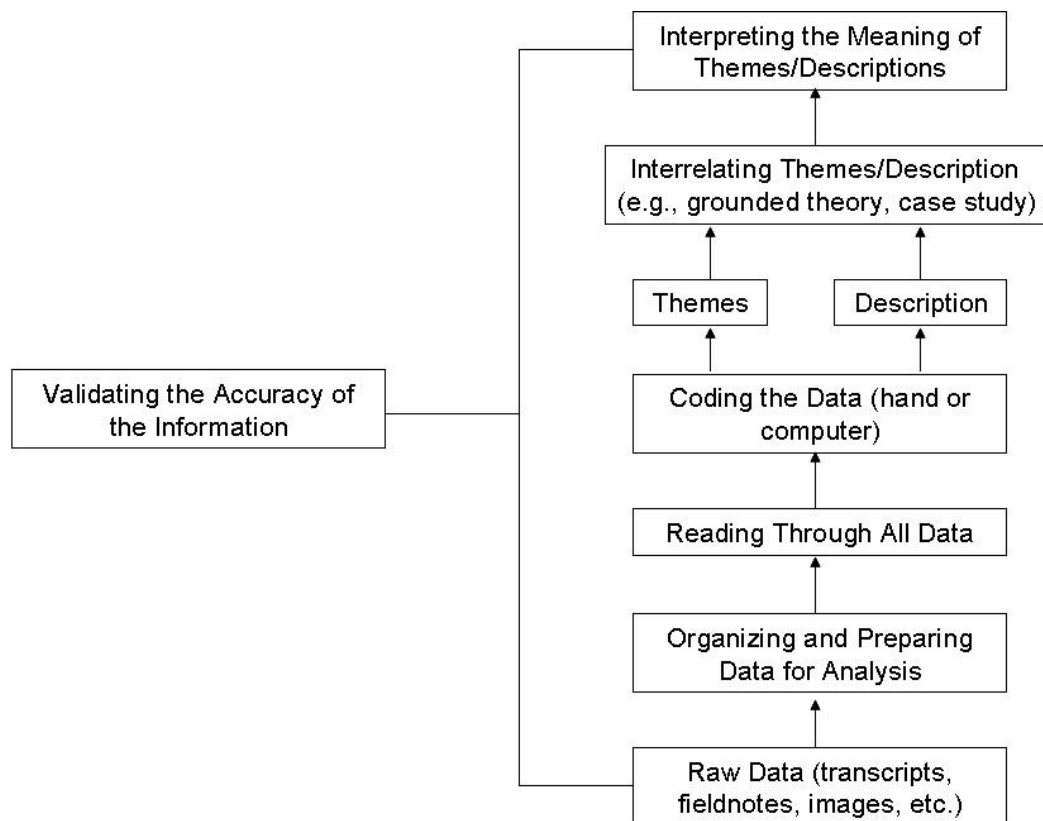


Figure 4.6 Data Analysis in Qualitative Research (from Creswell, 2009, p. 185)

The qualitative data in this study included material from individually and group taped interviews, video recording, pupils' work, my fieldnotes and journals. After being transcribed verbatim, the interview data, together with my field notes and journals were typed up and content-analysed by means of both paper-based and computer approaches. The interviews were conducted in Chinese and the transcriptions were translated into English only at the point where I needed to quote examples for this thesis. Gibbs (2007) has reminded novice analysts that "qualitative data are multi-layered and may be interpreted in different, but equally plausible, ways." Therefore, they need to be careful not to be led by "the immediate, impressionistic, surface reading" (p. 143). In order to move descriptive interpretations to more analytic levels, he urges the researchers to undertake intensive reading. I took on board his suggestion, carefully reading

and re-reading the text to familiarise myself with it and asking new questions of it in each reading. The importance of multiple readings of qualitative data is also emphasised by Erickson (1986), who moreover encourages the researchers to read “by hand”—to circle or highlighting the text in various colours. He explains, “Reading through the actual notes page by page provides the researcher with a more holistic conception of the content of the fieldnotes than that which would be possible with the more partial view provided by computerized data retrieval” (p. 149). I agree with Erickson’s view because I indeed experienced some difficulties in terms of keeping a holistic view when reading through the computerised data at the initial analysis stage. Hence I printed out several copies of the computerised data, highlighted the parts relevant to the research topics, added labels in the margin, and tried to find out patterns and themes. I also bore in mind what Dörnyei (2007) has advised that “at this stage you should highlight any interesting-looking passage even if it is not directly linked to your immediate focus area. This is how new insights can emerge” (p. 251). In the later stage of analysis, I used NVivo 7.0 software for coding the qualitative data and retrieval tasks. As my literature review notes were previously coded and stored in NVivo too, it became more time-saving and efficient to explore the relationship between the gathered data and theoretical interpretations. Although the computer-aided qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software has gained growing acceptance among qualitative researchers, I have been highly aware of its potential drawbacks, such as technological thinking, the coding trap and decontextualised coding which have been further discussed by Dörnyei (2007, pp. 266-267).

I videotaped every lesson and converted all the recordings into digital files which allowed me repeatedly to watch the video clips, mark particular moments,

and compare with my fieldnotes in a more efficient fashion. As the pupils' physical involvement was one of the major research areas in this study, I watched closely the children's movements in the recordings, described them with as much detail as possible and drew sketches when necessary to add clarification to the descriptions. Some crucial exchanges were transcribed verbatim and used as illustrative quotes in the account of the findings. The pupils' work, containing drawings, writing, mini books, was scanned and stored as JPEG files. I also entered my comments on most of their work which were later incorporated into the discussion of findings.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

The classroom is ideal for conducting action research. The benefits, according to Macintyre (2000), come from the regular presence of pupils who, neatly grouped by ages, are usually exuberant and interested in novelties. Young learners in particular tend to comply with the teacher's requests. All these advantageous factors for classroom research, on the other hand, "can leave them [children] open to exploitation" (p. 47). Moreover the imbalance of power between pupils and teacher can potentially impair the validity of data. As N. Burton et al. (2008) point out, for example, children "may feel that they have to give 'right' answers' when they are interviewed or asked to fill in a questionnaire because "they do not perceive the researcher in you, but the teacher" (p. 54). Hence it is imperative for researchers to ensure that children's rights are adequately protected and make clear their positionality and research purpose to the participants. One way to ensure that researchers will fulfil their "duty of care" for all the participant children (N. Burton et al., 2008, p. 50) is to bestow a

thorough consideration upon the ethical issues before commencing the work and to obtain informed consent from all those involved in the study (Mills, 2007).

Regarding classroom-based research, according to Mackey and Gass (2005), the involved parties include learners, their parents (if the learners are children), the instructor, and the school administrators. McNiff et al. (2003) advise that the ethics documents to be distributed to all participants should include an ethics statement and letters of permission. In terms of conducting action research in an ethical manner A. Burns (1999) sets out three key principles: responsibility, confidentiality, and negotiation.

Being aware of the ethical principles for carrying out research with human participants, my co-teachers and I held parental meetings before the commencement of the teaching project. In the meeting the parents were fully informed of the purpose of the research and were able to raise their questions and concerns. One of the parents asked about how I would assess the children's progress. I, accordingly, gave a further explanation on why and how a multiple assessment approach would be implemented in this project. Some parents were interested in my educational background and teaching experiences and also sought advice about what they could do at home to help their children learn English better. They all showed their support for the project, looking forward to seeing the effects of drama and stories on the pupils' English learning experiences. The consent letters with a brief explanation of the research project were later sent home to those parents who were absent from the meeting for them to sign for permission. It was assured that anonymity of participants and confidentiality of their personal information would be maintained. All the names in this study, therefore, have been changed to pseudonyms to protect the

participants' anonymity. The data and results would be accessed only by those who were immediately involved in this research study. Furthermore, in compliance with the prescribed principles and criteria set out in the University's code of conduct for research, I also submitted an application for ethical approval to the Institute of Education of the University of Warwick prior to undertaking my action research.

4.7 The Baseline Study

The baseline study was carried out in spring 2006, utilising a mixed methods approach. Its purposes were two-fold. One was to increase my understanding of the teachers' perceptions of the application of drama and stories in primary English teaching in Taiwan. The second was to investigate the current teaching practice in Taiwan's primary English classes. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire survey, interviews, observations, and document analysis.

A self-administered questionnaire survey (Gray, 2009, p. 229) was conducted in the baseline study to explore the primary English teachers' attitudes towards stories and drama as well as their experiences in applying stories and drama into teaching. Various strategies were used to ensure the validity and reliability of the survey questionnaire. For instance, the questions were reviewed by several experienced primary English teachers and my thesis supervisors in order to establish the content validity. Their feedback was used to refine questions. As Cohen et al. (2007) stress, a pilot test helps to enhance the questionnaire's reliability, validity, and practicability. The revised questionnaire was then piloted on five primary English teachers with different teaching

experiences and modification was made when appropriate. The questionnaire consists of 48 question items, divided into four parts: (1) teachers' application of stories and drama in their teaching, (2) teachers' attitudes towards teaching English through stories, (3) teachers' attitudes towards teaching English through drama, and (4) teachers' background information. Nowadays English teachers in Taiwan often receive questionnaires from postgraduate students or university researchers. A lengthy questionnaire might be off-putting for them (Gilmore & Campbell, 2005). In order to increase response rates, I tried to limit the length and number of questions and keep the questions "as short and straightforward as possible" (Denscombe, 2007, p. 164). In addition, the questionnaire was written in Chinese, the language that the teachers are most familiar with, to make it more respondent-friendly. A total of 135 questionnaires were distributed by convenience sampling "on the basis of proximity, ease-of-access, and willingness to participate" (Urdan, 2005, p. 3) and 109 questionnaires were returned, yielding a return rate of 80.7%.

Five primary English teachers of varying teaching and educational backgrounds participated in the face-to-face interview survey. Two of them had taught primary English for less than three years and the rest had more than six years' experience of teaching English. Two teachers held bachelor degrees in English. Three teachers, who became qualified English teachers by completing the intensive Elementary English Teacher Training Programme held by the Ministry of Education, were also members of the regional instructional consulting teams. Three of the participants had a one-on-one interview while the other two requested a group interview. All the interviews were audio-taped with the interviewees' permission and conducted in Chinese, which was conducive to

a less formal atmosphere, allowing them to express their thoughts more fully. The interviews, each lasting 1-2 hours, proceeded in a semi-structured manner with a list of guide questions regarding issues such as teacher beliefs, the challenges teachers faced in teaching primary English, their frequently-used classroom activities, and their attitudes towards incorporating stories and drama into teaching.

As a participant observer, I observed seven 40-minute primary English classes, ranging from the 3rd to 5th grades, taught by three teachers. Unstructured observation was employed in this study because of its flexibility which “allows the observer to obtain a more complete understanding of the complexities of the situation at hand” (Waltz, Strickland, & Lenz, 2005, p. 236). I took field notes and audio recorded the classes as observational aids. During the break, I also had some chats with the pupils about what they did in class and what they thought about the English class. The main purpose of my observations was to investigate what methods were used in teaching primary English, how the pupils participated in class, and how they interacted with their peers and teacher.

Document analysis included a review of currently used primary English textbooks, demonstration video clips of teaching children English through picture books and drama, produced by National Institute of Educational Resources and Research, and the Grade 1-9 English Curriculum Guidelines, promulgated by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan. Information gathered from the above sources was an important reference for my course design. My teaching project would be part of the formal school curriculum; therefore, I needed to develop my lesson plans in accordance with the teaching objectives listed in the guidelines. The review of English textbooks and demonstration video clips helped me to gain a

better knowledge of how stories and drama were used in primary English teaching. In order to obtain an insight into the problems related to primary English education in Taiwan faced by policy makers, parents, and educators, I also searched through online news archives of several major Chinese and English newspapers, e.g. *United Daily*, *China Times*, *The Taipei Times*, and *The China Post*.

4.8 Action Research Cycle One

For the sake of describing the steps taken in the action research process in an explanatory manner, I followed Lewin's cyclical model of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. However, my actual practice of action research in a real-life setting has shown that it is "an integrated process" (Somekh, 1995, p. 343). Hence, I find it necessary to reiterate Gray's (2009) remark that "these stages overlap" and "some activities are running in parallel with each other" (p. 318).

■ Planning

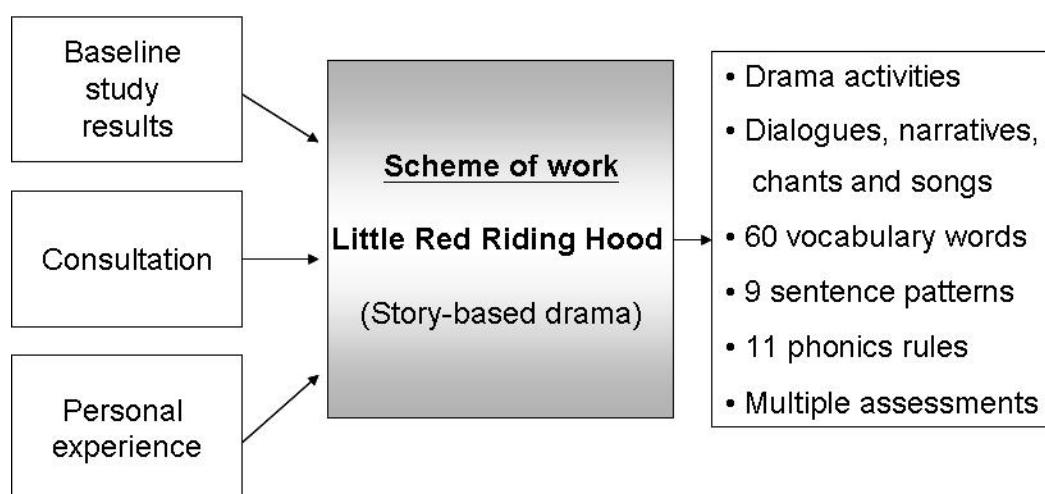


Figure 4.7 Action Research Cycle One: Planning

At the planning stage of the first action research cycle (see Figure 4.7), I developed a scheme of work based on the story of Little Red Riding Hood with input from the baseline study findings, two subject experts, and my co-teachers. The story was chosen for three main reasons. Firstly, it is a popular story that most children in Taiwan have heard. As previously discussed in Section 3.7, children's familiarity with stories in their mother tongue may provide the foundation for their comprehension when hearing the same story told in a foreign language. Secondly, the text of the story, adapted from a jazz chant version written by Carolyn Graham (2003), consists of highly repetitive and rhythmic language elements, which help to reinforce children's language retention and encourage their participation. Graham uses a combination of dialogues and narratives, two fundamental components of stories and drama, to retell this well-known tale. She also includes a chorus to comment on the action and send warning to the characters, creating a dramatic contrast and tense ambience as the story unfolds. Thirdly, the story of Little Red Riding Hood has been told and retold in many different styles and versions. The possibility of bringing various endings to this story offers children an ample space for creativity and imagination.

A variety of drama activities were incorporated into the lessons for different purposes. For instance, a physical warm-up activity in combination with simple English instructions was used to build up an atmosphere of fun and trust. As Hayes (1984) argues, "unless students feel relaxed and safe as a group it is almost impossible for any drama to take place" (p. 16). Teacher in role was employed "to establish, maintain and extend the dramatic world" (O'Mara, 1999, p. 147). I took on the role of Little Red Riding Hood's mother, who was worried

about her daughter going through the forest all on her own, and asked the class for advice. I was also once in role as the sick and lonely granny, who happily read out loud get-well cards sent by the pupils written in the role of Little Red Riding Hood. To increase the children's engagement in drama, teachers need to show their willingness to take part in the imagined game. What is better, they should play even harder than children themselves to demonstrate that "their teacher takes playfulness very seriously" (Winston, 2004a, p. 10). In the story circle, the space within the circle formed by the pupils was transformed into the forest where Little Red Riding Hood met the big bad wolf. The story was enacted through the teacher's narration together with the children's retelling, physicalisation, and movement. By doing so, the pupils were able to connect the language they had learned with what they heard and what they were doing in a contextualised fashion. All the drama activities used in this scheme aimed to help the pupils learn how to:

- Use physical actions to create symbolic meanings;
- Sustain work in role;
- Explore characters by means of dramatic conventions;
- Respond appropriately to teacher in role.

This teaching project, implemented within the formal curriculum, was designed in accordance with the Grade 1-9 English Curriculum Guidelines, formulated by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan. According to the guidelines, pupils, when completing primary education, are required to be able to use at least 300 common English productive vocabulary words and spell and write at least 180 of them. Additionally, children need to familiarise themselves with basic phonic rules and sentence patterns. The language in the story of Little Red

Riding Hood was adapted with reference to the suggested lists of vocabulary and sentence patterns in the guidelines. This scheme also meets the following proclaimed English learning competence indicators.

In *listening*, children should be able to:

- Understand simple sentences and dialogues;
- Understand the main contents of simple songs and rhymes;
- Understand the main contents of simple children stories and plays with visual aids such as pictures, puppets, and physical actions.

In *speaking*, children should be able to:

- Participate in oral practice in class;
- Chant simple songs and rhymes;
- Play a part in simple children plays.

In *reading*, children should be able to:

- Identify main words and phrases in stories, songs, and chants;
- Follow the teacher to read aloud dialogues or short stories and chant songs or rhymes.

In *writing*, children should be able to:

- Copy the words previously taught;
- Copy or imitate simple sentences;
- Spell and write some common basic vocabulary words.

A multiple assessment approach was employed to enhance objectivity in the appraisal of the student progress. Smith (2000) argues that the primary function of assessing young learners is “to form and encourage learning.” Assessment, therefore, should not be a one-time summative test, which very often “ignores the interactive and holistic approach to young learners’ education” (Pawelec &

Lesinska-Gazicka, 2000, p. 229). Rather it should be seen as an ongoing process “through which we try to understand and make inferences about a learner’s development, skills and knowledge” (p. 143). In the light of this view, teachers need to gather information about their pupils’ progress from various sources. In this action research cycle, different types of student work were collected for formative assessment. The pupils created comics from a scenario of the story (S. H. Hughes, 2000), drew get-well cards for Granny, made mini books with illustrations and had the freedom to end the story in their own way. In the mid-term examination, the pupils were first given a paper and pencil test in compliance with the school curriculum requirement. They then, in dyads, put up a finger puppet show for assessment of spoken English in which the pupils themselves also served as peer assessors. As Jarvis (2000) points out, “Children can ‘articulate’ through drawing, gesture, [and] acting” (p. 23). The teacher should accordingly incorporate varying modes of articulation in assessing young learners.

■ Acting

This scheme of work was taught in two 40-minute sessions weekly. According to my original teaching plan, only eight weeks were to be spent on this scheme. For some unexpected situations which will be further discussed in the stage of reflection, it took me two additional weeks to complete this scheme.

Every pupil had a booklet containing the story, dialogues, and word list. Worksheets were distributed separately to the pupils at the end of class as homework and later kept in their portfolio folders after marking. Audio recordings of the teaching content, initially made by me and my colleague, were burned into CDs for the pupils to review at home. Surprisingly, some children

felt interested and volunteered to record the story and dialogues after listening to the recording I made. Gladly granting their request, I arranged time off from class hours for them to produce their own recordings. Working in groups, they created background sound effects, such as the wolf howling, footsteps, and screams. They also tried to be different characters in the story and played with various combinations of accents and tones. When I played the audio clips in class, the pupils all listened very attentively and eagerly made guesses at who played which role in each recording. The audio clips were all uploaded to a web page which only the pupils and teachers could access through a password.

■ **Observing**

I discussed in Section 4.4 my methods of observation and why they were adopted in gathering the action research data. Here I will give a brief summary of the methods used. In this research cycle, the co-teacher helped to observe the children's participation and interaction between each other. After dismissing the class, I would have a discussion with my co-teacher about her observation which was then used as feedback to modify my teaching for the benefit of the pupils' learning. I also video-taped the class and kept a teaching journal for my own observation records. The pupils were requested to keep a learning journal in which they were able to reflect on what they had learned in class and share their thoughts with me. At the end of Cycle One, I conducted a questionnaire survey and stimulated recall interviews to gain understanding of the children's views about learning English through story-based drama.

■ **Reflecting**

I am in agreement with MacIntyre's (2000) claim that "all the time as the action unfolds, there is constant reflection on the ongoing process" (p. 2).

Constant reflection enabled me to apply what I had discovered to classroom learning situations, monitor the pupils' progress towards the intended learning outcomes, and refine my action plan in context. Even though most of the children responded positively to the story-based drama course, the information gathered through the above-mentioned methods also revealed some problems in the first research cycle. Take grouping, for example. As many primary teaching practices in Taiwan still remain heavily teacher-centred, group work is not the norm. This teaching project, however, frequently required cooperation among the children and it took quite a while for them to get used to group work. While some of the pupils preferred to work with their best friends only, some individuals tended to be excluded when they were allowed to form their own groups. Due to the children's unfamiliarity with group work, the first scheme of work fell behind the teaching schedule by two weeks, which led to an urgent need to find workable ways for grouping and, furthermore, a modification to the second scheme of work. As for peer commenting, the pupils were not able to appreciate others' performances and tended to nitpick for they had seldom had previous opportunities to give peer-to-peer feedback on one another's work. Hence I needed to demonstrate how to provide feedback in a positive manner and encouraged them to do so. Another instance is the stimulated recall interviews which did not result in a satisfactory quality to fully understand the pupils' thinking about learning English through drama and stories. Their attention was so easily distracted by their peers' funny behaviour on the video clips that they were not able to talk sensibly in the interview. Therefore, I had to seek an alternative method for the interviews in the second research cycle.

4.9 Action Research Cycle Two

■ Planning

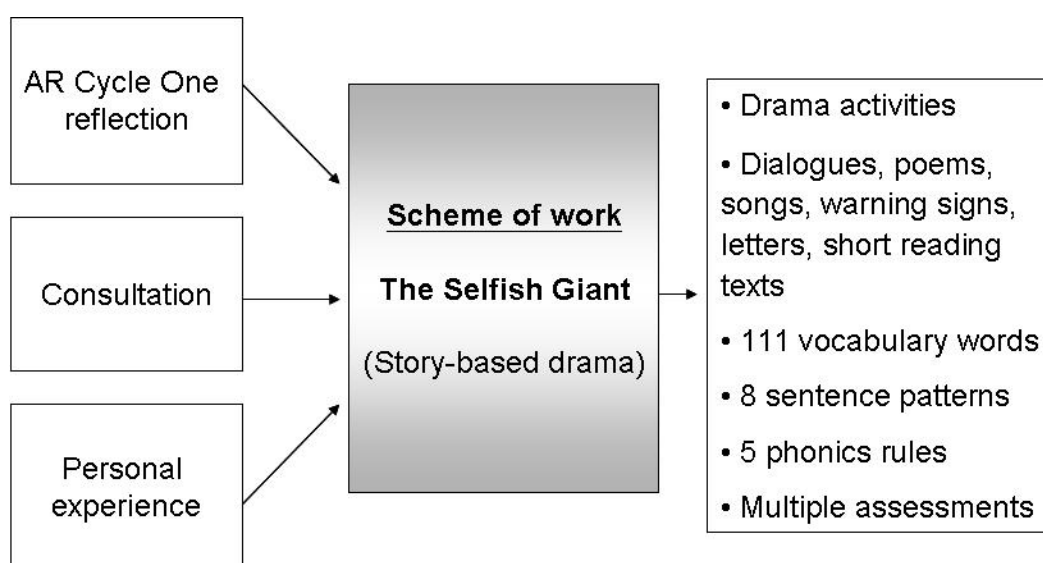


Figure 4.8 Action Research Cycle Two: Planning

The story for the second action research cycle was adapted from Oscar Wilde's story of *The Selfish Giant*. The lessons, derived from Winston's (2004a) scheme of work, had been drafted before I started this research project. However, more details were added and some modifications were made to incorporate the co-teacher's feedback, the pupils' responses, and my reflections on teaching in the first research cycle. Although this is a classic story, most of the pupils participating in this study had not heard it before, which allowed me to observe how they would react to a less familiar story. Focusing more on the theme of sharing, the drama work leaves out the last part in the original story line which symbolises redemption and spiritual values and ends with the giant's welcoming the village children back to his garden. Recognising the importance of illustrations in aiding children's comprehension of stories as discussed in Section 3.7, I also used Gallagher's (2005) aesthetically illustrated picture book when presenting the story.

The main setting of the story is the giant's garden which provides a suitable theme for English learning. What children can see and what they can do in the garden are closely related to their life experiences. When children are in role playing in the garden, it is easy for them to associate language they learn in the story context with physical movement, e.g. climb a tree, jump rope, play hide-and-seek, water the flowers, and cut the grass. The story is full of emotions too. The giant, for instance, was angry at the beginning, finding the village children playing around in his garden. Then he felt sad and lonely since he chased the children away and, as a result, spring stopped visiting his garden. The children in the story also went through different emotions—from playing happily, then feeling scared at the sight of the giant incandescent with rage, becoming sad when told to leave, and feeling happy again as they were allowed to return to the garden. When pupils become engaged in the emotional experience created by the drama work, they are able to identify themselves with characters and relate to the daily problems that this story deals with, such as selfishness vs. sharing. In addition, all the linguistic items are embedded in a meaningful, language-rich story context which facilitates children's language learning.

More genres, such as warning signs, letters, poetry, and short reading texts, were included in this scheme of work. Before starting to produce warning signs on paper, the pupils, in groups of four, were asked to use their bodies to present the high walls which the giant built around his garden to keep the children away. They also needed to think about what threatening warnings they would like to put on the wall and to vocalise them with proper tone and pitch to form a frightening aura. This drama activity aims to help the pupils learn how to express themselves through facial expressions, voices, and gestures and, at the same time,

to create and sustain “atmosphere through use of sound and movement” (Winston, 2004a, p. 57) . It was also hoped that their physical involvement with the scene would improve their recall of the language learned in class and offer them creative ideas in drawing the high wall and warning sign in their take-home assignments. In order to make letter writing a meaningful, communicative activity, a character was created in the dramatic play for the pupils to correspond with. The fictional character was a little girl named Amy, who lived in another village and was going to become the giant’s next-door neighbour. She heard about the giant’s beautiful garden and was looking forward to playing in it. However, she was not sure if the giant would grant her entry. She then wrote to her previous teacher living in the giant’s village to ask what the giant was like and whether he liked children’s company. After reading her letter, the pupils, in role as the village children or the teacher, replied to Amy, describing the giant’s physical appearance and personality traits, and also speculating whether or not the giant would let her play in his garden. A short poem was composed by me to depict the miserable, wintry garden and the giant’s anger and desperation. The pupils needed to recite the poem with appropriate emotions, gestures, and movement. A reading text with three short paragraphs was added to narrate how the giant regretted his being selfish and what happened after he knocked down the wall to welcome the children back to his garden.

This scheme was also designed on the basis of the Grade 1-9 English Curriculum Guidelines. It encompasses 111 vocabulary words, eight sentence patterns, and five phonic rules. Like the scheme of Little Red Riding Hood, the pupils’ audio recordings of dialogues were uploaded to my web page for them to review at home and share with their family. Assessments include the pupils’

written work (warning signs, letters) and role play in which they needed to act out one scene of the story. A paper-pencil test was conducted at the end of the semester as part of summative assessment.

■ **Acting**

In this action research cycle, the lessons were taught for six weeks, each week with two 40-minute sessions. This scheme was finished within the planned length of time due to my better control of the teaching schedule as well as the pupils being accustomed to group work. Apart from teaching, another week was set aside for formal assessment, group interviews with the pupils, and a questionnaire survey. As in the scheme of Little Red Riding Hood, the pupils were given a booklet of The Selfish Giant which consisted of the teaching content, work sheets, and a word list.

■ **Observing**

I continued to use many of the same observation methods which were applied to the first action research cycle, including the co-teacher's observations, my teaching journal, the pupils' learning journals, group interviews, and questionnaire survey. Owing to the ineffectiveness of incorporating video clips in interviewing the pupils in the previous research cycle, I employed a different interview tool to prompt them to reflect on more focused content and guide the discussion. The pupils were told to draw one picture showing how they were taught English in class before and the other one presenting a moment in which they learned English through story-based drama in my class. Then they were put into groups of four, discussing their drawings with their peers and me.

■ **Reflecting**

As Mills (2007) maintains, "Pausing to analyze and reflect during the action

research process is essential” (p. 121). In the same light, Anderson et al. (2007) suggest that teacher researchers should stop periodically in the process of data collection so that they will be able to see if there are any gaps in the data, holes that they need to address. In this cycle of action research, I still constantly reflected on my teaching and, moreover, evaluated the impact of the solutions to the problems found in the previous cycle of action research. Apart from the main research questions, other questions emerging in the research process guided my reflections:

- How do the pupils respond to my demonstration of commenting on other’s work in a more positive way?
- Are the pupils able to work more cooperatively and effectively with each other in their new groups?
- Do the changes made to interviewing with children generate more productive discussion?

As this research cycle was the last phase of my study, I also needed to critically review and evaluate the project as a whole.

4.10 Summary

This chapter begins with a brief review of research paradigms. This is followed by a discussion of why I incorporated both action research and case study to illustrate the process of developing and implementing a story-based drama English course for young EFL learners. The key definitions and major characteristics of action research and case study are addressed and critically reviewed. As this study also applied a mixed methods approach to collecting data for evaluating the impact of my teaching on the children’s English learning, a

range of qualitative and quantitative research methods and how to analyse data is examined. The chapter then progresses to describe my research design, including three phases—the baseline study, the first and second action research cycles.

The next chapter attempts to present the pupils' experience of learning English through stories and drama. I will incorporate various data sources into my analysis and interpretation of their language learning experience in this project.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss results and findings of the study. The analysed data is represented chronologically in a narrative structure, interweaving classroom vignettes, quotes or dialogues from interviews, children's work, and questionnaire survey results. As Clandinin and Connelly (1990) emphasise, "Education and educational studies are a form of experience. For us, narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience" (p. 18). They elaborate:

This retelling may help us—we authors, our students, readers with a special interest—relive our works as narrative inquirers and move on in ways different from, yet connected to, where we began—retelling connected to telling, reliving connected to living. (p. 187)

Through depicting the teaching process using narrative strategies, I seek to "convey what it is like to be part of the scene and the "lived experiences" of the people under study" (Eisenhart, 2006, p. 568).

5.1 Action Research Cycle One: Little Red Riding Hood

5.1.1 Let's Begin

I always feel excited and a bit nervous every time when I start to teach a new class. There is much preparation to be made—getting to know the pupils, acquainting myself with the teaching materials, and being familiar with the use of classroom facilities. However, the thought of being a teacher researcher

designing a semester-long English course almost from scratch and conducting the action research for the first time filled me with more anxiety than excitement. Trying to make sure that everything in the first lesson would be on the right track, I arrived at the school thirty minutes earlier, arranging the seats in a U-shape where children could actively interact with one another and have larger space for drama activities. I placed a video camera at the corner in the back of the hall in the hope that it would not attract too much attention from the pupils. I also wanted to introduce the recording equipment to them right at the beginning of my teaching as suggested by Mills (2007) so that they could gradually feel more comfortable with the presence of the camera. The following narrative section depicts the children's anticipation and excitement about learning English from a new teacher in an unusual teaching space.

Before the bell rang, many pupils had already excitedly rushed into the basement hall, gathering around me and pouring me with lots of questions about the new English course. I could see curiosity in their eyes. Some children spotted the camera, waving hi and making a face in front of it. The hall soon teemed with noise and laughter. Some started to play games in the open space surrounded by the foldable chairs.

My co-teacher, Ms Lin, came in with the rest of the pupils when the bell rang for recess to end. She asked the children to quickly pick a seat and sit down quietly for class. There seemed to be an unspoken consensus as the girls tried to find seats at the same side of the U-shape while the boys took seats at the other end. There were some arguments among the pupils over who wanted to sit beside whom. Ms Lin and I spent a couple of minutes getting them all settled down on their seats. But I could tell that several children were not happy with the seat arrangement. A girl looked particularly upset because she had to sit next to a boy.

Ms Lin introduced me again to the class and then sat herself down in a chair outside of the U-shape at the back of the hall, where she could have an unblocked view of the class. I greeted the children first and then told them that we were going to learn English together through drama and stories this semester. Some of them shouted, "Oh yeah!" which spread contagious enthusiasm, creating an atmosphere of anticipation. The pupils wriggled, giggled, and buzzed. In order to calm them down, I stood still, raised my left

hand, placed my right index finger on my lips, and looked around the class. A few children noticed my hand gesture. At first, they looked puzzled but immediately they took their cue from me by putting their own hands up to indicate silence like I did. The class turned quiet in seconds as more and more children joined in, copying my hand gesture. (Journal_02/03/07)

This class was exactly as Ms Lin had previously described to me. They were lively and boisterous, which, for one thing, could make it easier for me to engage them in drama activities. For another, their liveliness raised my concern about classroom management and discipline. Their reaction to the freedom to choose where to sit was not all positive. In retrospect, it hinted that grouping might not be a straightforward task in the lessons ahead.

5.1.2 Get Physical

After a short introduction to the course, I started the lesson with a physical warm-up activity in which the children needed to demonstrate physically proper reactions to given commands. In order to link the warm-up activity to the story of Little Red Riding Hood, I told the class to imagine that they were trees in a magic forest and could move their branches (i.e. their arms) in different directions as commanded, such as right, left, up, down, front, and back. I then paired up the pupils, one acting as a tree and the other as a command-giver. In my journal I wrote:

The pupils all stood up without hesitation and started to assign roles between themselves. The hall was again full of noises and actions with the children shouting commands and stretching their arms to different directions. The boys were especially excited. Some of them used exaggerated body movements to respond to the commands. Terry and Richard even jumped up and down when being a tree. I needed to go over to remind them as a tree they should only move their arms like branches but keep their feet fixed on the ground as roots. This physical activity seemed to engross all the pupils' attention. No-one acted awkwardly because of the presence of the camera. (Journal_02/03/07)

In the following activity, I told the class that these trees in the magic forest always attempted to grab people walking by with their movable branches. Children liked to play with them. They would sing “La la la la la! You can’t catch me!” and try to dodge the swinging branches when going through the forest. However if someone got caught by the tree, it would shout “Got you!” I led the class to practise the tune sung by the children and the phrase called by the trees several times. Then I asked for eight volunteers to be the magic trees standing in a big circle in the centre and one to be the child wandering through the forest. The following section is an excerpt from my journal:

[Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.]

I said to the class, “*I need eight trees for the magic forest. Who wants to be the trees?*” Several boys waved their hands in the air, waiting for me to call them. Interestingly, some others held up their classmates’ hands instead and cried, “*Teacher, teacher. HE wants to be the tree! He, he, he!*” The girls looked intrigued but only three or four of them actually put up their hands. I assigned eight volunteers, six boys and two girls, to form a big circle in the central space. Without my asking them to start to move, they already swayed their bodies themselves. Terry was keen to catch the wandering child and kept asking me how to say “*Got you!*” correctly.

I first demonstrated how to be the child skipping around and trying not to get caught by the trees. When I began to sing “*La la la la la,*” surprisingly, the class joined in and sang along with me, “*You can’t catch me.*” I stopped beside Terry and he poked me in the arm, calling out, “*Got you!*” Ethan imitated his voice but said “Achoo!” which caused a blast of laughter among the pupil. They all looked very relaxed and cheerful.
(Journal_02/03/07)

The purpose of the physical warm-up activities described above was to lighten up the atmosphere and boost playfulness conducive to interaction. There also exists “a natural interconnection between physical action and language production” (Schewe & Shaw, 1993, p. 8) in the second warm-up activity. Laughter, in addition, can render learning an enjoyable process, thereby

facilitating children's retention of information. In this regard, Pauncz (1980) proposes that teachers should create a joyful learning atmosphere, "where there are often excuses to laugh, so that the language which is being learned is fun" (p. 207). Hence it was not surprising to hear the pupils singing "La la la la la! You can't catch me!" and shouting "Got you!" once in a while at break time when they were playing around even if we had this warm-up activity only once on the very first day of the course.

5.1.3 Read the Props

Before beginning to tell the story of Little Red Riding Hood, I showed the class three props—a basket, a mask of a wolf, and a red cloak with a hood, telling them that these objects would appear in the story they were going to listen to. The conversation below describes how they picked up the new words in an interactive way.

[Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.]

MYSELF: *In this story we have a...* [taking out a basket and placing it on the floor]

ETHAN: *Lan tzu!* [saying the word 'basket' in Chinese with a foreign accent in a funny way]
[The pupils are laughing out loud.]

MYSELF: *Yes. But how do you say lan tzu in English?*

SOME: *Basket.*

MYSELF: *Yes, very good!* [guiding the class to spell 'basket'] *And in this story we also have a...* [taking out a wolf mask and putting it on my face]

ETHAN: *Wolf!* [howling and raising his hands above his head, acting like a wolf attempting to attack the boy sitting next to him]
[Some other children are imitating him.]

MYSELF: *Good. Let's all try to be a wolf.* Please think of the most scary sound and gesture a wolf can make. And then say the word *wolf* loudly with that sound and gesture. *Are you ready?*

CLASS: *Yes.*

MYSELF: *Here we go. One, two three.*
 [All the children are shouting out 'wolf' accompanied by various kinds of howling and frightening gestures.]
Well-done! Now let's see what else we have in the story.
 [taking out the red cloak and putting it on]

ERICSON & ETHAN: *Hsiao Hung Mao!* [saying 'Little Red Riding Hood' in Chinese with a foreign accent in a funny way]

ERICSON: *Teacher, are you going to tell the story of Hsiao Hung Mao?*

MYSELF: *Yes.* This is her red cloak. A cloak with a hood. *So how do we say Hsiao Hung Mao in English? This is big* [using my hand gesture to signal something big] *and this is...* [signalling something small]

CLASS: *Small.*

MYSELF: *Good! And we can also say "little."* [pointing to the cloak] *And this colour is...*

CLASS: *Red.*

MYSELF: *Very good.* [miming the action of riding a bicycle] *What am I doing?*

SOME: *Riding a bicycle.*

MYSELF: Excellent! But say "*riding*" only, OK? So now we have ... [narrowing the gap between my thumb and index finger to show 'little']

CLASS: *Little*

MYSELF: [pointing to my cloak]

CLASS: *Red*

MYSELF: [miming riding a bicycle]

CLASS: *Riding*

MYSELF: [pointing to the hood]

CLASS: *Hood*

MYSELF: *Very very good! You're right. Little Red Riding Hood. So in this story there is a girl. Her name is...*

ELISA: [Trying very hard to connect all the words] *Little... Red... Riding... Hood?*

MYSELF: *Right! Everybody, give Elisa a big hand* [clapping my hands]
 [The class are applauding loudly.]
 [Starting to write on the board] *OK. So let's spell.*
L-I-T-T-L-E, R-E-D, R-I-D-I-N-G, and h-oo-d [reading
 'hood' in separate consonants and vowel] *Who can spell*
"hood"?

ETHAN: *H-O-O-D* [looking confident]

MYSELF: *Yes, yes. Ethan, very good!*

(Journal_02/03/07)

The children were very interested in the red cloak. Even Ms Lin stood up and tried to get a closer look at it. At break time, many pupils came to me and asked if they could try it on. Actually, in the following lessons where I needed someone to play Little Red Riding Hood, I never lacked pupils, either boys or girls, who were eager to be picked because they had fun wearing the red cloak. As Dickinson and Neelands (2006) argue, "Objects, or props, have a special value in drama. They are read as having a symbolic importance" (p. 69) and they also "help create the central mood or atmosphere within the story" (p. 77). The red cloak successfully brought the children into the world of Little Red Riding Hood.

Rather than spoon-feeding the new vocabulary to the children, I used objects, cut-out figures, gesture, and performed actions as suggested by Nation (1990, p. 51) to elicit words from them. According to the pupils' responses, it is clear that they were engaged in the conversation with me, both orally and physically. Guiding them to spell out words through phonics also helps them to

activate their previously learned phonics rules to work out the spelling on their own.

5.1.4 Meet the Roles

I drew the outline of Little Red Riding Hood and the big bad wolf on two large pieces of paper and placed them on the floor. The children were asked to think about these two characters' physical appearance, age, and temperament.

The following questions were used to elicit their responses:

- Does Little Red Riding Hood have short/long/straight/curly hair?
- What colour is her hair?
- Does she have big eyes?
- How old is she?
- Is she a good or bad girl? Why?
- Does the wolf look ugly/cute/friendly/mean?
- Is he a good or bad wolf? Why?
- What does he like to eat?

Through this activity, I aimed to observe the children's oral and listening abilities in English. I wrote down their answers on paper and asked them for help when spelling out the words. As a take-home assignment, the pupils needed to write a short description of Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf, which also provided me with a chance to understand their writing skills. Some children expressed their personal views about the characters in the story. For instance:

- Little Red Riding Hood is a happy girl. The wolf is sad and hungry. (Ericson)
- Little Red Riding Hood may be 8 years old. She is a good girl. She is short and thin. The wolf is a bad wolf. It is a stupid wolf. (Elisa)
- The wolf is my pet. It likes to eat people. But it doesn't want to eat me. I don't know why. I think because it loves me. (Ethan)

Some incorporated illustrations in their descriptions:

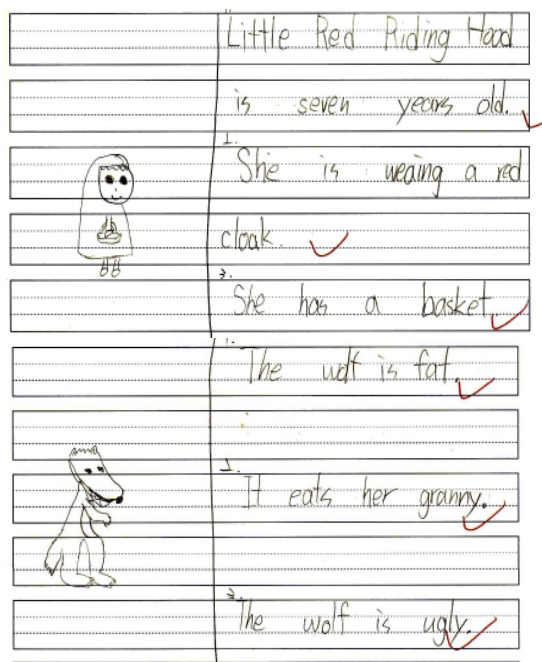


Figure 5.1 Character Descriptions by Kathy

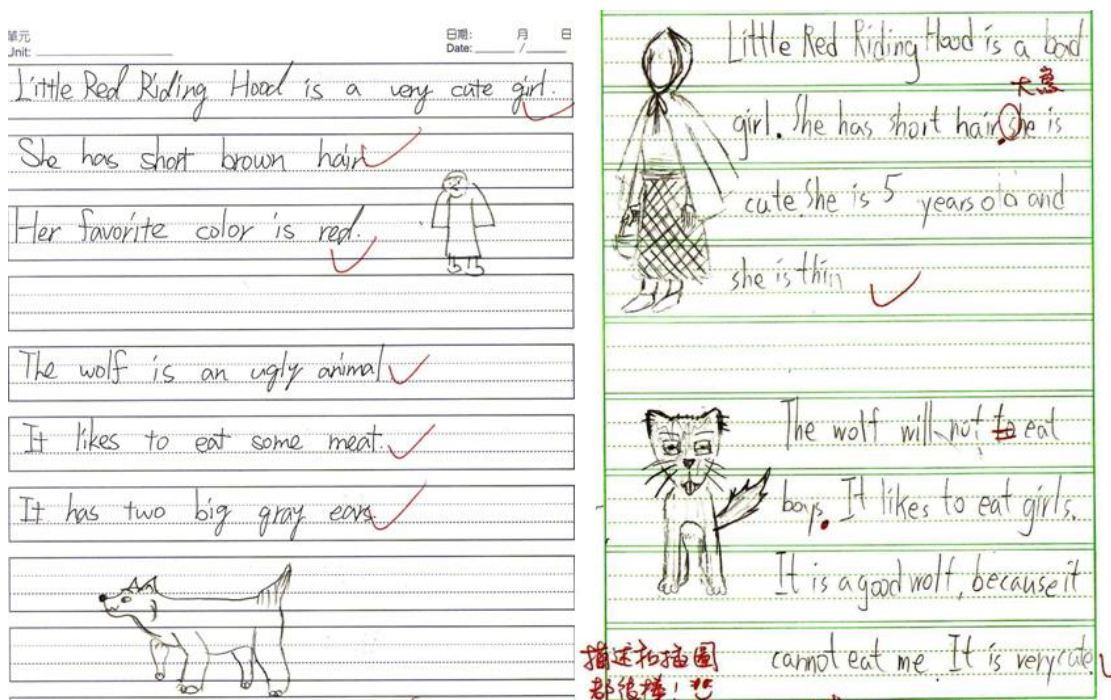


Figure 5.2 Character Descriptions by Audrey and Jack

This writing assignment allowed more able children to display the full range of their language ability and apply what they had learned to complete the task.

Louis's description below can be shown as an example.

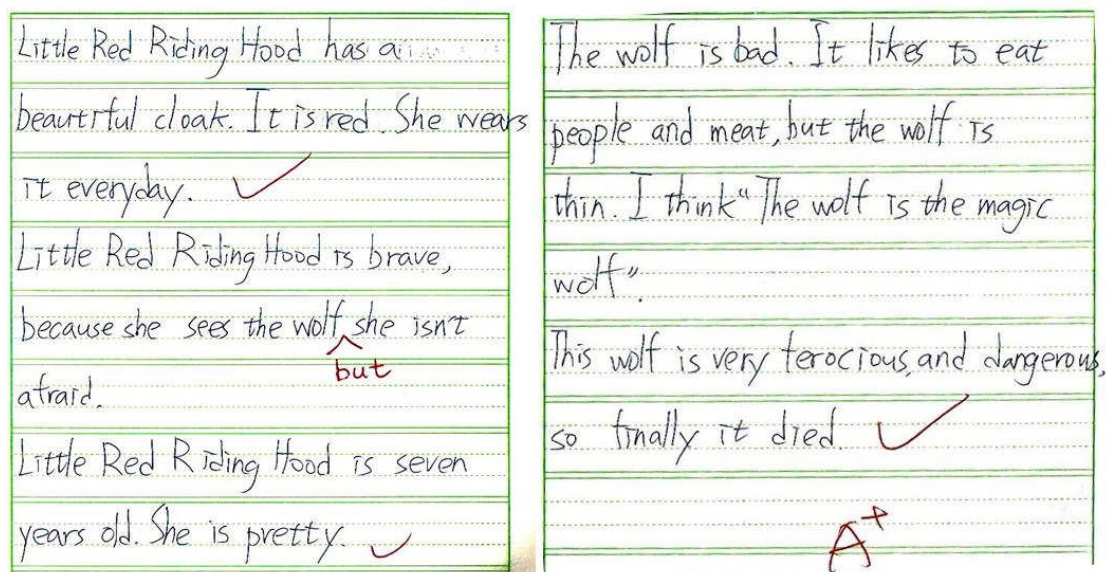


Figure 5.3 Character Descriptions by Louis

5.1.5 Tell the Story

The second lesson began with reviewing vocabulary words taught last time. From the previous lesson, I found that this group of children were not shy in expressing themselves through body language. I, therefore, decided to add more physical elements into my teaching. The following excerpt from my journal outlined how the pupils responded.

[Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.]

When I took out the red cloak from my bag, the children excitedly said, "*Little Red Riding Hood!*" I was amazed that they remembered how to say the name and linked the cloak to the story character themselves. I asked the class how to present Little Red Riding Hood through certain posture or gestures. A boy quickly said, "She looks cute." I asked, "*OK, she looks cute. But how? Can you show us?*" He placed his index and middle fingers on his cheek, made a V-sign hand gesture, cracked a smile, and pretended to look cute. His presentation won lots of laughs because of his vivid imitation of the typical hand gesture many Taiwanese girls normally adopt when taking photos. I invited him to come to the front to mime again. He did accordingly and I asked the class, "*Who is she?*" Terry was the first one to put up his

hands, saying “*Little Red Riding Hood*.” I complimented him, leading the class to clap for him. He looked a bit embarrassed but also seemed to enjoy the applause. Wayne raised a book to attract my attention. He pointed to the book in his hand and said loudly, “*Little Red Riding Hood!*” It’s a picture book he brought from home. I’m glad that he still thought of the story at home.

Some pupils asked whether they could wear the red cloak. Instead of granting their request, I asked them to pretend that they were wearing a very beautiful cloak and show me how they felt and looked in it. The children started to act like they were putting on a cloak. Wayne held his head up high, his hands tenderly stroking his shoulders as if he’s wearing a very nice cloak. I went up to him and said, “*Wow! It’s beautiful!*” He said “*Thank you*” with a nod and a smile. Bella also looked like having a great cloak on. She turned around, walking as if in a fashion show. I told the class to compliment her on her cloak by saying together, “*What a beautiful cloak!*” The children repeated with a giggle, some imitating her posture. Then I asked the pupils how to mime a wolf. Terry, again, was the first one to raise his hand, calling, “*Teacher, me, me!*” I signalled to him and he came to the front. Snarling with his teeth showing, looking fierce with both hands reaching out like sharp claws, he did a great job at miming a wolf, which won himself another round of applause. (Journal_06/03/07)

Ms Lin told me in the interview at the end of the semester that she was impressed by Terry’s response in my English class. She commented:

Terry used to look absent-minded in class. All too often when you asked him to stand up to answer questions, he totally had no clue what was going on or what you wanted him to do. In your class, he did concentrate much more than before and behaved much better, though he still behaved funny once in a while. (Interview_End_Lin)

What I have found from Terry’s and some other pupils’ active participation is that they were highly physically engaged in the pretending activities, an experience they did not normally encounter in more traditional lessons. My positive attitude towards their pretend play and use of body language also encouraged their willingness to participate and volunteer. As Brewster et al (1992) suggest, “Praise and encouragement are important in setting the right atmosphere and provide a good model for the children” (p. 132). Drama is a

collectively constructed imagined world that demands a positive and supportive working atmosphere. I hoped that through my praising the children warmly for whatever contribution they made, they would also learn how to appreciate their peers' performance and effort so as to forge rapport and trust between each other.

After reviewing the vocabulary words, I started to tell the beginning part of the story, a mixture of narrative and dialogue. The interweaving of narrative and dialogue in a story, according to Cameron (2001), "does much to create its particular atmosphere" (p. 165). She maintains that the time-frame within stories distinguishes the use of verb tenses; that is, the past tense is normally seen in narrative to describe what happened, while in dialogues characters can use any tenses which suit the context. However, she observes that in simplified English stories the simple present tense is commonly chosen for narrative, which she regards as "a pity to deprive learners of opportunities to hear authentic uses of past tense forms, and the contrast with other tenses, in the meaningful contexts of stories" (p. 166). A similar point is made by Wright (1995), who claims that time indicators such as "once upon a time" or "long, long time ago" strongly advised the use of past tenses in the story, serving as "a natural vehicle for exposure to past tenses, which can later be turned into active use" (p. 173). Though well argued, their notion of exposing learners to varied verb tense forms in stories is not without its limitations when applied to teaching English as a foreign language to beginners. Especially for learners who speak Chinese as their native tongue, it can be a difficult task to mark the past tense in the initial stage of learning English. As in Mandarin Chinese tense is not indicated in the verb itself, Chinese EFL learners have a tendency to rely on temporal adverbials to refer to past time (Chueh, 2007). The task can be even more challenging for young learners who

need to not only understand the abstract concept of time in English but also learn the complicated rules of forming the past tense with both regular and irregular verbs. Some pupils in this project were still struggling with very basic English grammar, e.g. subject-verb agreement and present progressive tense. Introducing the past tense to them might add a burden to their learning. Ergo, I decided to use the simple present tense to narrate the story as follows, aiming to reinforce the sentence patterns the pupils were required to learn according to the English Curriculum Guideline. They would also be able to focus more on the story content and vocabulary.

In our story, there is a girl. Her name is Little Red Riding Hood. She lives with her Mama by the forest. Little Red Riding Hood is a good girl. She listens to her Mama, most of the time. When Mama says, “Go,” she goes. When Mama says, “Come,” she comes. When Mama says, “Sit,” she sits. When Mama says, “Sleep,” she sleeps. She is a good girl. She listens to her Mama, most of the time.

The story was told with finger puppets. Satchwell and De Silva (1995) recognise the value of puppets in the foreign language classroom because puppets are “a colourful and enjoyable way to introduce unknown vocabulary and structures” and “can bring a new dimension to lessons” (p. 28). In my journal I wrote:

I could hear some “wows” from the children when they saw the finger puppet of Little Red Riding Hood. Some leaned forward with mouths wide open while some stood up so as to see better. The puppets did attract the pupils’ attention. They were all ears during my storytelling. At break, several children came to ask if they could play with the finger puppets. I told them that they were going to make their own finger puppets to tell the story in a future lesson. They looked interested. (Journal_06/03/07)

A finger puppet show was indeed held in the middle of the semester as one of the

multiple assessment instruments. I do not intend to delve into any details here about how the children responded to puppets now since they are to be covered in the relevant section elsewhere in this chapter.

After presenting the introductory part of the story, I asked for two volunteers to be Little Red Riding Hood and her mother. The pupils became thrilled at the sight of the red cloak and an apron for the story characters. I described their reaction in my journal:

I saw hands waving in the air and some children jiggling to attract my attention, looking forward to being called upon. (Journal_06/03/07)

As I had seen in my classroom observations conducted in the baseline study, very few pupils would raise their hands to volunteer either to answer or take part in an activity. One teacher I had an interview with expressed her disappointment at students' passivity and non-participation in class. She said:

It's really hard to get them [my pupils] to do anything. They think it's boring to role-play the dialogue in the textbook. They don't find games interesting either. Some told me that the games they played in the private language centre were more fun and exciting. So I don't feel like asking for volunteers any more. (Interview_Baseline_Chen)

In her class, the pupils were randomly chosen to answer questions through drawing lots, which would avoid the embarrassment of seeing no hands up. I, therefore, took the children's active responses in class as a positive sign of their willingness to participate.

I wrote the narrative on the whiteboard and led the class to read it aloud. Reading aloud, suggested by Cameron (2001), benefits children's language development in a number of ways. She argues:

... reading aloud familiarises children with the language of written English: the formulaic openings (*Once upon a time...*) and closings (*and so they all lived happily after.*); the patterns of text types—stories and information texts, and sentence types. Affectively, reading aloud can motivate children to want to read themselves. (p. 141)

On the other hand, she emphasises the necessity of making sure that children grasp the overall meaning of the text and the majority of words in it. To prevent young learners from falling into the trap of merely barking at the print, she urges that the teacher should offer them a “skeleton” to build on their understanding of the text by using, for instance, “pictures that show characters and action, and by talking about the text in advance and giving enough of the meaning” (p. 141). The way I helped the pupils make connections between words and meaning in this lesson was mainly by means of my body language. With each time reading aloud, I rubbed out some words and used gestures to aid their recall of the erased words. In the end, most of the children were able to memorise the whole paragraph with my physical prompts.

5.1.6 Act It Out

The narrator plays a crucial part in drama and storytelling. Winston (2004a) mentions that narration can be used to “introduce, link or conclude action,” “slow and intensify action,” “mark the passage of time,” or “introduce the next stage of a drama” (p. 142). Narration, though an important component of a story, has not received sufficient attention in the current primary English coursebooks in Taiwan, in which most texts are presented in a dialogic form. I briefly told the class the function of a narrator in stories, a role that moves the story forward by telling, but not acting, part of the story line and whose attitude towards and interpretation of the events or characters can influence how the reader or

audience perceives the story. We also had a short discussion about different dramatic effects that can be created by where narrators position themselves on stage. To gain a deeper understanding of how the narrator sets the mood and the pace of the story, the pupils were divided into groups of four to act out the story by taking on roles of narrators and characters.

Before having the pupils practise in groups, I asked them how to present the forest without using props. Ethan's quick response described in my journal impressed me.

[Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.]

"Little Red Riding Hood and her mama live in the forest, right? So how can we show the forest without the use of props?" I asked.

"Use people to be the trees," replied Ethan.

"Good idea! Can you show us?" I asked.

"Like this," said Ethan, standing up, stretching his arms out, and posing like a tree.

After class, I asked Ethan where he got the idea of "using people to be the trees." He pointed at me, said, "In your class," and started to sing *"La la la la la. You can't catch me."* I'm impressed because he still remembers that physical warm-up activity. (Journal_16/03/07)

In their group presentations, two pupils needed to act as narrators, another one as Little Red Riding Hood, and the other one as Mama. It indeed looked chaotic, sounded loud when the children spread out in the space for rehearsal. But I could also see them pick up each other's ideas and try them out. Ms Lin and I circulated among the groups, listening and giving advice. I encouraged the pupils to do their best to memorise the text and see if they could act it out without reading from the whiteboard. At least half of the children who were in role as narrators successfully completed the task in their group presentation. They spoke their lines fluently and clearly. Some even varied the way they

narrated. I wrote down what I observed in class in my journal:

Louis and Terry used different combinations to narrate the story. Sometimes they spoke together and sometimes separately, which created a special atmosphere in their storytelling. Audrey and Julia said the lines in turn but added a vocal emphasis to the last line—“*She listens to her mama most of the time*” by speaking more loudly in perfect synchronicity. When they narrated, they used eye contact to cue each other to take turns. When the characters spoke and acted, they kept still and focused their eyes on the actors. Wayne made a very dramatic hand gesture when saying, “*In our story*,” to start his storytelling. He then pointed to David, who played Little Red Riding Hood, and introduced, “*There is a girl. Her name is Little Red Riding Hood.*” Turning around to face the front, David deliberately wore a shy smile on his face and greeted the class in a high-pitched, girly voice, “*Hello, my name is Little Red Riding Hood.*” Naturally, the class erupted into laughter. Wayne applied the same dramatic hand gesture as he did at the beginning to end the story.

The children showed different relationships between Little Red Riding Hood and her mother in the presentation. Ethan, for example, played a very bossy mother who gave commands such as ‘Go’, ‘Come’, ‘Sit’, ‘Sleep’ with gestures like manipulating a puppet. Ruby, by contrast, was a gentle mother who spoke softly to her daughter, played by Olivia. However, Olivia pretended to be a rebellious girl, pouting her lips, shrugging her shoulders, and stamping her feet to show her unwillingness to follow her mother’s commands. As the narrator said the last sentence “*She listens to her mama most of the time*,” she even made a face and stuck out her tongue at her mother. (Journal_16/03/07)

Watching others act out the story enhances the learners’ memorisation and provides a meaningful context for the vocabulary taught. In this lesson, the story was acted out by eight groups of children in eight different ways, which reinforces a lasting memory and understanding of content. The end-of-term questionnaire survey shows that among 32 pupils in this class, 24 strongly agreed and seven agreed that they liked watching their classmates’ acting with only one pupil indicating a neutral attitude. In the mid-term interview, Julia said to me, “Being an audience also helps me learn English because I can not only listen to but also watch the story.” Her opinion was supported by other children:

MYSELF: Do you like watching others act out the story?

ALL: Yes. It's fun!

BEN: It makes me laugh.

MYSELF: Do you think making you laugh is important for you in terms of learning English?

WAYNE: Yes. Gotta learn happily.

BEN: Right. And I can remember better.

SAM: I can hear the dialogues much more times through watching others perform and it helps me learn English better.

(Interview_Mid_Group 1)

In fact, after one month's time with one-week spring break in between, Ms Lin was surprised to find that the children were still able to recite by heart the narrative together with a dialogue which I will describe in the next section. After class, she gave her comments as follows:

It's really amazing! It's been quite a long while since you taught them that part of story. And we even had a spring break in between. But they still remember! I think it's because the pupils had the chance to act it out in groups and watching their classmates perform has become a great language input for them. It impressed them more than passively listening to the CD.
(Journal_13/04/07)

5.1.7 Sing and Act

MAMA: (Sung to the tune of Frère Jacques)
Are you sleeping? Are you sleeping? Red Riding Hood.
Red Riding Hood. Morning bells are ringing. Morning bells
are ringing. Ding ding dong. Ding ding dong.
Get up. Get up. It's time to get up.

LRRH: Oh no. Oh no. I don't want to get up.

MAMA: Come on. Come on. It's time to get up.

LRRH: OK. OK. It's time to get up. Mmmm, something smells like

chocolate. Something smells like peanut butter. Chocolate
peanut butter cookies? It's chocolate peanut butter cookies!

MAMA: These cookies are for Granny. She's home alone and sick in
bed. Please go and see her this morning.

LRRH: Oh, poor Granny. She's sick and all-alone. I'll go and see
her this morning.

The dialogue above was taught after the narrative described in Section 5.1.5. It begins with a song sung to the tune of Frère Jacques, a melody which is so popular that the class soon joined in and sang along. Phillips (1993) observes that young learners "respond strongly to music and rhythm" (p. 38) and it is easier for them to remember words in a song or a chant than in a spoken text. She goes on to argue, "if you teach children a song, it somehow 'sticks'" (p. 100). Although it is widely believed that children enjoy singing, the result of a questionnaire survey conducted prior to the course commencement suggested something different. Nearly one-third of the class (or ten) disliked singing English songs, with 14 pupils claiming a neutral view, only 8 indicating liking. This somewhat contradictory finding was later justified by some children's explanation given at their interviews:

MYSELF: Ms Lin told me that you didn't like singing English songs in
class. Can you tell me why?

AUDREY: The songs in the textbook are not pleasing to the ear. I've
heard none of them before.

BELLA: Right! They are all about bread, toothbrushes, and so on. The
lyrics don't make any sense at all.

(Interview_End_Group 1)

BEN: The songs in the textbook are so silly. [The rest are nodding.]

DAVID: They can't be called songs at all.

JACK: Yes, they're just a list of vocabulary words.

(Interview_End_Group 3)

There is a major attitudinal change in the end-of-term survey, in which the majority of pupils, 27 of them, expressed more positive attitudes towards English songs and four appeared neutral, leaving only one pupil in the camp of disliking singing (see Figure 5.4).

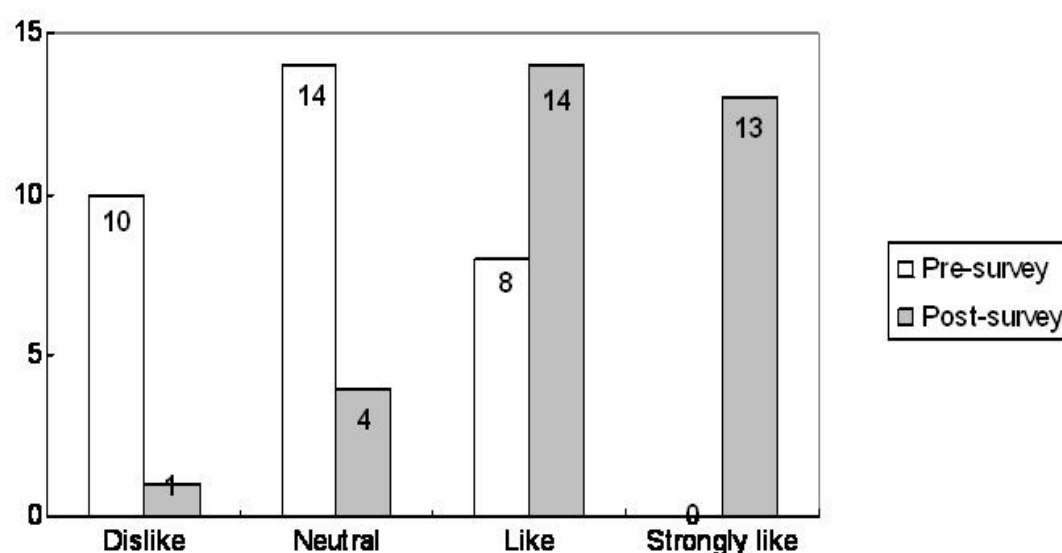


Figure 5.4 Pupils' opinions concerning the question "Do you like learning English through songs?"

A possible reason for the change may lie in the melody and lyrics of songs.

Another group of pupils voiced their comments regarding the differences

between songs in the textbook and the stories taught in this project.

MYSELF: What do you think made you more attentive in class this semester?

ANNA: Because we can perform.
[The rest of the group are nodding to show agreement.]

OLIVIA: And we can sing too. [starting to hum “If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands,” a song taught in *The Selfish Giant*.]

MYSELF: But there are also songs in the textbook, aren’t there?

ANNA: Yes, but some of them are songs I learned in kindergarten, and they are not pleasing to the ear.

OLIVIA: Right, very unpleasing to the ear.

MYSELF: So the songs we learned this semester are more pleasant to hear?

ANNA: Yes. The songs in the textbook are so boring.

OLIVIA: Right! Something like “*I can do what*” *blah blah blah*...

MYSELF: You mean the lyrics are composed of words and sentences from the content of the textbook?

OLIVIA: Yes, one song for one lesson and none is pleasing to the ear.

MYSELF: I also found that you all are fond of singing this semester. Every time when I started to sing “*If you’re happy...*” and everybody would just join in and sing “*and you know it, clap your hands.*” Some would even begin to clap too.

CLAIRE: Yeah, it’s fun!

(Interview_End_Group 2)

In a preparatory meeting with Ms Lin, she told me that this class showed no interest in singing the songs in the textbook. She did not appreciate those songs either. Some songs, in her words, are “so tuneless” that she couldn’t pick up the tune herself and needed to rely on the CD for demonstration. She shared a similar view with the pupils on the lyrics which she found “very unnatural and illogical” because “the songwriter seems to squeeze the taught vocabulary and sentence patterns into the song merely for the sake of review.” Consequently, she would “just lead the class to read the song once, listen to it once, and that’s it.” Children’s enjoyment in music has rendered it “an integral part of language

programmes and published ELT materials for children” (Brewster et al., 1992, p. 174). The usefulness of bringing songs into an EFL classroom is manifold.

Kirsch (2008) lists the benefits as follows:

- They promote positive feelings.
- The rhythmical patterns facilitate and accelerate learning.
- They are a good means of developing listening, pronunciation and speaking skills. (p. 85)

Rixon (1995), emphasising “language pay-off,” also notes that songs “may give the child access to language chunks which he/she can incorporate into general language use” (p. 36). Although these positive effects that singing can bring to children’s foreign language learning are indisputable, the premise is that the songs need to be able to engage them first. Story and drama provide rich contexts for teachers to incorporate songs into their lessons, which, in return, may add a dramatic feel to the storytelling and acting out. Songs in the textbook specially written and composed for revision purpose can sometimes sound stilted and contrived. If teachers place too much emphasis on using songs to drill specific linguistic items, children may feel demotivated because the enjoyment of singing is reduced to be language exercises (Vale & Feunteun, 1995). Alternatively, teachers can select suitable songs relevant to the story told in class from a wide repertoire of “real” songs which normally contain authentic and natural language. The main concern of using real songs to teach English to young learners, as Rixon (1995) has reminded us, would be the “weird or archaic locutions” in many traditional songs which initially can be baffling to even native-speaking children. However, there is a wide range of choices in real songs, if picked wisely or adapted properly, they can expand young learners’ “experience in the fields of concept, culture and pure fun” (p. 45).

After teaching the new vocabulary, I acted out the dialogue to enhance the pupils' comprehension without the aid of translation. The cloak and the apron were placed on the floor to represent Little Red Riding Hood and her mother. While dramatising, I varied my voice, eye level and switched the spot where I stood. Simply put, as Mama, I would stand next to the apron, speak with a deeper, more mature voice, and look down as if my little girl was standing in front of me. When in role as Little Red Riding Hood, I would position myself beside the cloak, talking with a higher pitch and eyes up front like looking up at my mother. My presentation of the dialogue was accompanied by a large amount of body language, such as pointing to my watch to indicate time to get up, yawning to stress that "I don't want to get up," stretching my arms straight up when saying "OK. OK. It's time to get up," sniffing as if I actually smelled chocolate peanut butter cookies.

The pupils were put in groups of four to enact the dialogue. In order to lower their anxiety level about having to learn the dialogue by heart, I told them that two members in the group would be prompters who read out the dialogue line by line for the other two members to repeat and act it out. The prompters needed to be able to recognise the words in advance and pronounce them clearly while the actors were required to grasp what had been said and reproduce the sentence accompanied by proper tones, facial expressions, and gestures to show their comprehension. Like the previous time, the children were loud and boisterous, many of them, especially boys, moving around in the space during group practice. It reminded me of a scenario described in Tony Wright's (1992) article:

Imagine we walk down the corridor of a school and hear much noise coming from a classroom. We might at first assume that it is the result of the teacher having lost control of the class (or some other plausible explanation). On arrival and entrance to the classroom, we find the students engaged in an activity which involves animated discussion, in groups, with the teacher participating as a monitor in the activity. We can only know what the noise is about by referring directly to the context in which the noise occurs. (p. 194)

Very often the noise levels in a drama class are higher than expected in a regular class. Children are prone to become hyperactive when they are given the green light to work on their feet. It is easy to be misunderstood as a discipline problem. In the questionnaire survey of my baseline study, the teachers did show their concern about pupils' behaviour in drama activities. As shown in Figure 5.5, among 95 respondents who claimed that they had never or seldom incorporated drama into their teaching, more than half of them (50 teachers) chose "It's easier to cause discipline problems" as the reason which discouraged their use of drama, one of the top two reasons receiving the most agreement.

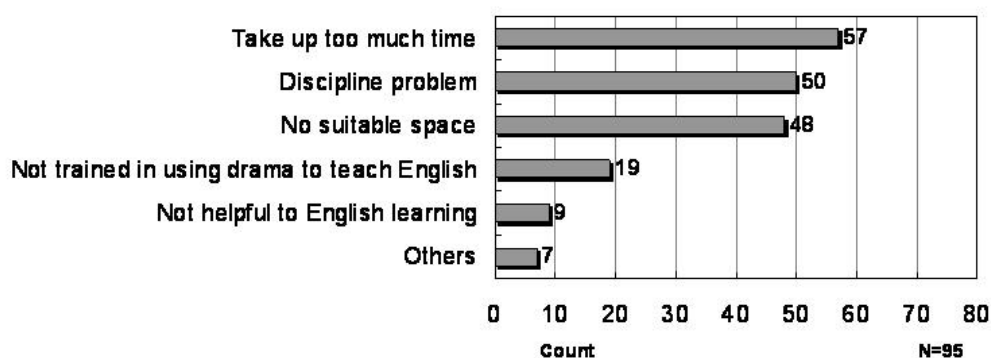


Figure 5.5 Teachers' reasons for never/seldom use drama activities

I was fully aware of the noise level the children created but also wanted them to be actively involved in rehearsing and preparing for the enactment of the dialogue. I thought of a way to strike the balance which I put down in my journal:

All of a sudden the hall was drowned in a wave of noise as soon as the children found their own spot for group practice. I wanted to keep the noise to a reasonable level, giving due consideration to other classes nearby. Hence, I gathered the pupils together and told them to assign a person among their groups to be responsible for making sure that nobody is shouting or talking too loud while rehearsing. If they see me raise my hand, they need to ask their group to lower their voice. Some pupils took this noise detecting job seriously, trying their best to remind their peers to speak a little quieter. Overall speaking, the children made progress in group practice this time. It was not as noisy as before. Besides, they knew they only had ten minutes for rehearsal and they didn't want to embarrass themselves when acting in front of others; therefore, most of the children were on task. Some even asked their peers to get serious and work harder. (Journal_27/03/07)

After the children worked in groups for ten minutes, I clapped my hands to signal that the time was up. A number of pupils pleaded for more time to practise, showing that they were highly motivated to present their work as well as possible. Actually, during the presentation time, two groups even asked me to give them a second chance to act out the dialogue again because they were not satisfied with their own performance. Three groups volunteered to be the first one to perform, indicating that they were willing to take initiative in participating in classroom activities. In my journal, I described the children's group performance:

The singing added an extra element to their acting work with a more joyful quality. They used different ways to get Little Red Riding Hood out of bed while singing the song. One mother shook her to wake her up. One sang very loudly to her ears. One slapped her on her hips. And one even held up a broom, pretending to "sweep" her off her bed. It's really amusing to see them connect the real life experiences to their acting. Terry used a folding chair as his bed, on which he, in role as Little Red Riding Hood, lay himself down, facing the floor with hands and legs hanging down loosely, snoring loudly as in deep sleep. He jumped up and down exaggeratedly to show his excitement when pretending to smell chocolate peanut butter cookies. I couldn't help but laugh out loud along with the class. Jack took a plastic floor mat to cover himself up as a blanket, which was pulled and dragged by him and David, playing Mama when she tried to wake up Little Red Riding Hood. It looked like a funny tug-of-war! Of course, it brought another round of laughs! At the end, David grabbed a whiteboard eraser, turned it into a mobile phone and called Granny to tell her that Little Red Riding Hood will

visit her soon. It's really a surprising ending for us all. The class found their use of the whiteboard eraser and plastic floor mat very creative and entertaining. They were not the only group that added extra lines to the dialogue. Wayne rubbed his tummy and said "I'm hungry" after "It's chocolate peanut butter cookies!" I asked him why he put that sentence into their presentation and he told me "It just came out of my mouth naturally." As an English teacher, this is the moment I've been waiting for—the moment when learners can recall language input in English they've received before and output it "naturally" in an appropriate context at the right time. (Journal_27/03/07)

I can't agree more with Hallowell's (1992) view on what English teachers should aspire to achieve in the foreign language classroom. He maintains that "We want our learners to want to and dare to use the language for their own purposes. We want them to use it accurately if possible, inaccurately if necessary, but above all we want them to *make it theirs*" (p. 9). In Wayne's case, he did make language *his*.

I asked the pupils to draw a comic strip of the dialogue as their homework. Most children enjoy drawing and quite a few of them like to create their own comics. Hughes (2000) comments that for young learners the writing task can become "more enjoyable through illustration" (p. 107). She further points out that "Comics adapt themselves to mixed ability classrooms in that all children can create a successful comic regardless of their limited grammar knowledge, thus contributing to feelings of confidence and success" (p. 116). As shown in their work below, the pupils selected appropriate text to fit into their comics. Terry based his comic strip on a performance he saw in class. Eva had very limited English but was good at drawing. I put her work into the booklet as teaching material, which indeed boosted her confidence and enabled her to become more engaged in class. Julia's well-presented comic served as a good illustrative version of the dialogue.

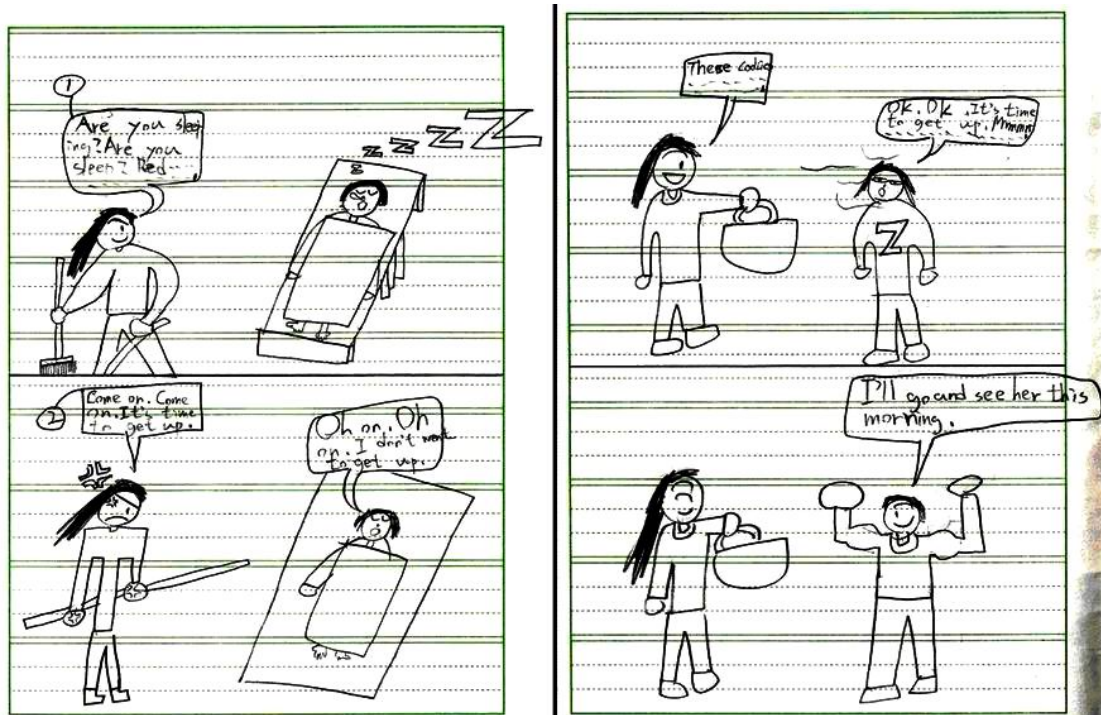


Figure 5.6 Comics drawn by Terry



Figure 5.7 Comics drawn by Eva

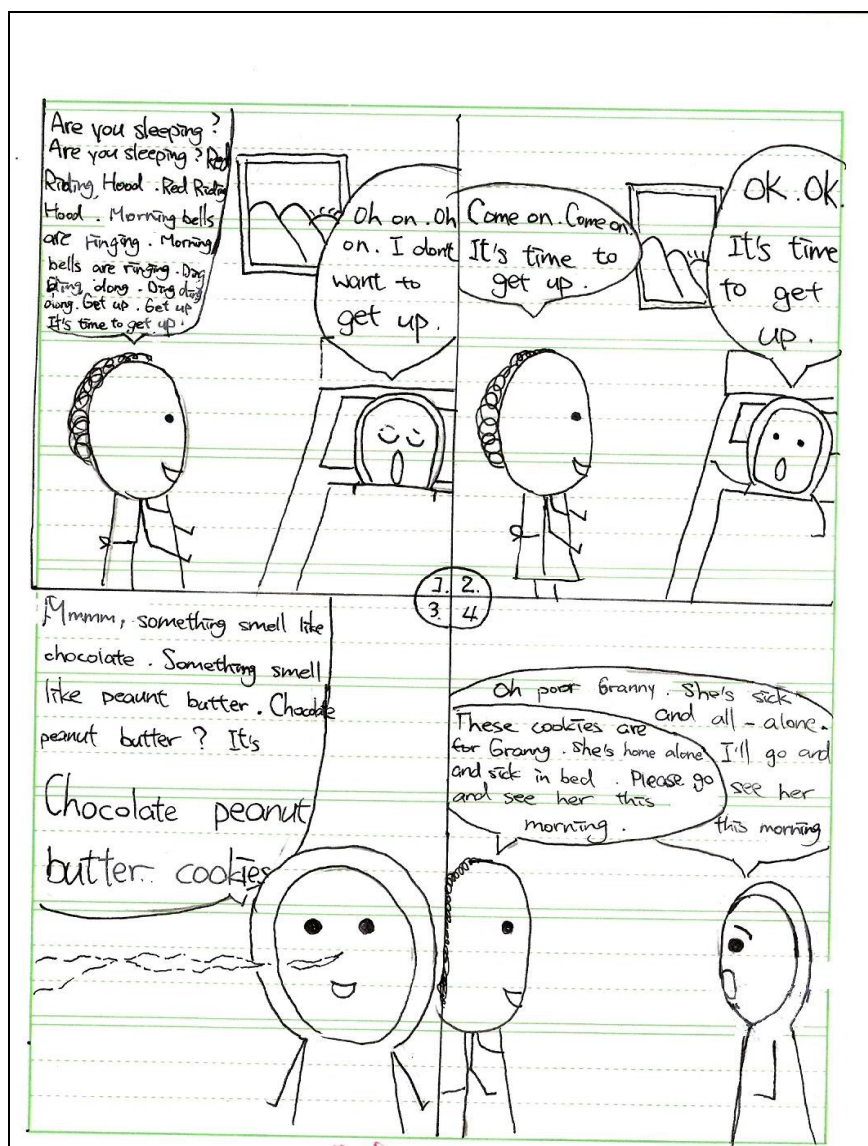


Figure 5.8 Comics drawn by Julia

5.1.8 Feedback Time

Before the group presentation, I assigned an extra task to the children, telling them that they were going to give feedback on the group performing after them. According to Phillips (1993), feedback time has a significant role to play in language learning. It is a time for the teacher and taught to “look back at, and reflect on, what they have been doing” in class (p. 11). She suggests that feedback can focus on linguistic elements as well as how children have carried out the task individually or in a group. What I asked my pupils to do was to

provide feedback on their classmates' enactment of the dialogue. Although the task was aimed at providing an opportunity for children to benefit from each other's feedback, contrary to my expectations, it turned out to be personal attacks. It seems that the pupils did not know how to praise others and were so ready to make negative comments. As soon as I realised that they were not trying to offer constructive criticism but nitpicking, I intervened and started to comment on their work in a positive manner. The following is the transcription of the conversation between the pupils and me:

[Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.]

MYSELF: Has anybody noticed that Wayne added a sentence in the dialogue?

SOME PUPILS: Yes.

MYSELF: *What's that?*

Terry *I'm hungry.*

MYSELF: *Right. Very good!* I like the way Wayne related what he learned before to the story and used the sentence appropriately. What did he do when he said "*I'm hungry?*" Do you remember?

Emily He rubbed his tummy like this.

MYSELF: *Yes.* So do you think the way he rubbed his tummy made himself better understood?

Class: *Yes.*

MYSELF: What about Jack's group? I like the way they used the plastic floor mat as a blanket. It's creative! I would never have thought of that myself.
[The children are laughing.]

SOME PUPILS: Yes, it's fun.

MYSELF: But it's a pity that some of you didn't speak loud enough when acting out the dialogue. So I couldn't hear you clearly. Do you

think it's important to let others hear what you say when you perform?

CLASS: *Yes.*

MYSELF: *Good, so let's do it again. This time you need to tell the group performing after yours two things you think they have done well and one thing you think they can improve. Can you do that for me?*

CLASS: *Yes!*

(Journal_27/03/07)

This incident struck me that it does not come naturally for children to show appreciation of other people's work, performance, or contributions. As Palloff and Pratt (1999) point out, "The ability to give meaningful feedback, which helps others think about the work they have produced, is not a naturally acquired skill. It must be taught, modelled, and encouraged by the instructor" (p. 123). It is a learned skill for pupils as well as teachers. After class, Ms Lin had a chat with me about how I could always find something in the children's work to compliment them. She admitted that she tended to look at what the pupils did not do well and ignore the things they did well. She agreed that the teacher should also learn to praise their pupils for effort in learning so as to motivate them and provide encouragement. Praise, nonetheless, is not as straightforward as it seems. Sometimes praise backfires. After reviewing a number of studies on praise, Willingham (2005/2006) concludes, "Praise can take so many forms that its effects are inevitably complex." In order to bring about positive effects of praise, he provides guidelines as follows:

- Praise should be sincere.
- Praise should emphasise process, not ability.
- Praise should be immediate and unexpected.

For children, simply hearing the teacher's positive comments on their peers' work or behaviour does not necessarily lead them to follow suit. Teachers need to scaffold the process of giving feedback. By learning to give feedback constructively, children may know how to "participate in each other's learning and thus achieve greater understanding and appreciation for their peers' experiences and perspectives" (Ertmer et al., 2007). Moon (2000) also stresses that children develop their self-esteem "through their perception of how other people view them" (p. 49). The transcript from a group interview below coincides with Moon's claim:

MYSELF: What do you think about the comments made by your classmates?

MINDY: Their comments were sensible.

OLIVIA: I thought we acted very badly. But after hearing their comments on our performance, I realised that in fact we did a good job.

MYSELF: So you mean sometimes you think you didn't do well but other people can see the nice part of your work which you didn't realise in the first place?

OLIVIA: Right. I know we were great [nodding her head as self-assertion] through their comments!

MYSELF: Do you like it when people tell you which part you have done well?

ALL: Yes.

MYSELF: Do you also have chances to receive positive feedback in other occasions at school?

ALL: No.

CLAIRE: Not a chance in the previous English class.

MYSELF: So how do you feel when people compliment on your work?

ALL: Very happy!

RUBY: Feel confident.

MYSELF: Do you remember the first time I asked the class to give feedback at the end of the group presentation? Did you all talk about the good part or the bad part of others' work?

ALL: The bad part.

MYSELF: Why?

CLAIRE: Because everybody sees other people's defects first and nobody sees merits in them.

MYSELF: Do you still find it difficult to discover people's forte?

ALL: No.

RUBY: And it makes me happy too.

(Interview_Mid_Group 2)

Positive feedback contributes immensely to children's learning process.

Moon (2000) makes a cogent statement:

If they [children] receive positive feedback from others and are respected by them through praise, acceptance, being listened to and not laughed at, they will feel they have worth and value. It will give them more confidence to take risks in future. (p. 49)

Successful second language acquisition depends both on one's cognitive learning and affective variables. Risk-taking has been identified as one of the main emotional factors affecting second language learning success (Beebe, 1983; H. D. Brown, 2001). Language learners who are afraid of taking risks could "become emotionally paralyzed" especially when they need to perform in front of others because they are "stalled by actual or anticipated criticism from others or by self-criticism that they themselves supply" (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992, p. 59).

This psychological inhibition can sometimes form a barrier against one's mastery of language. As a result, it is worthwhile to create a learning environment where children are willing to take a risk without the fear of embarrassment or anxiety. There is a possibility that positive feedback can enhance confidence and self-esteem (Papageorgi, Hallam, & Welch, 2007), which, in its turn, may encourage more risk-taking behaviour among children both inside and outside the EFL classroom.

5.1.9 Finger Puppet Show

MAMA: Little Red Riding Hood, please sit down and listen to me carefully.

LRRH: Yes, Mama. I'm listening.

MAMA: Go straight to Granny's house.

LRRH: Yes, Mama. I will.

MAMA: Don't talk to strangers.

LRRH: No, Mama. I won't.

MAMA: Be very careful.

LRRH: Yes, Mama. I will.

MAMA: All right. Take this basket and go to your granny now.

LRRH: Bye-bye, Mama.

MAMA: Bye-bye, my dear.

To assist the children's comprehension of the above dialogue, I chose some sentences to mime without telling the class which they were. The pupils then needed to guess the mimed sentence. Mime or pantomime is "the art of conveying ideas without words" (McCaslin, 2005, p. 72). To represent ideas or feelings, facial expressions, hand gestures, and body movements are used silently instead. It is a form of visual representation. In the modern world dominated by images, the ability to decode visual representations is indispensable. In addition,

as Wyse and Jones (2003) put it, “Children’s lives are heavily influenced by both still and moving images, and for this reason alone the education system needs to engage with these” (pp. 14-15). The value of incorporating non-verbal episodes such as mimes in the L2 classroom has also been underscored by Kao and O’Neill (1998):

... working in mime releases students from the constraints of language. In other words, mime is an alternative for L2 learners at lower competence levels to express their thoughts with their body and not in the language that they are yet comfortable with. (p. 30)

When I mimed, the children all looked at me with concentration, trying to match my movements with the sentences in the dialogue and hastily shouting out their answers. Some children even asked if they could do the miming themselves. Those who volunteered included a number of pupils whose English proficiency was deficient and yet still found this activity engaging and entertaining.

As mentioned previously, the pupils were asked to make their own finger puppets to re-enact the dialogue. In recent years there has been a growing interest in the use of puppetry for educational purposes. Puppets are now utilised in many areas of curriculum due largely to “their power to hold and sustain the attention of a class” (McCaslin, 2005, p. 126). Language teachers, in particular, can benefit from using puppets in the classroom. It is widely believed that puppets are safe vehicles for expressing ideas and feelings. Research has shown that puppetry can foster children’s L1 literacy development. In Peck and Virkler’s (2006) study, for instance, they found significant gains in their pupils’ reading as well as cooperative learning. They conclude that “The translation of ideas into imagery and the process of bringing puppets to life drew on the multiple

intelligences of the students” (pp. 793-794). Fisler’s (2003) research suggests that puppet theatre is conducive to improving primary students’ reading abilities. The children in his study enjoyed not only the process of making puppets but also performing with them. Rehearsing for the performance also helped the children to “make sizeable steps forward in their reading skill” (2003, p. 35).

Puppets as teaching aids are highly promoted in resource books for EYL teachers. (Linse, 2005; Paul, 2003; S. Phillips, 1999; Satchwell, 1997; Satchwell & De Silva, 1995). Phillips (1999) views puppets as “a very versatile resource in the young learners’ classroom.” She claims,

Children use language while making them, often respond to puppets more readily than to the teacher, and are usually enthusiastic about manipulating them. The process of making a puppet is a rewarding craft activity itself and the end product, the puppet, plays a key role in a subsequent activity. (p. 51)

For Satchwell and De Silva (1995), puppets are “a colourful and enjoyable way” (p. 28) to present new language and are something concrete children can handle when assimilating the newly learned vocabulary and structures. Many claims have been made for the added advantages of puppets in assisting less confident children to overcome their shyness by involving themselves with “a new ‘personality’ in the classroom” (Satchwell, 1997, p. 20). Clipson-Boyles (1998) remarks that talking through puppets is like hiding behind a mask, which creates “a distancing effect” that makes the children feel more secure (p. 24). Furthermore, a puppet can portray various traits and, as Satchwell (1997) suggests, it can:

- talk to the teacher;
- talk to the whole class;
- talk to and touch individual children;
- make mistakes;

- get up to mischief, show off;
- be sad, happy, play tricks on the teacher and the class;
- be told off by the teacher, get into scrapes of all kinds;
- always be the children's friend and confidant, whispering the correct answer to pupils who get stuck;
- also be the ring leader for pupil activities, showing them what to do or demonstrating how to play a game. (p. 20)

With simple instructions given, the pupils made their own finger puppets at home for fear of taking up limited class time. Some children's work is shown in Figure 5.9. Most of the pupils enjoyed creating the finger puppets. Several children told me that they learned how to make things with recyclable materials in the arts and crafts class. To be more environmentally friendly, they used cartons or recycled paper in their puppet making (Figure 5.9 A-D). A couple of the children even drew a simple backdrop for their performance. Eva's backdrop (Figure 5.9 H) was a creative one—with a window cut out of the house, letting the finger puppets appear from within. The class appreciated her idea, which really meant a lot to her since she normally was not able to attract positive attention from her peers due to her below average English performance. This was the second time she received recognition for her art work in my English class and it was obvious that she strived for it.



Figure 5.9 Pupils' Finger Puppets

I encouraged the pupils to experiment with all kinds of voices and tones to present Little Red Riding Hood and her mother. For example, Little Red Riding

Hood can sound impatient because she is annoyed by her mother's nagging. Or she can speak in a frightened voice as she needs to go through the forest to visit her granny on her own. The children worked in pairs to rehearse the dialogue and I noticed that they were more attentive and less noisy than working as a group. It could partly be attributed to the nature of working with puppets which does not require as much physical movements as in acting out. It could also be a result of pairwork itself as Moon (2000) observes that when working in pairs both pupils are occupied. In groupwork, nonetheless, the chance is bigger that some children would misbehave or do nothing (p. 54).

The finger puppet show brought out different aspects of the pupils' personalities and classroom behaviour. In my journal I wrote:

Like Terry, Richard becomes excitable and distracted very easily. He often uses over-exaggerated body language to draw attention from others without realising that his gestures can sometimes be inappropriate. Especially for some girls in this class who seem more mature at their age, his behaviour is "a bit childish and weird." However, he acted quite differently when presenting with finger puppets today. Hiding behind the backdrop, he could only focus on his manipulation of the finger puppet and express himself through his voice. He spoke so fluently and clearly that the class gave him a big hand at the end of his performance. He looked overjoyed. After class, he came to tell me that he felt a sense of achievement. (Journal_24/04/07)

Ethan was another case worthy of note. He had learned English in the private language centre for many years; therefore, the content of the textbook was far too easy for him. What had been taught in the English class, in his words, was "boring and nothing new." He was an energetic boy who also enjoyed challenging the teacher. I can still remember vividly our first encounter. It was the day I went to observe Ms Lin's class in order to gain background knowledge of the class I was going to teach for my research. Ms Lin introduced me to the

pupils, telling them that I would teach them next semester. When I stood up, starting to give a self-introduction, Ethan said loudly to me in English, “Speak English!” With a tinge of embarrassment on her face, Ms Lin reprimanded him not to be impolite. Interestingly, I could sense some excitement from the class for Ethan’s abrupt request and see the look of expectancy in the children’s eyes. They were looking forward to knowing how I was going to react. Later Ms Lin taught a new vocabulary word “smoke” and translated it into Chinese. As in English, smoke has more than one meaning in Chinese. In that lesson, it means the smoke created by barbecue. After Ms Lin told the class its Chinese equivalent, Ethan responded quickly in Chinese, “It also means smoking a cigarette. And do you smoke, Ms Lin?” Displeased by his interruption, the teacher frowned at him disapprovingly and replied, “That’s not the meaning we’re talking about in this lesson. So don’t mention it.” Ethan said with a shrug, “You always say so!”

There was a reason behind Ms Lin’s discouraging Ethan from mentioning something he learned outside of the classroom. She was afraid that his showing off might cause anxiety among those who were not able to receive extra English lessons outside of school. She described Ethan as “a class comic, who was fond of making others laugh, being the centre of attention, and acting mischievously in class on purpose.” In spite of that, what Ethan did in the finger puppet show enabled her to see him in a different light:

[Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.]

Ethan and Victor were the first pair to perform. When I called out their names, Ethan stood up and asked me if he could introduce their show. I was more than happy to see him volunteer to do so and quickly agreed. But he didn’t know exactly what to say and asked me to prompt him. So I started with: “*Ladies and gentleman, welcome to our show. Today we’re going to present the best finger puppet show in the world. We are students from*

River Hill Elementary School.” Ethan repeated what I said to the class and then walked toward the camera, telling me to give him a close-up of his face. He posed for the camera with the V-sign hand gesture and said, “*My name is Ethan. And this is my partner. His name is Victor. Today we’re going to tell a story, Little Red Riding Hood.*” Then turning to the audience, he continued, “*Are you ready? Sit down and listen carefully. Be quiet.*” He placed his fingers on his lips, looking around to make sure that everyone stayed quiet. He said to me, “*One, two, three, action!*” Together with Victor, they started their finger puppet show. Ethan used a very caring, feminine voice to speak for Mama and Victor’s voice clearly showed a cheerful Little Red Riding Hood. After their performance, I asked the class what emotions they tried to express through their use of voice and the children guessed them right.

As the second group prepared to present, unexpectedly, Ethan jumped out from his seat and asked for my permission to introduce them. This time he didn’t need much of my help, speaking confidently, “*OK. Now this is the second team. This team is Emily and Julia. Let’s welcome them.*” At the end of their presentation, Ethan stood up and said to the audience, “*Let’s give them a big hand!*” He was getting more and more engrossed in hosting the show. Each time he came out to introduce the group, he would bring different things with him to look more like a host—e.g., rolling a piece of paper to be a microphone, and using two rulers as a film slate. He also knew how to direct everyone’s attention to the props. When introducing Bella and Gina, he said “*Look! They have two baskets.*” He even made comments on one group’s performance, saying “*Their sound is very small. They should talk louder. But they did a very good job!*” One group forgot their backdrop. Ethan noticed that and asked them, “*Where is the house and trees?*” He then told the audience, “*Please wait for them.*” It seems that hosting the show provided him with a natural context and real purpose for using English. (Journal_24/04/07)

At the end-of-term interview, Ms Lin and I talked about Ethan’s performance in the finger puppet show. She said:

Classes like this offered Ethan opportunities to shine. He still played around a bit occasionally but I also found that he exhibited more positive behaviour in class. When you give him a chance to show what he is good at, he can be very high and engaged. (Interview_End_Lin)

Many pupils, too, mentioned about Ethan’s hosting the show in their interviews and questionnaires. Most of those who considered that the finger puppet show was fun and impressive thought Ethan was a contributory factor in its success.

They did not feel that he was showing off but agreed that his hosting was highly entertaining. As Woolland (1993) argues, “There are some occasions when it is educationally valuable to offer such a child the ‘centre-stage’ for a while through the drama itself” (p. 76). For Ethan himself, being a host meant a way to conquer stage fright. He was often assigned to attend English speech or recitation contests as school representative. He shared his experience with me:

MYSELF: Why did you volunteer to host the finger puppet show?

ETHAN: Even though you are good [at English], sometimes you still don’t know what to say on stage. You will stammer and just freak out. So it’s important to have more opportunities to practice on stage. Then you won’t fear speaking or performing in front of others.

MYSELF: How did you like it?

ETHAN: It’s great. In stories and drama, I can say something I learned before. In the previous English class, no matter how much you know, you could only confine yourself to the little area the teacher taught in class. Anything more, you’ll get told off.

(Interview_Mid_Group4)

As discussed in Section 2.1.3, it is common for primary teachers in Taiwan to teach a mixed-ability class of learners coming from various backgrounds of English learning. Pupils like Ethan are not difficult to find in any ordinary class. What they need is not to be told to leave what they have learned outside of the classroom but to be given level-appropriate tasks which foster their active involvement in classroom activities. Ethan’s improvisation in the finger puppet show is a good example of this.

Compared with the previous drama activities the children participated in my class, the finger puppet show was more formal in its way of presentation. The

pupils needed to step up to and step down from the platform in a proper manner, briefly introduce themselves and wrap up their performance in English. Not every pupil embraced the opportunity to speak in public as eagerly as Ethan. Some of them indeed felt anxious, standing up in front of a class, talking, and doing presentations, not to mention that I also had the class put on the finger puppet show again for their mid-term oral test, which unavoidably raised their level of anxiety. Anxiety, in Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, is one of the affective variables which, though not impacting on language acquisition directly, may form a mental block preventing comprehensible input from reaching the language acquisition device. He argues that a low level of anxiety contributes to success in second language acquisition. Anxiety, nevertheless, is not necessarily seen to inhibit performance. Brown (1987) classifies anxiety into two types: debilitating and facilitative. Debilitating anxiety, viewed as a negative factor, can bring people too much pressure which prevents them from performing well. Facilitative anxiety, on the other hand, is a positive factor that can work as a critical push to one's successful performance. One may feel an appropriate amount of nervousness to get things done with "some concern—some apprehension over a task to be accomplished" (Brown, 1987, p. 105). In the post questionnaire survey, 28 pupils agreed or strongly agreed that they feel less embarrassed when speaking or performing in front of a group, with three children indicating neutral and only one expressing disagreement (see Figure 5.10).

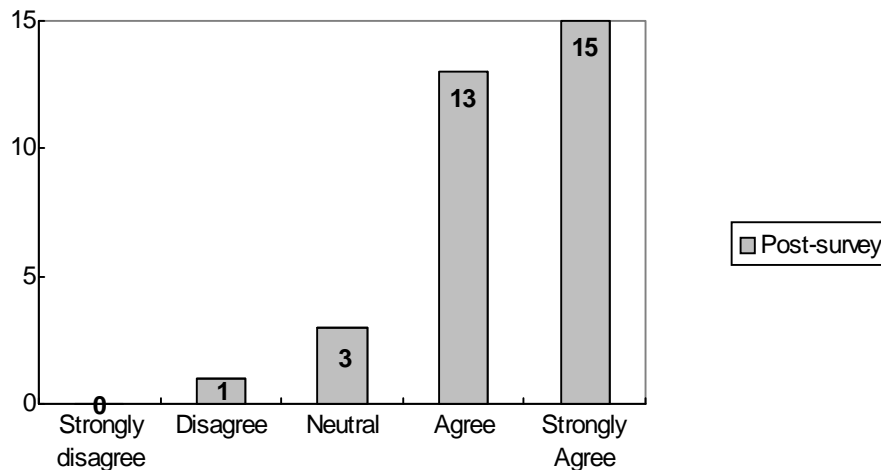


Figure 5.10 Pupils' opinions concerning the statement "I feel less inhibited when speaking or performing in public."

In the follow-up interviews a number of pupils elaborated on this:

[The pupils are talking about their favourite drama activities.]

SANDRA: I like finger puppet show the most. I can hide behind the puppets. I don't need to look at others so I don't feel that nervous.

MYSELF: I see. [To the rest of the group] What about you? Did performing in front of others make you feel more confident?

ALL: Yes.

GINA Now I don't feel nervous presenting on the platform. I don't feel afraid.

EMILY: If we can practise like this in every English lesson, we won't feel so nervous when participating in a contest.

MYSELF: So you think it's important to overcome stage fright?

ALL: Yes.

EMILY: Emily: But we hadn't had much chance like this before.

(Interview_End_Group 4)

MYSELF: Why do you feel less afraid of performing in public now?

ANNA: Probably because we get to do it much more now.

RUBY: Right, I'm getting used to it now.

CLAIRE: And it's not that frightening anymore.

OLIVIA: We didn't have time to prepare before speaking or performing in front of others previously.

ANNA: We girls used to feel nervous very easily and walk very slowly up to the platform like this [standing up and walking in slow motion] But now many of us just skip up there.

OLIVIA: Yes, I walk like this! [standing up, striding in a confident manner.]

MYSELF: So now you have the nerve to stand up and speak in front of others?

ALL: Yes!

(Interview_End_Group 2)

The pupils' responses echo Brown's notion of facilitative anxiety. Tasks like the finger puppet show generate enough tension to keep young learners on their toes and, at the same time, stimulate them to further efforts.

5.1.10 Teacher in Role

"Why did Little Red Riding Hood's mother let her go to visit Granny on her own? Didn't she know that it's dangerous?" asked one girl.
"No idea. The storybook doesn't say anything about it," replied another girl.

One day in class I overheard the above conversation. Through the convention of teacher in role, I brought Little Red Riding Hood's mother into the classroom to have a chat with the children so as to solve their puzzle. As discussed in Section 3.5, teacher in role has been regarded as one of the most effective strategies in educational drama (Bolton, 1998; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Heathcote et al., 1984). Much has also been described about its usefulness

in language teaching and learning, both L1 and L2, whereas little has been investigated regarding its application in teaching English as a foreign language to young learners. Schewe and Shaw (1993) observe that the application of drama to the foreign language classroom tends to point to “the narrow confines of (in common practice often notably undramatic) role-playing” (p. 10). Techniques of dramatic enactment such as teacher in role and still image, which are “true to the nature of drama” as viewed by them, “are as yet far from being fully utilised in modern language teaching” (p. 10). The result of my questionnaire survey in the baseline study indicated a similar tendency in Taiwan’s primary English teachers’ preference for drama activities. As shown in Figure 5.11, role-play ranks as the top drama activity used by the teachers while the frequency is very low in terms of other drama conventions such as teacher in role, thought tracking, role on the wall and still image.

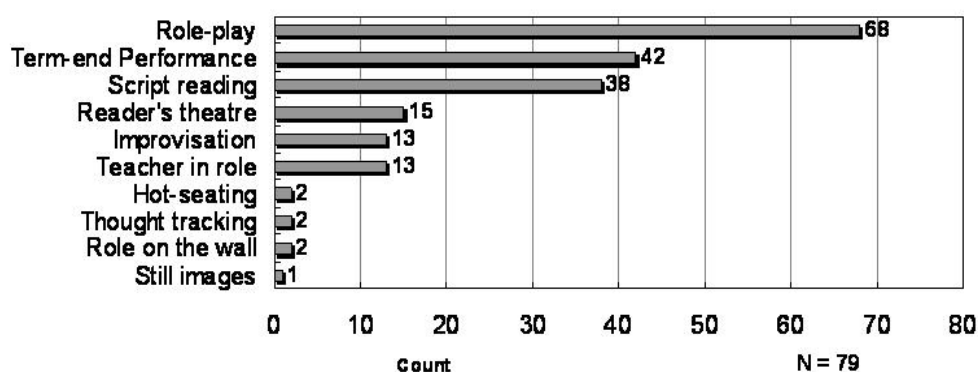


Figure 5.11 Types of Drama Activities used in the English Class

Neelands and Goode (2000) suggest that, by taking on a suitable role in the drama, the teacher is able to “excite interest, challenge superficial thinking, create choices and ambiguity, develop the narrative, create possibilities for the group to interact in role” (p. 40). The application of teacher in role, however, is not without its limitations in an EYL class where learners do not have sufficient

vocabulary to express themselves in English. Rather than engage them in in-depth discussion, I, in role of Mama, aimed firstly to provide the children with contextualised listening input and, secondly, build up the tension for the first encounter of Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf so as to arouse their interest in the scene yet to come.

Before taking on the role of Mama, I asked the class why she let her daughter enter the forest to visit Granny alone. Ethan, as if still being a host, holding a microphone made up of rolled paper, replied in English, “Because her mama is... is very busy. She eh...eh needs to work and make many many dinners. So Little Red Riding Hood has to go to Granny’s house alone.” Taking from what he said, I put on an apron in role as Mama, walked hastily to the chair at the front, sat down and greeted the class:

[Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.]

MYSELF: *Hello. I’m Little Red Riding Hood’s mother. I’m very busy. I need to work every day. There are so many things to do. I can only be here for a few minutes. What do you want to ask me?*

WAYNE: *Where’s Little Red Riding Hood’s father?*

MYSELF: *Her father? ... He’s dead.* [using a hand gesture to convey the meaning of “dead”] *So I have to work every day. [sighing] I’m very worried about Little Red Riding Hood.*

ETHAN: *Why?*

MYSELF: *She is going to see her granny this morning but I can’t go with her. Do you think...will she go straight to Granny’s house?*

SOME *Yes.*

PUPILS: *No. No.* [arguing among themselves]

MYSELF: *No, she won’t?*

SOME *No, she won’t!*

PUPILS:

MYSELF: *She won't? Oh, no! Will she talk to strangers?*

SOME *Yes.* [Nodding their heads]

PUPILS:

MYSELF: *Really? But will there be strangers in the forest?*

ALL: *Yes.*

MYSELF: *Really? Who will they be?*

SOME *Wolf.*

PUPILS: *The wolf in the forest.*
There's a wolf in the forest.

MYSELF: *Wolf? Oh, my God. So the wolf will talk to my Little Red Riding Hood?*

ALL: *Yes!* [look excited]

MYSELF: *Will Little Red Riding Hood talk to the wolf too?*

ALL: *Yes!* [look more excited, some nodding their head]

MYSELF: *What should I do now?*

LOUIS: *You can call Granny. Tell her [to] be careful.*

MYSELF: *Good idea. Thank you. I'll call her.* [pretending to make a phone call and go out of role]

(Journal_24_04_07)

It is never an easy task for young learners of English to use the target language to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. It can be even more difficult when they are not able to find a real reason to speak or the task does not require them to say something meaningful. As a result, most of the language output in the primary English classroom I observed in the baseline study was merely repeating what the textbook had said. Stories often contain hidden gaps which can be filled by children's imagination and creativity triggered through their participation in drama activities. Ethan's answer about Little Red Riding Hood's mother was a surprise to me in that he spontaneously tried to come up

with a reply and use English to get meaning across. Louis' reaction was interesting since he made a connection between my question to the scene played by David's group almost a month ago (see 5.1.7). In the interviews I had with the teachers, many of them mentioned the sheer monotony of using the textbook to teach English, which bored both children and teachers themselves. Some even claimed that repeating the same teaching content several times a week led to work fatigue. Despite that, those teachers with experience in teaching English through stories and drama also told me that they could always find children respond differently to the same story or drama activity. "The unpredictability in their responses adds to the excitement in teaching," said one teacher. Ethan's and Louis' responses made me feel the same.

5.1.11 Story Circle

"Little Red Riding Hood is going into the forest. What animals do you think she will see in there?" I asked the class.

I saw many hands raising enthusiastically and I nodded to some pupils who shouted out answers like monkey, rabbit, snake, bear, etc. The children seemed to have fun brainstorming the names of animals which filled up the whiteboard very quickly. One boy even called out "dinosaur." His answer caused a few raised eyebrows—"A dinosaur in the forest?" "Yes. Why not? Anything can happen in a story," replied the boy immediately. Indeed anything can happen in a story! Therefore, as Bella put up her hand and said "chocolate peanut butter cookie monster," the children found it intriguing and willingly accepted it as a possibility. (Journal_24/04/07)

Cookie monster is a popular Muppet character in the children's programme *Sesame Street*. Bella created an animal called "chocolate peanut butter cookie monster" by linking together "cookie monster" (a phrase she learned from TV) and "chocolate peanut butter cookies" (a phrase she learned in the previous

dialogue). The pupils still talked about this special monster creature afterwards in class and interviews because they thought it was an enthralling combination. As discussed in Section 3.2, children are creative with words in their first language. Pinter (2006) indicates, “They make up their own words, create jokes, and experiment with language even when they have to rely on limited resources” (p. 20). In order to make language their own and learning more memorable, children should be offered opportunities for language play (G. Cook, 1997, 2000; Read, 1998) so that their “creativity and willingness to play with the language could carry over to the learning of second and foreign languages as well” (Pinter, 2006, p. 21).

Body movement can be another way to enhance memory according to my observation of the pupils’ reactions to the following chant used to set up the scene in which Little Red Riding Hood meets the Wolf. The chant is an adaption of Medicott’s (2003, p. 18) forest chant:

The forest is deep and the forest is wide.
The forest has lots of animals inside.
It has ____ (and) ____ (and) ____

The pupils needed to offer suggestions for what animals might be seen in the forest and to think about how they would move. With each reading, the children added one more animal to the end of the accumulative chant and mimed the action of the suggested animals. The purpose of this activity was to reinforce newly introduced language structure, recycle learned vocabulary, and enable the learners to stay focused. As more and more animals were attached to the chant, it gradually became harder to recall all the animals which had been mentioned. I noticed that many children, before speaking out the words for animals, would mime the action first. It seems that the body movement served as a reminder for

the children's word recall. Pointed out by Roberts (1998), "motor activity strengthens recall" (p. 353). Kirsch (2008) makes a similar claim that "the link learners make between the language and the physical action enhances memorization" (p. 56). The same notion can also be found in Wagner's (1998a) "enactive knowing" and "kinaesthetic experience" and Culham's (2002) emphasis on the impact of movement on children's learning experience. Bodily knowing, revealed by Juntunen and Hyvönen (2004), "forms the basis for all knowing, without which conceptual knowing remains mechanical and thin" (p. 211). The following activity, story circle, requiring bodily involvement, satisfies children's need to be physically active and allows for embodied learning experiences.

The story circle, also known as "whoosh" or "story wand," is a theatrical ensemble in which children spontaneously act out different roles responding to the narration in the acting space within the circle. The other children sitting in the circle with no specific roles assigned make up the audience watching the performance and helping to create sound effects or chant repetitive phrases. The narrator retells the story, using a "story wand" to assign those who volunteer to enact the mentioned roles to enter the acting space and perform. During the process of storytelling, the narrator can wave the stick over the acting area to indicate the clearance of space and invite new volunteers to act out the remaining scenes. The story wand is, as Winston and Tandy (2009) explain, "endowed with a certain magical property," functions not only symbolically as "a visual mark of the storyteller's authority"; it also serves as "a control device to help demarcate real time from drama time" (p. 30). In order to assist the student actors to properly respond to the narration with facial expression, gesture, posture, and

tone of voice, the storyteller needs to re-adapt the text, providing more detailed description about physical actions. Through re-enacting the story in the story circle, children are able to “go over the events of the plot in a way that stealthily re-enforces their recall of it” (Winston, 2009, p. 39). Additionally, their spontaneous physicality can be conducive to varying the pace of teaching and refocusing attention.

What I narrated in the story circle was based on all the dialogues taught previously and the English dialogue below with a bridging narration added to describe how Little Red Riding Hood had fun playing with animals in the forest so that she totally forgot her mother’s warnings.

After walking into the forest, Little Red Riding Hood sees many cute animals. She has so much fun playing with them that she forgets what her mother has told her: Go straight to Granny’s house. Don’t talk to strangers. Be careful. And here comes the Wolf!

WOLF: (Hides behind the tree.) What a lucky day! I’ll have something yummy for my hungry tummy.
(Walks to LRRH.) Good morning, my dear. I’m Mr. Wolf. How are you this morning?

TREES: Don’t tell! Don’t tell! Don’t talk to strangers!

LRRH: I’m fine, thank you, Mr. Wolf. How are you?

WOLF: (Smiles) Just fine, my dear. What’s your name?

LRRH: My name is Little Red Riding Hood.

TREES: Oh, really? You’re Little Red Riding Hood. Everyone says you’re a good girl.

LRRH: Oh, really?

WOLF: Oh, yes! Everyone says you’re a nice little girl.

LRRH: Thank you, Mr. Wolf. You’re very nice.

WOLF: (Smells something.) Do I smell cookies?

TREES: Don't tell! Don't tell! Don't talk to strangers.

LRRH: Yes, it's chocolate peanut butter cookies for Granny. She's home alone and sick in bed. I'm going to see her.

WOLF: What a nice little girl! Where does your granny live?

TREES: Don't tell! Don't tell! Don't talk to strangers.

LRRH: Granny lives in the little red house over there.

WOLF: I know that house. I have an idea. Look at the beautiful flowers over there. Why don't you pick some flowers for Granny?

TREES: Don't stop! Don't stop! Go straight to Granny's house!

LRRH: That's a good idea! Thank you, Mr. Wolf.

WOLF: You're welcome. Bye-bye, my dear.

LRRH: Bye-bye, Mr. Wolf.

After introducing the story wand to the children, I started to narrate the story by saying, "In our story there is a girl. Her name is Little Red Riding Hood." Then I paused, waiting for any volunteer to take the role. The children looked spellbound but hesitated as well, not sure what would happen in the acting space. A few seconds passed as the pupils whispered to each other before Ethan put up his hand. I pointed the stick at him and he entered the acting space:

[Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.]

"Hello, everybody. My name is Little Red Riding Hood. I'm a good girl. I listen to my mama most of the time," said Ethan loud and clear without any prompt from me. His pretending to be a good girl made everyone laugh, which also swept away the children's hesitation. Therefore when I said, *"There are many trees in the forest,"* a few hands quickly rose. I pointed at Victor, saying, *"This is a tall tree."* He repeated after me, standing upright with his arms reaching up high. I continued, *"This tree is taller than that tree,"* signalling to Sam to be the taller one. Sam is actually a little shorter than Victor but he responded to my narration without thinking too much—standing on his toes and stretching his arms even higher than Victor when saying, *"I'm taller than that tree."* I next introduced to the audience a

very thin tree which was played by Terry, who quickly tightened himself up and drew in his arms and legs while repeating my sentence in a squeaky voice. He even held his breath and squeezed his face into a narrow and wrinkled mass, trying to look as thin as possible. Being a big tree, Richard made an interesting contrast by spreading his arms and legs wide open, roaring, “*I’m a big tree.*” (Journal_11/05/07)

In the later part of the story, the Wolf suggested that Little Red Riding pick some flowers for Granny. I had several pupils come into the acting space, pretending to be various kinds of flowers—cute, shy, happy, sad, etc. Posing in different gestures, they all yelled, “Pick me! Pick me!” As Winston and Tandy (2009) argue, physically creating the scenery of the story, apart from being fun, introduces children “to the importance of the body in drama, to how it can represent a myriad of symbolic meanings, and develops their confidence in improvising spontaneously with their bodies” (p. 30). Physical involvement furthermore left a vivid impression on the pupils. In some children’s mini books (see Figure 5.12) they personified the trees and flowers as they had experienced or watched in the story circle.



(By Terry)



(By Wayne)

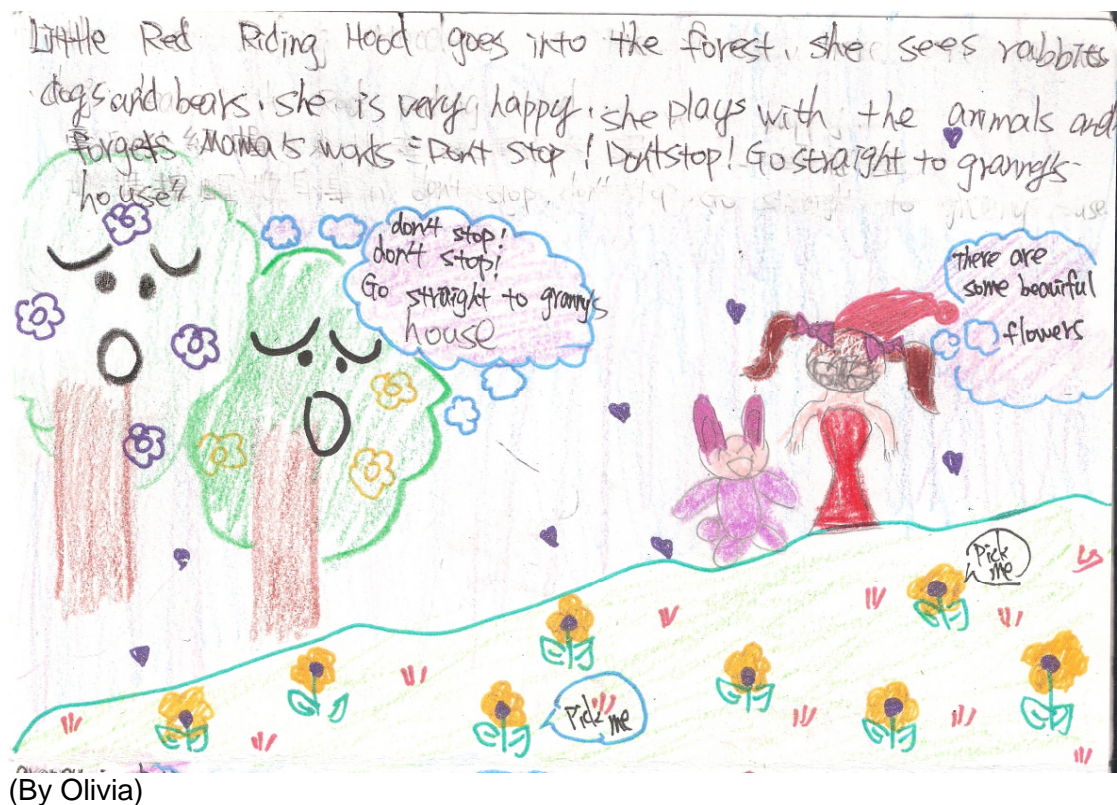


Figure 5.12 Pupils' Mini Story Books

When the trees chanted warnings to Little Red Riding Hood, the audience joined in too. I encouraged them to vary their tones of voice to caution the little girl to avoid the Wolf and show their feelings about seeing her walking into the Wolf's trap without even knowing it. They whispered. They shouted. They sounded worried, scared, anxious, and angry. Their chorus established a theatrical feel that can seldom be experienced in role playing the textbook dialogues. In group interviews, the pupils talked about the differences between the dialogues in the textbook and the story drama they had in my class:

MYSELF: Is there any difference between the dialogues in the textbook and the story drama?

VICTOR: Yes, the roles in the textbook have no character at all.

ETHAN: Right. We can only read word by word.

(Interview_End_Group 5)

MYSELF: Is there any difference between the dialogues in the textbook and the story drama?

OLIVIA: Far too many! I'm more willing to read dialogues this semester.

MYSELF: [To the rest of the group] What about you? Do you like to read the dialogues taught this semester?

ALL: Yes.

MYSELF: Why?

OLIVIA: I even sing and read in my room.

ANNA: The written descriptions [in the story] are more vivid. The ones in the textbook are boring. When you act, you need to have facial expressions and vary your voice—sometimes loud, sometimes quiet. You can't just speak ...

RUBY: in a monotone.

ANNA: Right. In a monotone.

MYSELF: So you're saying that the textbook you used before didn't provide you with chances to practice tone of voice?

ALL: Much much fewer.

ANNA: You got chances to take turn reading the dialogue with the teacher at the most. [The others nodded their agreements.]

RUBY: We didn't act out the dialogue.

OTHERS: Right. We didn't act it out.

(Interview_End_Group 2)

As discussed in Section 3.7, though conceptual meaning is generally considered “the central factor in linguistic communication” (Leech, 1974, p. 10), the importance of affective meaning, through which people communicate their feelings and attitudes, should not be overlooked. However, the physical limitations of a traditional classroom setting, described by Almond (2005), often result in the teachers' neglect in offering language learners opportunities to

experiment with different voice qualities since “acting in an emotive scene or improvisation behind a desk is difficult and inhibiting” (p. 64). It is true that the constraints of classroom space may restrict the use of drama in certain ways but the text content is also an essential element to engage learners emotionally and kinesthetically. The text content should include characters, experiences, emotions, situations, or problems that children can identify with and that arouse their interest by creating meaningful associations.

EMILY: The activities this semester were more interesting than competing to write English vocabulary. For instance, in story circle, we were able to take on a role as Little Red Riding Hood, walking into the forest so that we can understand what the story is about. Unlike previous English classes, the teacher only told us the story content and didn’t let us experience it.

MYSELF: So do you mean that to re-enact the story helps you understand the story characters’ feelings and personalities?

EMILY: Yes.

KATHY: It should help me learn how to express myself. And I can learn how to express myself through acting.

MYSELF: Meaning?

KATHY: Through acting, I can become more emotionally involved in the role I play.

SANDRA: But the content should be interesting and can be acted out. It’s fun using stories.

EVA: Yes, it needs to be able to be acted out.

LILY: There should be activities in which we can move about, not just sitting still all the time in class.

(Interview_End_Group 4)

The story circle was the pupils’ favourite activity in the end-of-term questionnaire survey, with 30 of them expressing liking or strongly liking, two

reporting a neutral attitude (see Appendix 6). In the interviews, many children could still recall and describe a large number of details of what happened in the story circle. Ms Lin and I had a discussion about how the story circle facilitates children's English language learning:

MYSELF: What do you think about story circle?

MS LIN: I think it's great because the children can take on roles to be part of the story, which aids their understanding. Normally we use the picture book to tell the story and the children just listen to it. They may feel interested at the beginning but may also lose interest soon. And it should be some story they haven't heard of to get them interested. If I tell them that we're going to read Little Red Riding Hood, they will just say, "We've heard of it before!" They will be very attentive when listening to stories they don't know. But after telling the story, I always feel uncertain about what they've learned from it.

MYSELF: Yes. I remember the first time I told the class that I was going to use Little Red Riding Hood as the first story. They also gave me the "I've-heard-of-it-before" look. But the dramatic activities introduced them to some new aspects of the story, which made a big difference. Take story circle for example. Children can practise their listening and speaking skills in class. They will do the reading at home if they find the story engaging. They also need to write in role sometimes. Some children did a great job at letter writing. Drama can bring together all four language skills easily.

MS LIN I agree. It's all about how to present the story and what to do in the telling of the story and after.

(Interview_End_Lin)

Many have argued that it is easier for young learners of English to start with stories they are familiar with in their first language. They can activate their prior knowledge of the story to enhance their comprehension by associating what they already know with the text presented in the second language (see 3.8). In this study, the pupils' first reactions to the story of Little Red Riding Hood were,

nevertheless, not all that positive. Some of the children indicated that at the outset they did not appreciate the idea of learning English through Little Red Riding Hood as they thought it “childish.” Ms Lin’s observations also indicate that special care should be taken when using stories children have heard of before. Woolland (1993) cautions that acting out a story of which the children already know the ending tends to “lose the dramatic tension of not knowing what will happen next.” Though it may be true, still the teacher can replace it with “the exploration of how and why they [the characters] get where they do” (p. 18). In this teaching project, I managed to incorporate various drama activities into exploring the known story, opening it up, and keeping some dramatic tension alive as Woolland suggests. It may be the reason why the children learned to view the story of Little Red Riding Hood from a fresh perspective.

5.1.12 Picture Book Storytelling

In recent years, an increased effort has been devoted to exploring the potential value of picture books in teaching English to non-English speaking children (see Section 3.8). There is a growing trend that teachers in Taiwan are now integrating picture books into their teaching repertoire. The questionnaire survey in my baseline study shows that among those who had incorporated stories (88% of the respondents) in their English teaching, over four-fifths of them used picture books or big books when telling stories (see Appendix 2). Sheu (2005) has made a thorough discussion of the educational values and challenges of utilising picture books in teaching English to Taiwan’s primary school children. She claims that pictures in the storybook facilitate children’s learning in two major aspects. One is to increase comprehension and the other is

to stimulate imagination (Sheu, 2008). The aesthetically appealing illustrations in authentic picture books extend learning well beyond the language level to include a multiple mode of meaning-making. Like good drama, quality illustrations can contextualise the text and serve as powerful visual stimuli. Meek (1990) has proposed that children should be encouraged “to linger, to explore, to say what they see” without being rushed on with the story in order that they can enter “the world of literate seeing” created by readers, artists, and writers (p. 117). To provide the children with an opportunity to see how visual and aural aids work together to enrich the written text, I used Nicoletta Ceccoli’s (2004) picture book to retell the story of Little Red Riding Hood as the last classroom activity in this scheme of work. As an award-winning illustrator, Ceccoli portrays the little girl and the wolf in an unusual way with vibrant, sleek illustrative style which is artistically pleasing.



Figure 5.13 Illustrations from Nicoletta Ceccoli's *Little Red Riding Hood*

The primary English teachers interviewed by Sheu (2006) mentioned the difficulty of using a single picture book in a large class and suggested three

methods for solving the problem: (1) the use of reading aloud, (2) the use of the data projector, and (3) the use of role-playing. My teaching experience also told me that it would be a problem for 32 pupils sitting around me to see the picture book clearly. I, therefore, scanned all the pictures, saved them as a PowerPoint slide show file, and used a data projector to present the file on a big screen. As the language in the original text is far beyond the children's current level of proficiency, the story I told was based on the dialogues and narration taught this semester. The lights in the classroom were dimmed so only images shown on the screen could be easily seen and additional distraction could be avoided as well. I described the children's reactions to and my feelings of the storytelling in the journal:

As soon as Ms Lin switched off the lights, the class quietened down. I started to tell the story when the colourful illustrations popped on the large screen on the wall. In the dark I couldn't see the children's facial expressions of emotions but I could feel some of them adjusting their seats and positions for a better view of the screen but nobody talked or laughed. Seldom did the class fall this silent! I was actually a bit worried that the pupils would doze off in the dimly-lit classroom. I tried very hard not to let my feeling of uncertainty influence me to rush through the story; however, without being able to have eye contact and interaction with the children, it was challenging for me to detect how they responded to my storytelling. There was a great contrast between telling stories through body language and what I did today. I could only rely on my tone of voice to hold the children's attention. I did hope that my rehearsing the storytelling in the past few days would work! At the end of the story, some tiny beads of sweat were dripping down my forehead and I'm sure it was not caused by the hot weather!

The lights were switched on again and I heard some clapping behind me. I turned around and gladly found that the children didn't look like just being woken up by the light. I felt relieved that they liked the way the story was presented. I asked them if they could understand the story simply by listening to me and looking at the pictures. Most of them nodded in agreement. As I anticipated, Ceccoli's atmospheric illustrations fascinated the children. After class, many pupils gathered around me, inquiring whether they could borrow the book from me. When asked which picture they liked the most, lots of them raised their hands for the one with the compellingly huge wolf encircling Little Red Riding Hood. They found it

peculiar to see the wolf and the little girl drawn in such a disproportionate way but also liked the menacing ambience it created. (Journal_15/05/07)

After the storytelling, I shared with the class Roald Dahl's (1982) well-known poem, *Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf* from his collection of *Revolting Rhymes*. Although they needed my translation to understand the content, the pupils were surprised by the ending in which the cunning Little Miss Red Riding Hood shot dead the Wolfie with a pistol and turned him into a "lovely furry wolfskin coat." Little Red Riding Hood has been retold in numerous forms and adaptations (see Beckett, 2002; Zipes, 1993). As discussed in Section 3.8, traditional tales lend themselves to use in an EFL classroom because of their potential for rewriting and children's familiarity with the story content. Kirsch (2008) rightly points out that children "generally like to find alternative endings, develop characters further, act out the story or create a new one" (p. 96). Barton and Booth (1990) go a step further to argue that "When we add to the story, continue the story, or write epilogues for the story, or rewrite the ending, the children are involved in shared authorship" (p. 97). Making a mini storybook was the pupils' last written task in this scheme of work. As the children's English learning experiences and proficiency levels varied considerably, two writing tasks were given for them to choose from. For those who did not feel confident in their writing ability, they were allowed to copy the phrases or sentences from the dialogues or narrations in the booklet to match their illustrations. Those who would like to challenge their imagination could rewrite the story with a different ending. Ellis and Brewster (1991) divide writing activities into two categories. One aims at encouraging copying; the other creativity. Through guided copying with support frameworks such as pictures,

written models, or charts, children are able to practise handwriting, spelling and new sentence patterns. Cameron (2001) adds that teachers need to make certain that “copying is meaningful and motivating” (p. 155). Creative writing activities, on the other hand, “provide practice in planning, organizing ideas and understanding the conventions of different text types” (G. Ellis & Brewster, 1991, p. 58). Emphasising the necessity of both types of writing activities for young learners of English, Ellis and Brewster (1991) argue that “it is impractical to imagine that one can encourage creativity without specific skills at word or sentence level, but not all writing should remain at the practice level” (p. 58).

The pupils’ mini storybooks consist of a book cover and six content pages which should present the key moments in the story. This task develops the children’s “ability to analyse, to edit, to condense and to focus” (Woolland, 1993, p. 52). They needed to illustrate each page with a picture which could be drawn from any images they saw or created in the drama activities in class. Jack’s work as shown in Figure 5.14, for instance, incorporated a scene he saw in group acting in which Little Red Riding Hood did not want to get up so her mother tried to get her out of bed with a broom. The horns on the mother’s head and the way she is jumping up high to strike a heavy blow express her anger in a vivid and comical manner. It also shows that story enactment is likely to leave an unforgettable impression.



Figure 5.14 Mini Storybook by Jack

The making of mini storybooks offers teachers the chance to appreciate children's different talents. The pupils with limited English proficiency often have low self-esteem in the English class because of their poor linguistic performance. Children reaching puberty normally become more sensitive, which makes them feel self-conscious about speaking in public and fearful of appearing foolish to others (Moon, 2000, p. 9). Those less capable pupils, very often, remain silent in class so as to avoid embarrassment and protect their fragile language ego. Through drawings some of them can be very expressive and regain their confidence. In Gina's mini book, her drawings clearly reveal the emotional changes Little Red Riding Hood have gone through on her way to Granny's house (see Figure 5.15, Figure 5.16, and Figure 5.17). With a big smile on her face, the little girl starts the journey happily while she becomes sad and worried when thinking of her grandmother, sick and all alone at home. Walking in

solitude in the immense forest, her tiny figure appears to be as lonely as Granny. Gina deliberately placed the wolf at the corner of the picture in which Little Red Riding Hood was picking flowers, showing only part of the wolf's body in the scene. The sight of the wolf's back suggests that he is peeking at the little girl who is absolutely unaware of what awaits her at the end of the journey. Instead of directly copying sentences from the booklet, Gina sensibly chose the ones suitable for her illustrations, made some adaptations and did this well. Ms Lin once described Gina as an "extremely inattentive child" who often forgot to do homework and had no idea about what was going on in class. Ms Lin found it difficult to detect whether Gina had learned anything simply based on her passive classroom participation and not handing in homework. But Gina's mini book displayed a different side of her talent, which can hardly be appreciated in a more traditional English class. It is well put by Smyth (2008), "Drawings hold multi-modal information that can be shared with others" (p. 106). Most children are capable and fond of drawing. In this project, many pupils, both at advanced and beginning levels in English, were able to express themselves effectively and creatively through drawings. Although drawing may not directly build up young learners' English skills, it can help to inspire confidence in them, which, in turn, increases their intrinsic motivation in learning English as discussed in Section 3.2.



Figure 5.15 Mini Storybook by Gina (Page 1 and Page 2)



Figure 5.16 Mini Storybook by Gina (Page 3 and Page 4)

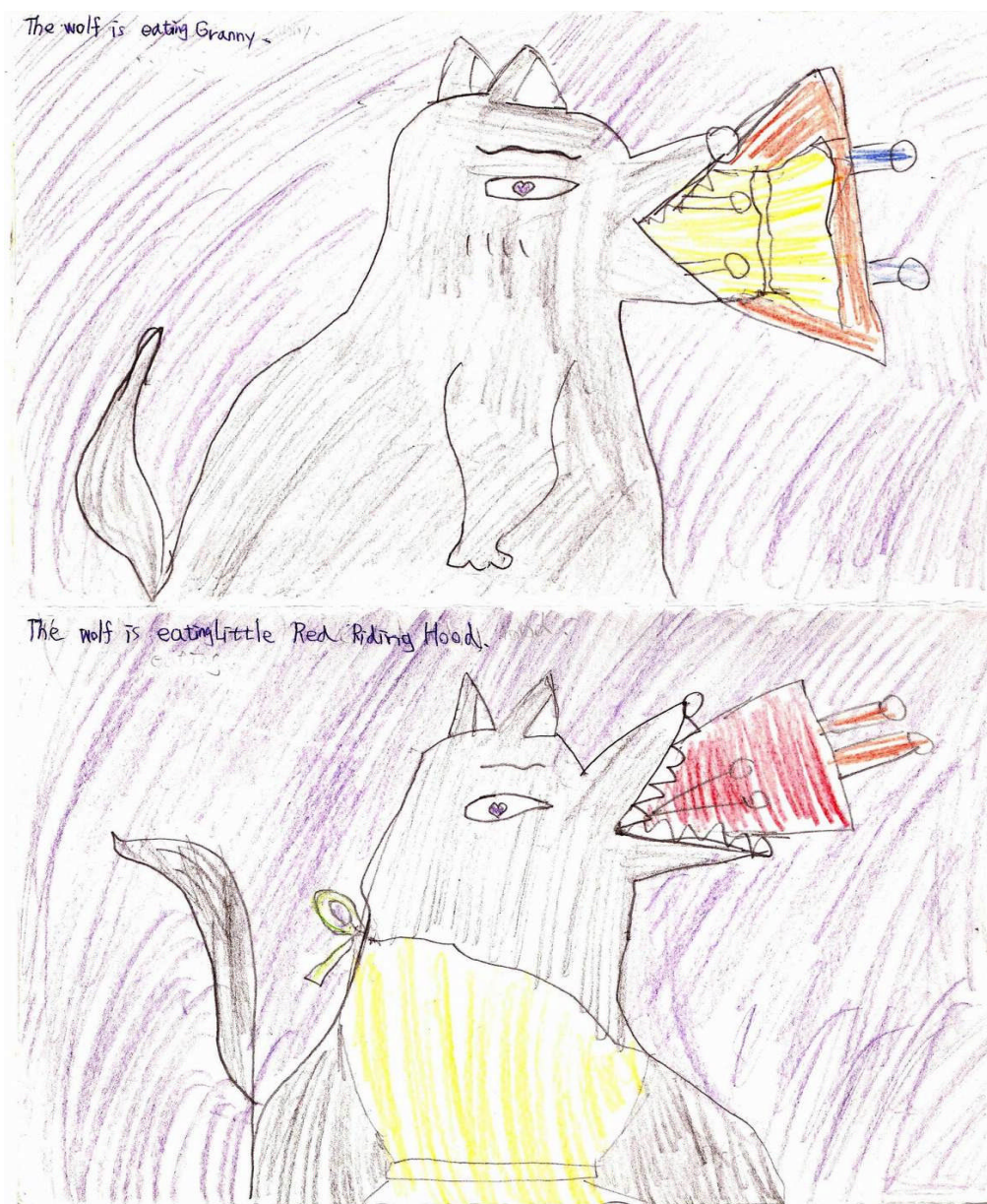


Figure 5.17 Mini Storybook by Gina (Page 5 and Page 6)

Stories usually comprise both dialogue and narrative. The former can be easily found in the English coursebooks for young EFL learners but the latter is not given as much weight as it should be. With regards to learning a foreign language, Cameron (2001) stresses the importance of developing children's "discourse repertoire" in spoken language and "genres" or "text types" in written text, and narrative is one of them. She summarises the key features of narrative as "the organisation of events in time, the intentional actions of participants,

cause and effect, and the resolution of problems, often through some surprising event” (p. 54). She argues that children are exposed to and are also able to produce narratives in their first language from very young ages, a transferable skill they bring to foreign language learning but lack the language for expressing them. For young learners, retelling a story in a foreign language is highly challenging. Generally speaking, productive skills are more difficult to master than passive receptive ones. Cameron (2001) adds that without proper support the experience “will be difficult and perhaps demotivating” (p. 176). Hence she suggests that the teacher should reduce the language demands when asking children to retell the whole story by, for instance, giving them or having them draw a set of pictures as cues for sequencing story events. Through making mini books, pupils can learn how to narrate a story from their own point of view. The illustrations they create also serve as visual prompts in their story reproduction. The speech bubbles added in the illustrations furthermore contribute to uncovering the character’s inner thoughts and feelings. As in Lily’s illustrations in Figure 5.18, Little Red Riding Hood’s last words “I’m dumb!” express her regrets about her stupidity and possibly also imply the writer’s own criticism of Little Red Riding Hood’s action.

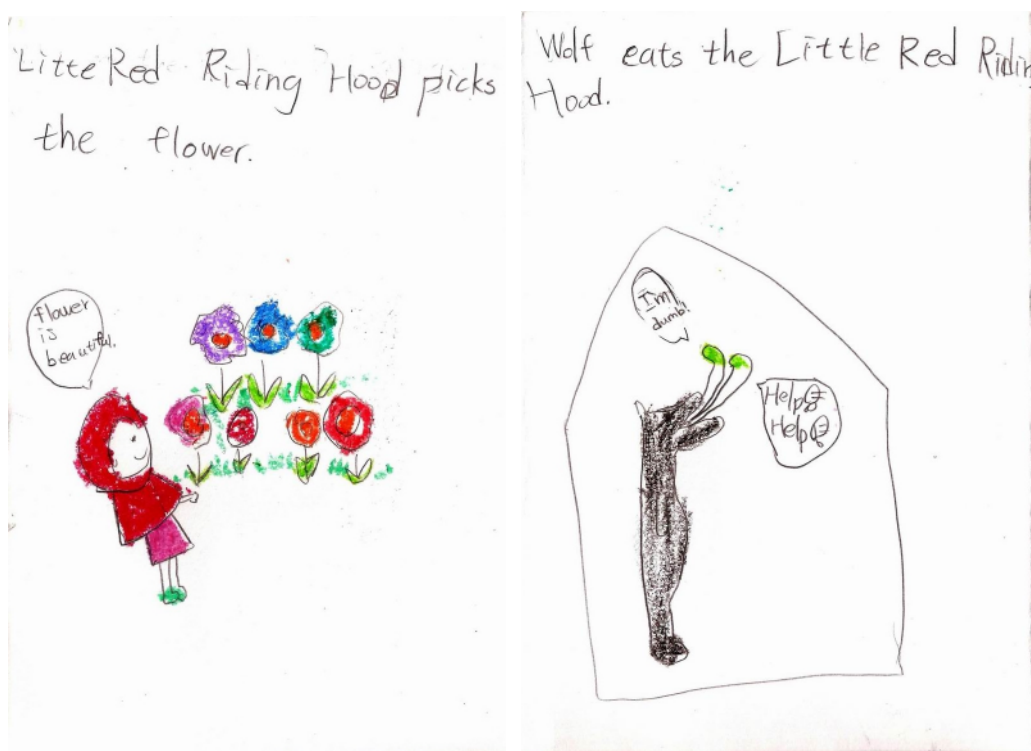


Figure 5.18 Mini Storybook by Lily

The pupils with higher levels of English proficiency did not confine themselves to just copying phrases or sentences from the booklet. They took in what they learned from the story and rewrote it in their own words. Combining different sentence patterns, Victor included all the essential information about the story and presented it in a nicely sequential fashion:

One day, Mama wants Little Red Riding Hood to take cookies and bread to go to the granny's house. Little Red Riding Hood is happy to go to granny's house. On the way, she meets the big bad wolf. The wolf asks her to pick a little flower for granny. Wolf himself goes first to granny's house and eats granny. When Little Red Riding Hood comes, the big bad wolf eats her up in one big bite too.

Retelling the story events by utilising connectives such as *and*, *but*, *so*, Audrey did a great job at producing a cohesive narrative (see Figure 5.19). She created a novel phrase to refer to the wolf disguised as Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother as "the wolf-granny," indicating that young learners are capable of

and creative in making up their own words to express themselves even though they have limited vocabulary and grammar. It is an encouraging sign as playing with words is risk-taking and “a certain amount of risk-taking is necessary in language acquisition” (Hess, 2001, p. 171).

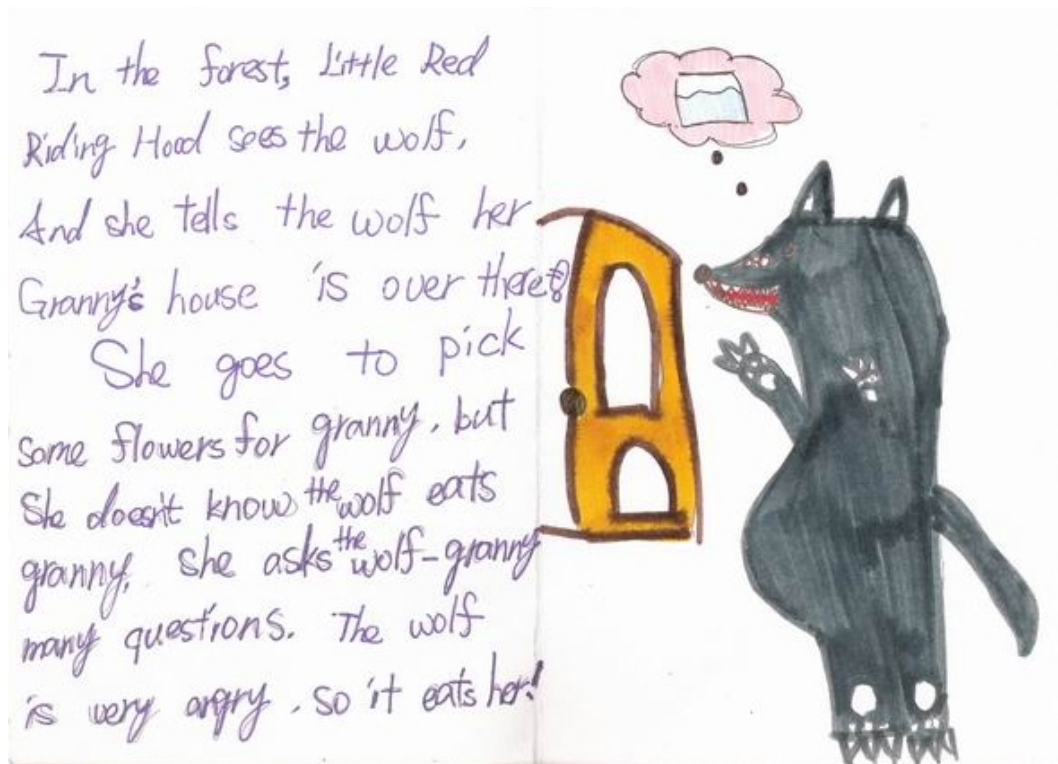


Figure 5.19 Mini Storybook by Audrey

In his mini book, Wayne used “What Mama says, she will do” to condense the following statement:

When Mama says, “Go,” she goes.
When Mama says, “Come,” she comes.
When Mama says, “Sit,” she sits.
When Mama says, “Sleep,” she sleeps.

By doing so, he not only fitted the text in one page but also demonstrated his ability to summarise information in English (see Figure 5.20)

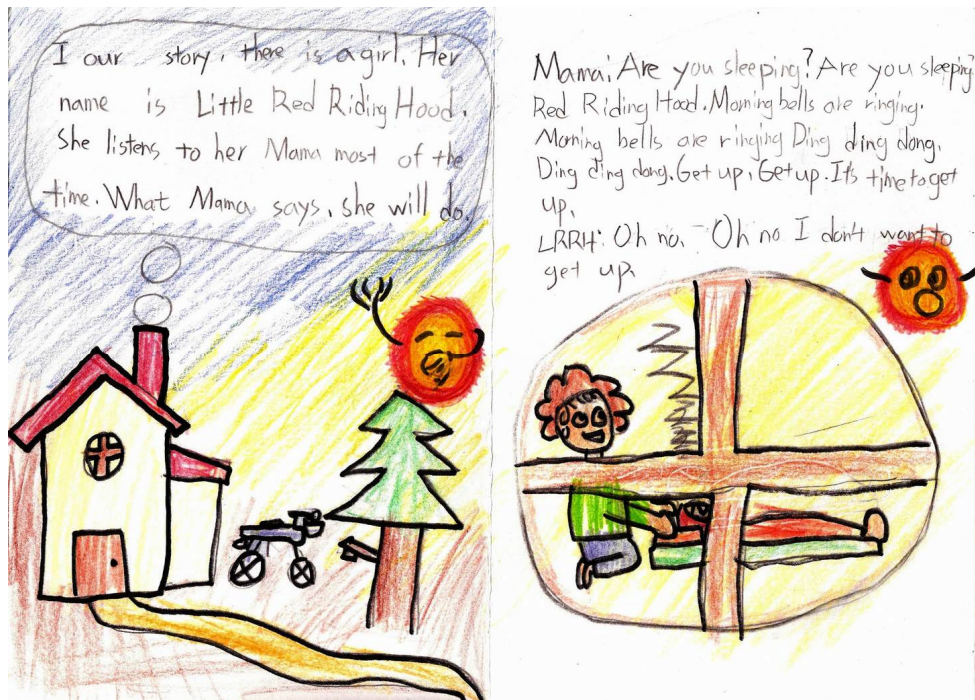


Figure 5.20 Mini Storybook by Wayne

The children were encouraged to use their imaginations to create their own versions of Little Red Riding Hood. Some of them kept the original story plot and came up with a different ending. For example, Julia's Little Red Riding Hood in Figure 5.21 is good at fighting and beats the wolf at the end.



Figure 5.21 Mini Storybook by Julia

In Jack's story as shown in Figure 5.22, Granny becomes the heroine, tricking the wolf to eat a human-shaped toy which looks exactly like her. Eventually, she knocked it dead, laughing out loud proudly.



Figure 5.22 Mini Storybook by Jack

Some pupils adapted the story with many more changes. In Bella's version, Red Riding Hood is not a girl but a little wolf. In the forest, she meets a big bad girl who is actually a wolf eater. Like Eugene Trivizas's *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*, the characters in Bella's retelling are in reverse with a little wolf that looks so innocent and harmless, contrasting with the giant menacing girl. Written in capital letters, the word, "HUM!" on the last page produces a dramatic sound effect, echoing in the reader's head.

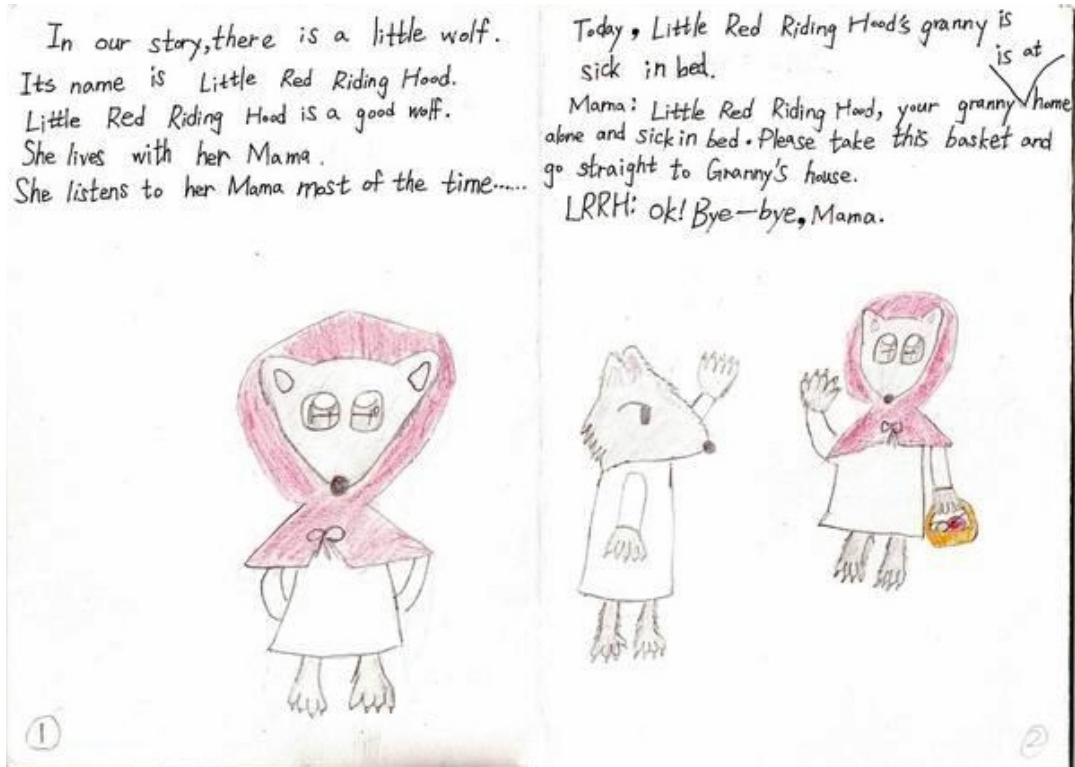


Figure 5.23 Mini Storybook by Bella (Page 1 and Page 2)

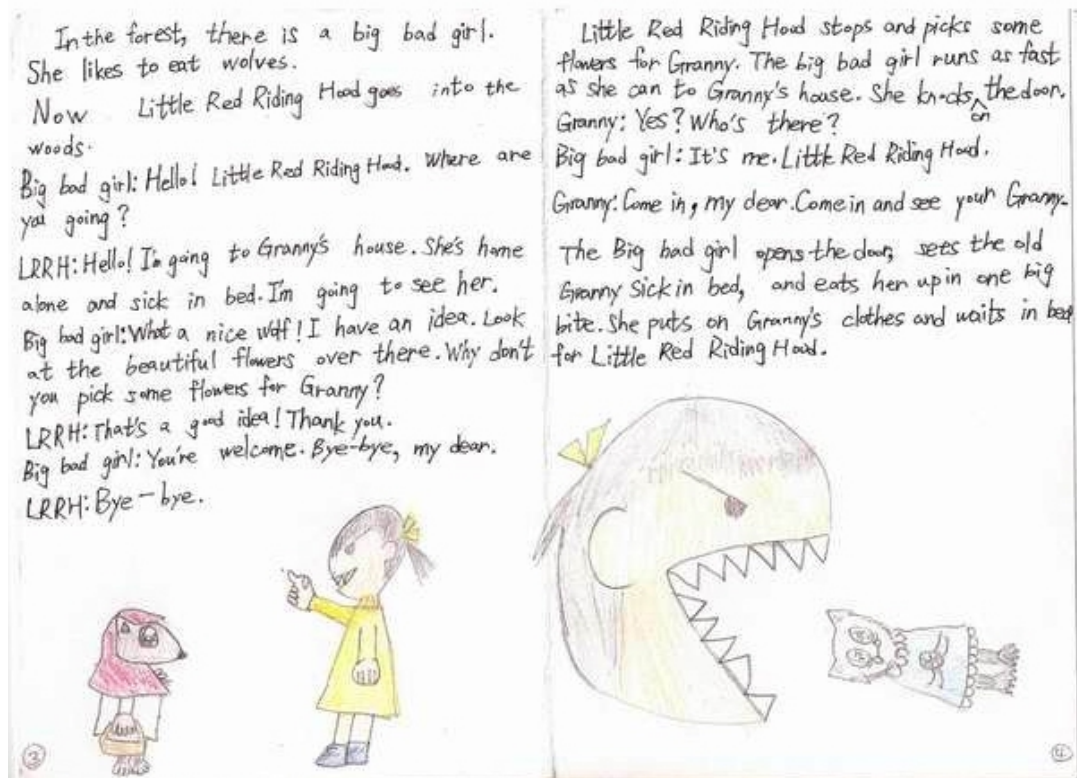


Figure 5.24 Mini Storybook by Bella (Page 3 and Page 4)

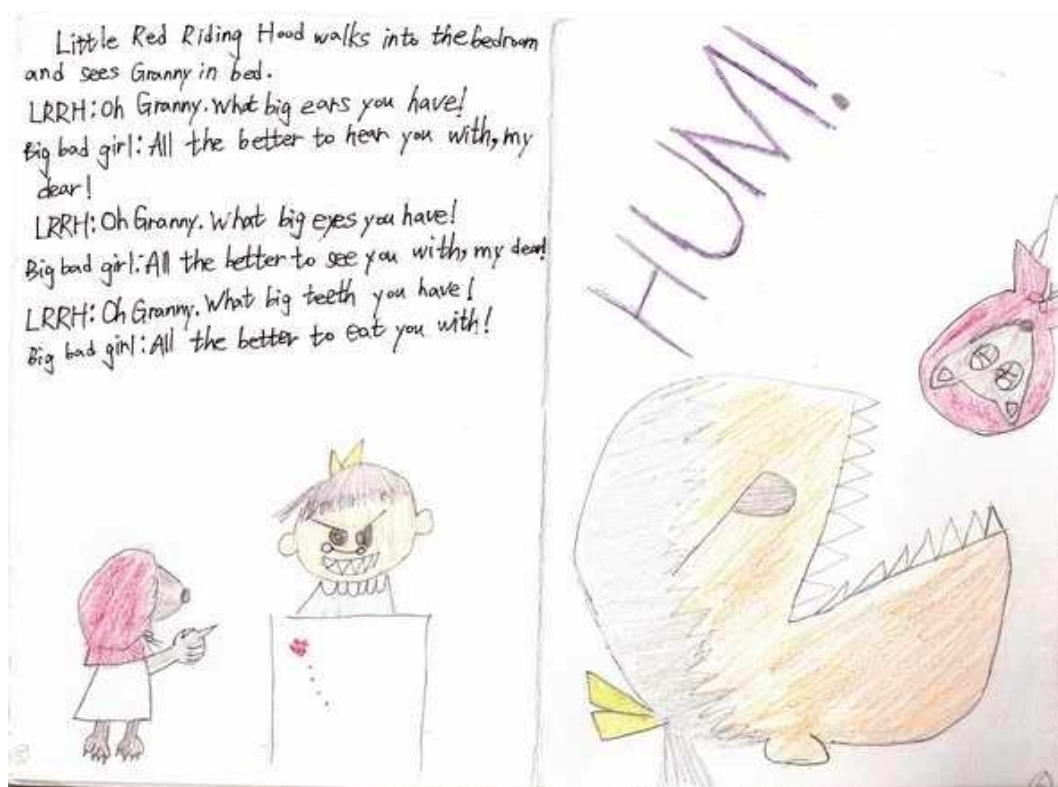


Figure 5.25 Mini Storybook by Bella (Page 5 and Page 6)

Louis' story blends Roald Dahl's *Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf* and a contemporary life setting, in which the pistol-packing girl happily cycles to 7-Eleven, the most popular convenience store in Taiwan, witnesses the wolf's attack on people, and bravely shoots him to death. Her wolfskin cloak sends a warning to the other wolves that dare not bully her grandmother anymore. Within only six pages, Louis retold the story with strongly crafted pictures and a high level of literary composition. (see Figure 5.26, Figure 5.27 and Figure 5.28). In the end-of-term interview, he said "I think written assignment is important in terms of improving my English. However, copying vocabulary words is very boring. I prefer more challenging homework such as letter writing and making mini books." Louis's remarks point out the need to give differentiated writing tasks for mixed ability classes.



Figure 5.26 Mini Storybook by Louis (Page 1 and Page 2)



Figure 5.27 Mini Storybook by Louis (Page 3 and Page 4)

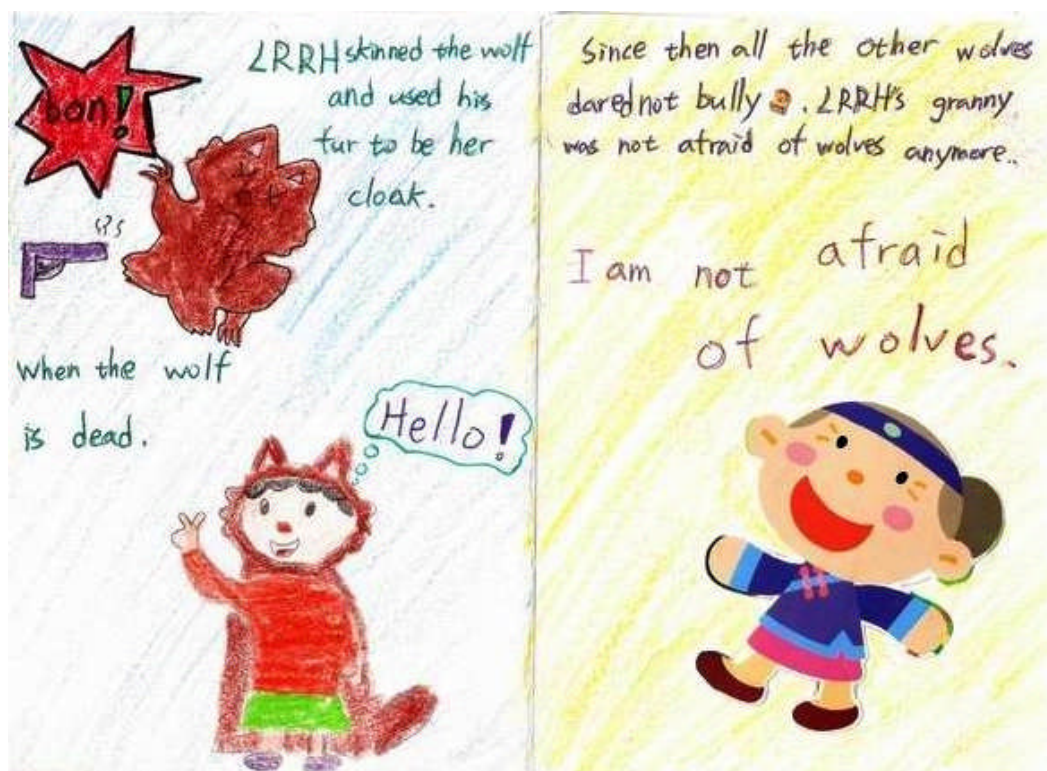


Figure 5.28 Mini Storybook by Bella (Page 5 and Page 6)

In the end-of-term interview, some pupils told me why they enjoyed changing the story ending:

Myself: What about your story adaptation?

Olivia: I killed my Little Red Riding Hood.

Lora: My Little Red Riding Hood beat the bad wolf away.

Myself: So do you like changing the ending of the story?

Ruby: Yes.

Others: It's pretty fun.

Anna: It's not that serious. We don't need to follow the original version. We can be imaginative.

Olivia: Right. We can create our own ending.

(Interview_End_Group 2)

As discussed in Section 3.2, children are creative and playful by nature. Writing task such as this allows young learners to be creative and imaginative, which tends to make learning more memorable and engaging.

5.1.13 Look Back and Move Forward

Action research is a reflective process, featuring the cyclical and iterative nature which gives researchers the chance to “explore the details of their activities through a constant process of observation, reflection, and action” (Stringer, 2007, p. 9). At the end of an action research cycle, as Stinger (2007) suggests, it is essential for action researchers to “revise (look again), reflect (reanalyze), and re-act (modify their actions)” (p. 9). In this section, I will reflect on my first action research cycle, describing what I have learned from the implementation of the scheme of work and how I would adjust my approach to teaching and data collection in the second action research cycle.

Firstly, before starting this scheme of work, I had some concern about whether the pupils would actively engage physically in the drama activities as they were reaching puberty, a stage at which children begin to feel more self-conscious and worried about appearing foolish in front of others. My concern was later brushed aside by the pupils’ positive response to the physical activities. They were attracted by the ideas of using their body to create images and form shapes of different objects. In order to encourage the children to express themselves through creative use of body language, the next scheme of work will incorporate more physical elements including gestures, movement, voice, and space.

The second lesson I learned from Cycle One is that with the teacher’s

constant reminders and practical demonstrations of how to give positive feedback, the pupils were able to learn how to appreciate their peers' performances and offer constructive criticisms. Otherwise, they could be very sharp-tongued and were prone to find fault with each other, which easily created a tense atmosphere in the classroom. As a result, it is necessary for pupils to bear in mind that to criticise constructively is healthy and legitimate, while putting people down for no apparent reason is only a destructive power and does nobody good. This idea should be reiterated and reinforced in the second action research cycle.

Aside from the two aspects mentioned above, I also discovered from the pupils' work that drawing helped them to represent ideas and develop creative expressions. For children with lower levels of English proficiency, drawing made it possible for them to go beyond their limited vocabulary and alternatively, they could express themselves in a visual way. In fact, some of them told me in the interview that they gained confidence in doing writing assignments combined with drawing comics and illustrations for mini storybooks. In the second action research cycle, the pupils will continue to be given opportunities to make meaning through drawing. The children's drawing ability also provided inspiration for me to use a different approach to interviewing them in the following research cycle. As the video clips in the stimulated recall interviews seriously distracted the pupils' attention away from answering my questions, I need to think of another way to engage them in talking about their learning experiences in the English classes. I will ask them to draw two pictures of themselves and their classmates in a classroom setting. One depicts a typical English lesson they used to have and the other shows a story-based drama lesson taught by me. It is hoped that their drawings can serve as a visual stimulus to

help the pupils reflect on their classroom participation and can also be used as a focus for discussion in the group interview.

The pupils' drawings perform another function, as well. I observed that a booklet containing a collection of their own work of drawings as part of the teaching material gave them a sense of pride and accomplishment. Nevertheless, this is not what had been included in my teaching plan at the very start. Rather than distributing booklets among the pupils, I passed around the handouts at first for I was convinced that a single sheet of paper would be convenient for them to keep in folders. It indeed achieved the desired purpose, but there were serious side effects which I had not anticipated. For instance, beverage stains were not rare to see on the pupils' handouts, or what is worse, there were always some who claimed that they either lost their handouts or forgot to bring them to class. Thus, the remedy for that problem was to give out a booklet, and this happened right after a few weeks after the semester started. Booklets, instead of handouts, will be continuously adopted in the next cycle.

In addition to the children's talent for drawing, their imaginative use of sound and voice should never ever be underestimated. Given that the pupils kept complaining about how insipid their original textbook tapes/CDs could be and the co-teacher also pointed out that the pupils hardly made any use of those textbook tapes/CDs when they went back home, I still tried to devise some new methods to allure them to have more listening input. For example, my colleague and I recorded the dialogues in the booklet in a very dramatic and amusing manner. They were then burned into CDs and uploaded to my web page so the pupils could listen to and review them at home. I was glad to find that the pupils took a liking to the recordings and, to my surprise, some of them even asked to

create their own versions. Their finished products were amazingly good with various tones of voice and fantastic self-made sound effects inside.

Retrospectively, recording was such a time-consuming and laborious task that I sometimes really wanted to call a halt. But it was a rewarding experience as far as the teacher and the pupils were concerned, so it should be applied to the following cycle whenever appropriate.

The last issue to be addressed in the first cycle is grouping. Group work did not work as well as I had expected in the beginning. I consider that it is mainly because I overlooked the fact that the pupils lacked experience in working in groups. I took it for granted that they would spontaneously know how to cooperate with one another and put effort into completing a task. However, as Edwards and Jones (2003) put it rightly, “simply placing the students in groups does not mean that group work will take place” (p. 146). Although the children, as social beings, enjoyed working with their peers in small groups, they actually needed guidance to keep them focused and on track. I tried several techniques to help them concentrate on the task at hand and to keep the noise down to an acceptable level for fear of disturbing other classes nearby. Through trial and error, the children did gradually make progress in their group work, yet how to group them together more efficiently still remained as a problem to be solved at the end of the first research cycle. In order to save time on grouping and increase the opportunities for the pupils to work with different partners, I often randomly put them in groups instead of having them choose their own groups. Objecting to my arrangement, some pupils moaned about not being able to practise with their best friends. There were also some boys who claimed that they did not want to work with girls and vice versa. Ms Lin therefore suggested that I should allow

them to form their own groups and work with the same team for a longer period of time. By doing so, it may be easier for the pupils to establish a sense of trust and feel connected to other members. Accordingly, I decided to take Ms Lin's advice about grouping and give it a try in the second research cycle to see whether this grouping mainly on a voluntary basis can fix the problem.

5.2 Action Research Cycle Two: The Selfish Giant

5.2.1 Words Words Words

The story of the selfish giant unfolds from a group of children playing in a garden in a village. I invited the children to brainstorm things they can see and activities they can do in the garden. Since the pupils had divergent English learning backgrounds, this vocabulary brainstorm activity helped me to gain a general sense of what words they were more or less familiar with. I could accordingly decide the amount of time needed for the later vocabulary practice. Pre-instruction of vocabulary prior to a new activity, claimed by Linse (2005), is important for young learners because it assists them in better comprehending the activity and their acquisition of the target vocabulary. She further points out that multi-sensory vocabulary input benefits children's learning. That is, not only do young learners need to see, hear, and speak the new vocabulary, they should also be able to play or do things with it. In this story-based drama project, new vocabulary words were presented and practised in a variety of ways. Take the lesson of playing in the giant's garden for example. The aural input of new words was reinforced by visual input such as flashcards and writing on the board, as well as kinaesthetic involvement like drawing and miming. I asked the pupils to draw a garden which includes all the vocabulary words taught in class (see

Figure 5.29). In so doing, they were able to relate the words learned within a vivid image context.

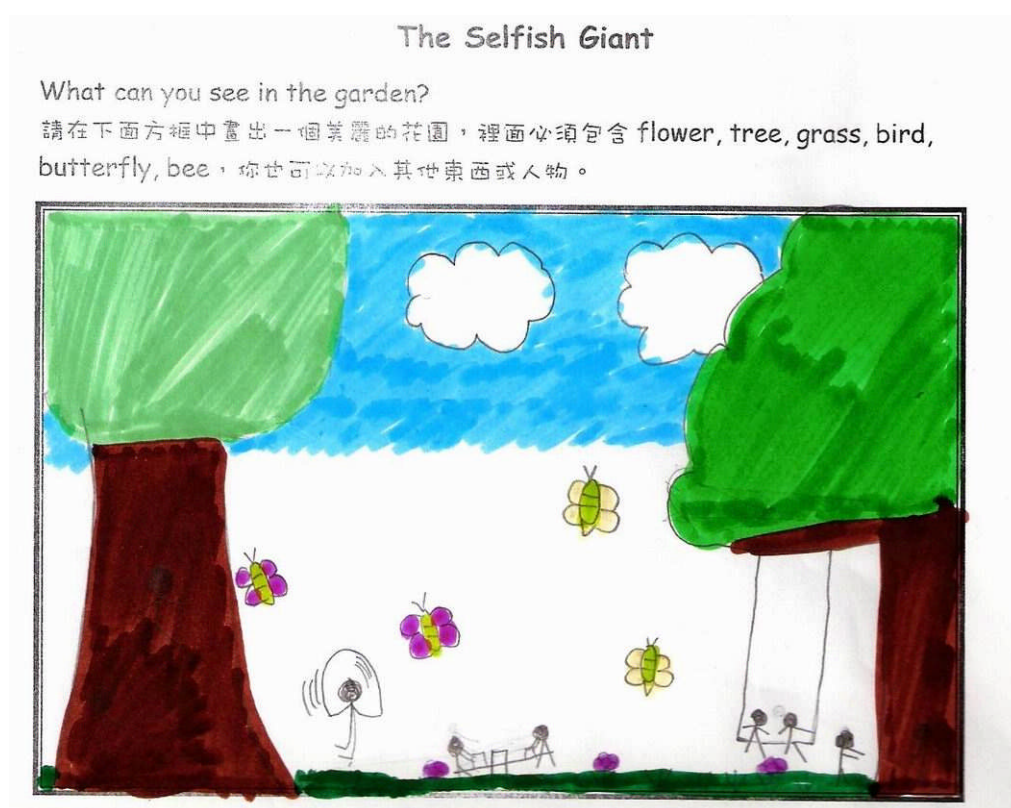


Figure 5.29 Drawing by Sandra

Working with mime, the pupils were placed in groups of three or four and each group was given a verb phrase, such as climb a tree, jump rope, play on the swing, play on the seesaw, play hide-and-seek for them to physicalise. Different from the previous mime activities requiring only individual work, this time I asked the pupils to mime as a group. As Scher and Verrall (1975) suggest, guess-the-mime as a group exercise can be a delight when children have plenty of miming experience. Each group started by announcing “What are we doing?” and then mimed the action for the class to guess. I described one of the group mimes in my journal:

The verb phrase assigned to Jack’s group was “play on the seesaw.” He

stood with both arms reaching out to his sides, one a bit higher than the other. On his right hand side stood Ericson on his toes, holding Jack's hand as if grasping the seesaw handlebar. On the other end of this "human seesaw" was Wayne squatting down and also grabbing Jack's hand. Then Jack began to sway his arms up and down and Ericson and Wayne moved their body accordingly. (Journal_22/05/07)

The pupils were eager to show their mime to the class and keen on guessing the other groups' miming, too. This mime activity was later incorporated into the scene in which the giant came back home and saw the children playing in his garden. In this project, mime was frequently used to introduce new language items or review taught ones (see Section 5.1.5, Section 5.1.9, Section 5.1.11 for example). There are many advantages of mime in the language classroom and some of them are pointed out by Maley and Duff (2005) as follows:

- It uses different sensory inputs—visual and kinaesthetic—in support of the purely verbal.
- It seems to spark off a process of mental rehearsal of the language required.
- It highlights the importance of the non-verbal aspects of communication.
- It calls for closer observation of small particulars. (p. 50)

Both those who mime and those who guess the mime, according to Maley and Duff (2005), are involved with visualisation to a certain degree and visualisation has become an increasingly important area in language learning in recent years. In terms of vocabulary learning, mime "helps students to get with words in a very physical sense" (p. 168).

Cameron (2001) describes learning words as "a cyclical process" (p. 74) in which new words are "met and recycled at intervals, in different activities, with new knowledge and new connections developed each time the same words are met again" (p. 84). Some vocabulary or verb phrases related to the garden can also be associated with the forest, e.g. trees, flowers, birds, climb a tree,

previously taught in the story of Little Red Riding Hood. Encountering words and using them in different contexts is crucial to activating young learners' vocabulary (Kirsch, 2008). Traditional stories often take place in certain places like the woods, a village, a castle, to name but a few. It is therefore easier for children to meet familiar words in story contexts. Vocabulary in textbooks, on the contrary, tends to appear briefly and lacks sufficient recycling and consolidation activities (Cameron, 2001). Reviewing some research on the relationship between repetition and vocabulary learning, Nation (1990) concludes that coursebooks need to provide enough repetition to make vocabulary learning possible in an EFL classroom. Words that occur less than five or six times in a textbook unit have little chance to be learned. Cameron (2001) goes on to argue that words should recur "not just in a unit, but across units or chapters, and across levels and years" (p. 84) since through recycling recall is made more probable. One possible way for children to repeatedly meet taught words in various meaningful contexts is story-based lessons. Cameron (2001) explains:

Additionally, words encountered in stories are heard in linguistic and discourse contexts, so that important grammatical and collocational information is available about words. Moreover, the plot and characters of a story are likely to form a thematic organisation for many of the words, thus assisting understanding and learning. (p. 91)

In one of the lessons of this scheme of work, I showed a picture of the giant staring at his snowy, wintry garden from his window and asked the children to describe the giant for me. One pupil said, "He's home alone and sick in bed," a description in fact formerly used to refer to the granny in the story of Little Red Riding Hood. To turn words into learners' personal vocabularies it takes more

than merely memorising lists of words (Linse, 2005). Thanks to stories, the pupil was able to establish connections between a new context and an expression he previously learned as a chunk. In the post questionnaire survey result shown in Figure 5.30, almost every pupil (31 out of 32) agreed or strongly agreed that stories and drama reinforce their memory of vocabulary and dialogues.

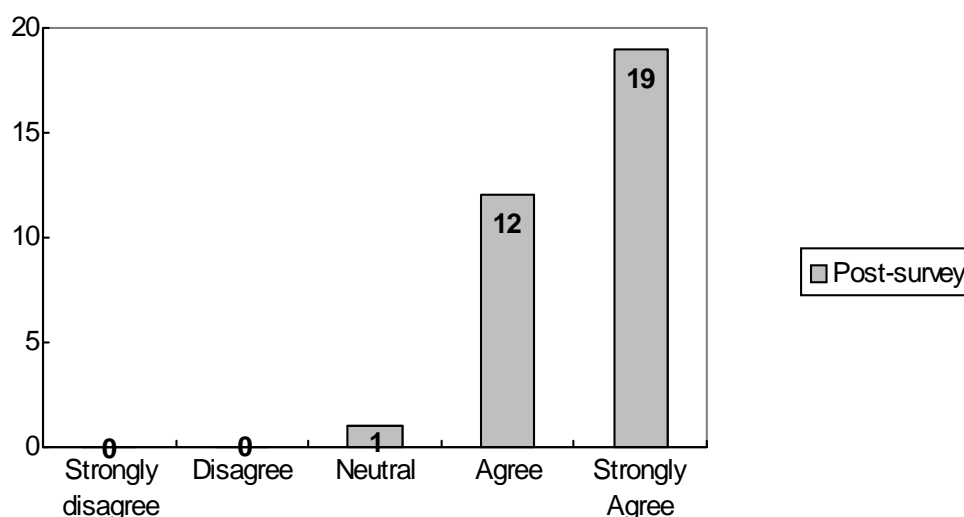


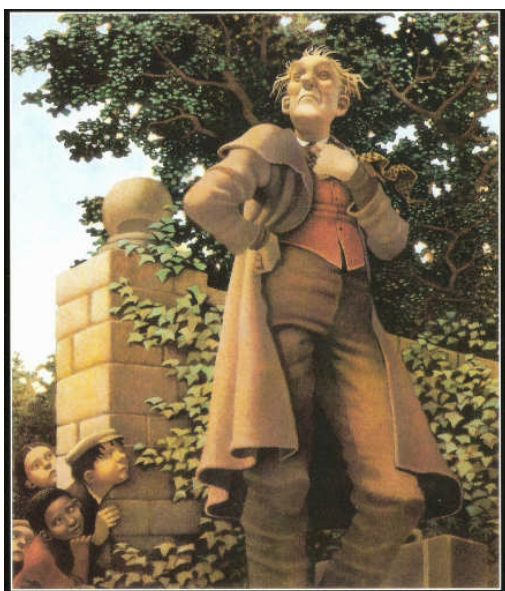
Figure 5.30 Pupils' opinions concerning the statement "Stories and drama help to improve the memory retention of vocabulary and dialogues."

5.2.2 Still Image and Thought Tracking

Unlike Little Red Riding Hood, the story of the Selfish Giant was unfamiliar to the majority of the pupils. I adopted a different approach to introducing the story to the class. Rather than using the picture book to wrap up the story as in the first scheme, I showed the pupils all the pictures illustrated by Susan Saelig Gallagher at the beginning, aiming at giving them a general idea of the story. Gallagher's evocative illustrations in the form of PowerPoint slides were projected on to a big screen on the wall with soft music running in the background. The slide show was played twice without any narration from me. After the slide show display, I asked the children what they thought about the story. Contrary to my expectation, they did not respond well to my questions and

looked confused. I could only receive limited responses from them such as, “I saw children playing,” “I saw a giant,” or “I saw some strange people moving around.” They were not able to connect the displayed images to form a whole picture of the story simply by looking at the illustrations. It dawned on me later that I should have scaffolded the instruction better in advance, giving them more specific questions to focus their attention as they viewed the pictures.

The picture of the book cover shown in Figure 5.31 was left on the screen for the pupils to create a still image. As Woolland (1993) suggests, still image can be utilised in various ways—to initiate a drama, to develop understanding of narrative, to focus and reflect on a particular moment (pp. 51-54). For initiating a drama, the teacher can show the class a picture and have some children bring the image to life by imitating what the people do in the picture. I used still image in a similar way as the first drama activity for this scheme of work.



5.31 Book Cover of Susan Saelig Gallagher's *The Selfish Giant*

I invited volunteers to take up the people's positions shown in the picture to form a tableau. The process was described in my journal as follows:

One by one several pupils came up, posing as the giant and the children on the book cover. Interestingly, Richard asked if he could be the wall and then Wayne offered to be the tree too—something not on my original teaching plan but sounded like a great idea! Being the giant, Ethan placed one arm on his chest and the other on his waist, standing at the right side of the space at the front. John, Kathy, and Olivia, taking the role of the children, stood closely to each other, positioning themselves at the other side of the space. However, the giant and the children all stood straight up and also in a straight line, which made the image look quite flat. I suggested that Ethan move a couple of steps forward to create depth, asking the class if this little change makes any difference. They nodded and looked like finding something new. I pushed a little further, asking “What about the levels? Do you think you can tell which one is the giant and which one is the child in this tableau?” Some pupils shook their heads and said “No.” I continued, “So what can they do?” I looked around, waiting for responses. Wayne came up with an idea that Ethan can stand on something to create different levels of height. Right after what Wayne said, Olivia proposed, “We can squat down to make the giant look much taller.” As suggested, Ethan pulled a chair and stood on it while Olivia discussed with the other two children how to lower their bodies to appear smaller. Richard the wall also offered an idea that the children can hide behind him to show their fear. The rest of the class helped to adjust the children’s and the giant’s gestures, postures, and facial expressions.

Although the children enjoyed this activity, it was difficult for them to keep still for too long. And besides, it was far too easy for them to giggle and laugh. I needed to remind them all the time that it’s a frozen image; therefore, they should try their best not to wiggle. I played a small game with them to help them learn how to shift between stillness and motion. I asked them to stand in a circle, facing the centre in their normal positions with the body relaxed. I then counted one, two, three and said, “Go.” They should quickly move to their positions in the tableau and pose. As I said, “Freeze,” they needed to stop moving and hold their postures and facial expressions. After a few times practice, they were able to move swiftly to their positions and hold precisely. (Journal_22/05/07)

Heathcote (1984), clearly specify that there are six elements in dramatic expression in terms of theatrical presentations: sound and silence, movement and stillness, darkness and light, which teachers should be able to employ in their teaching. In an ordinary classroom, dramatic expression may not be easily achieved through the contrasts between darkness and light due to the constraints imposed by the physical setting. The other four elements, however, can be applied to the drama activities with no difficulty. Neelands (1984) highlights the

importance of contrasts in drama work. He maintains that teachers should work as artists in their own classrooms. Like an artist who “consciously manipulates gradations of contrast in order to make meaning in an artefact, to evoke responses at an emotional and sensory as well as at an intellectual level” (p. 68), a teacher needs to use contrasts in the drama session for the same purpose. He encourages teachers to work with different combinations of contrasts and be aware of levels, pace, voice and the possibilities of light. In this story-based drama research project, I hoped to introduce basic drama elements to the children apart from English language skills since the majority of primary schools in Taiwan are required to participate in the local English drama contests but pupils normally lack opportunities to develop drama skills in a more traditional classroom setting. Whenever possible, I would discuss with the pupils how voices, tones, levels, gestures, and space bring different effects to dramatic expression. The discussion indeed had some impact on the children. It was not uncommon to see them remind each other to vary levels or make use of tones, gestures, and space when preparing for their drama presentation afterwards.

Thought tracking, also called thought tapping, is often used in conjunction with still images to reveal a character’s private thoughts or feelings which can be spoken out by either the character or other members of the class. After the pupils formed the tableau, I asked the class to observe closely their facial expressions and postures and guess what they might be thinking at that particular moment. I demonstrated how to tap the character on the shoulder and say a few words to express his/her inner thoughts. The pupils were paired up for discussion. A girl quickly put up her hand and wanted to know how to say “sad” in English. Other children also asked about words related to different emotions. I noted down their

participation in thought tracking in my journal:

[Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.]

While the pupils were still discussing among themselves what to say, Gina seemed to have some idea already. She asked me if she could be the first volunteer. Her request brought a smile to my face. I'm very pleased to see her progress from being an "extremely inattentive child" as described by her previous teacher to actively volunteering to take part in the drama activity. After the discussion time was up, Gina stood up from her seat instantly, walked toward one of the children in the tableau, tapped on her shoulder, and said assertively, "*I'm scared*." Sandra, another quiet girl, also wanted to give it a try but was too shy to come up on her own. She whispered in my ear, "Can I do it with Lily?" I nodded my head. She drew Lily closer to her and moved together to the children. Placing her hand on one child's shoulder, she muttered something inaudible. I encouraged her to repeat in a louder voice. It took her a few seconds to overcome her shyness to say "*I'm scared*" more clearly. Other pupils took turns revealing the characters' thoughts and feelings. For the giant, some said, "*I'm angry*," "*I'm not happy*," and "*Who are they?*" For the children, some said, "*He's very tall*," "*He's so big*" and "*I'm sad*." Wayne, posing as a tree in the freeze frame, had something to say too. He pointed at the giant, declaring, "*You're bad*." (Journal_22/05/07)

Although Sandra only produced a very short sentence, her willingness to try to speak English in front of others indicated a change in her attitude toward English learning. She wrote in her self-evaluation sheet at the end of the semester:

I was not interested in English before because my English was very poor and I couldn't understand what was taught in class. But I began to like English again this semester because I can learn English through stories and drama. This teaching method has made it easier for me to understand English.

Halliwell (1992) argues that most primary teachers "are not yet too tightly constrained by the content focus of the public examination system" (p. 11); therefore, high priority should be given to attitude goals, such as confidence,

willingness to ‘have a go’, and risk taking. Sandra’s and Gina’s becoming more active in classroom participation has shown the importance of promoting children’s attitudes and responsiveness in English learning.

5.2.3 Story Enactment

After pre-teaching the vocabulary words in the first part of the story through multi-sensory input and introducing the main story characters via still image and thought tracking, I made use of story circle to invite the pupils to collectively construct the story setting—the giant’s garden. I started to narrate the story:

[Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.]

“In the garden, there are beautiful flowers and tall trees.” Richard almost stood up from the chair, waving his hand, shouting *“Pick me! Pick me!”* However I didn’t call on him to be the flower. Instead, I gave the chance to some other girls who hadn’t been in the story circle before. I continued, *“In the garden, there is also green grass.”* Richard still held his hand up high and repeated *“Pick me! Pick me!”* I signalled him to enter the circle to be the grass. He lay down on the ground with hands and legs swinging back and forth in the air as if the grass were swaying in a slight breeze. Seeing this, four other boys couldn’t wait to join in, imitating Richard’s movement. I carried on my narration: *“There are children playing in the garden. One is jumping rope over there. Two are playing on the seesaw over here. One is playing on the swing right here. One is climbing a tree up there. And two are playing hide-and-seek behind the tree.”* More children came into the acting space and mimed the actions. It didn’t take them long to physicalise and I thought this was because they had already done it in the previous lesson. Wayne was singing *“Lalalalala. You can’t catch me”* when he pretended to play hide-and-seek.

To reinforce the language I wanted the pupils to practise, I said *“Freeze”* to ask those who were in the story circle to keep still. I narrated the story from the beginning again but this time left blanks for the class to orally fill in. *“In the __ (garden) __, there are __ (beautiful flowers) __, __ (tall trees) __, and __ (green grass) __. There are children playing in the garden. Some are __ (jumping rope) __. Some are __ (playing on the swing) __. Some are __ (playing on the seesaw) __. Some are __ (climbing a tree) __. And some are __ (playing hide-and-seek) __.”* With my story stick pointing at different images in the acting space, the pupils responded accordingly and correctly. For the final practice, I waved the story stick and had all the volunteers

return to their seats. I wanted to know if the children were able to recall the whole paragraph simply by seeing me pointing at the empty space where the volunteers had just posed for my narration. And they indeed were able to do so! I think the visual imagery has already been imprinted on their minds.
(Journal_25/05/07)

As I mentioned previously in Section 5.1.9, Richard's classroom behaviour used to be disruptive. Ms Lin described him as "an annoying child who often talked nonsense and liked to talk back in class. He always had his own opinion about what you requested him to do and asked questions to which he already knew the answers." The drama activities this semester have helped his interaction with other children and improved his classroom behaviour. "He enjoys taking part in the drama activities and loves acting too," commented Ms Lin with a smile on her face, "I did find that he has become much more loveable this semester." In my past teaching experiences I had also encountered difficulties teaching children who acted similarly to Richard. Therefore, in this project I especially took extra notice of how drama could contribute to reducing pupils' problematic classroom behaviour and encourage their participation in a positive manner. As recorded in the above journal entry, Richard kept saying "Pick me! Pick me," a phrase taught in the story of Little Red Riding Hood, to attract my attention and was able to creatively respond physically to my instruction. The change in his classroom behaviour has shown the importance of incorporating different types of intelligences into the classroom which have been discussed in Section 3.6. Children like Richard, for example, are kinaesthetic learners who prefer to be physically involved whilst learning; their needs, nonetheless, are not easily met in a more traditional classroom, which favours visual learning. They tend not to be able to sit still and wait passively for information to be given. Their restlessness is often mistaken to be undisciplined and rowdy. Bodily

engagement in drama activities, on the contrary, can channel their energy and creativity in positive ways and bring about productive learning outcomes.

In the second part of the above journal entry, I described how visualisation and physicalisation helped to elicit the children's language output. In the first action research cycle (see 5.1.5), I did a similar memorisation activity. I erased words from a narrative paragraph on the whiteboard with each time reading aloud, miming the erased words for the pupils to recall the corresponding words. With my physical prompts, most of the class were able to memorise the whole paragraph. In the memorisation activity in this scheme of work, physical prompts were given by the children themselves. The process of transforming a two-dimensional text to three-dimensional still images seems to deepen learners' grasp of the target vocabulary and memory traces as Evans (1984) mentions:

...drama allows participants the opportunity to act out roles and to use all the media of communication, the voice, gesture, movement, so to do. It thus takes what it shares with English, an emphasis on developing the means of communication, and extends these means to include all the paralinguistic aids to meaning which take communication beyond the two dimensional writing and talking to involve the third dimension of gesture and physical interaction, thus encouraging active and discriminating observation and listening, which true communication always demands. (p. 11)

After using still images to set up the scene for the story, I taught the following dialogue and led the class to read it aloud several times, making sure that they all understood the content.

In the Giant's garden, there are beautiful flowers, tall trees and green grass. The children are playing happily. Suddenly, the giant comes back!

GIANT: (Very angry) What are you doing here?

CHILDREN: (Very scared) We are...

GIANT: What are you doing in my garden? In MY garden! You! Tell me!

CHILD 1: I'm jumping rope.

GIANT: And you two! Tell me!

CHILD 2 & We're playing on the seesaw.
CHILD 3:

GIANT: And you over there! Tell me!

CHILD 4 & We're playing hide-and-seek.
CHILD 5: (Point to a tree.)
 They're climbing a tree.

GIANT: Playing in my garden? Is this YOUR garden or MY garden?

CHILDREN: It's your garden.

GIANT: Now you know it's my garden. Who let you in?

CHILDREN: Nobody.

GIANT: Go away! Go away! Don't come back here again!

CHILDREN: Sorry, Mr. Giant. (All run away.)

GIANT: Bad children! Bad children! I don't like bad children. I don't want to see them again. What can I do?

Next, I told the children that I was going to be in role as the giant when he came back home and angrily found that the village children were playing in his garden without his permission. I asked the volunteers to rebuild the previous still image of the garden in the story circle and I entered the acting space at the end of the sentence, "Suddenly, the giant is back." I bellowed, "What are you doing here?" and the volunteers resumed their movement to act out the subsequent lines. One of the functions of teacher in role, as Kao and O'Neill (1998) claim, is "to invite students to enter and begin to create the fictional world" (p. 26). They further maintain:

The role presented by the teacher is publicly available to be "read" or interpreted, and participants are immediately caught in a web of contemplation, speculation and anticipation. They are drawn together in attending to and building the event, as they seek for clues to the kind of fictional world that is emerging and their place within it. Students are challenged to make sense of what they hear and see, to become aware of their responses and to use these responses as an impetus to action. (p. 27)

Different from having the pupils role-play the dialogue and do drama on their own, my taking part in the story enactment encouraged them to be more emotionally engaged. Through my acting, they could read my facial expression and body language and also interpret my tone of voice so as to respond accordingly. I wrote in my journal:

[Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.]

Seeing me as a giant who was incandescent with rage and bawling, initially, the pupils did not know how to react properly. For a few seconds, some of them giggled, some whispering to each other. I knew they needed a bit more time to enter this shared fictional world than younger children who find it easier to willingly suspend their disbelief and agree to pretend. Some of them would care too much what their peers think about them as they are reaching an awkward age. So I turned to the audience, pointing at the pupils in the story circle, asking, "*What are they doing in my garden?*" A few voices answered, "*They are playing in your garden.*" I then turned back to those who in the acting space, stormed toward Kathy who was pretending to jump rope, questioning, "*What are you doing in my garden? In MY garden! You! Tell me!*" Perhaps with the endorsement of the children sitting around as audience, the pupils in the story circle stopped giggling and whispering and started to respond to me in role of the terrified village children. "*I'm jumping rope,*" replied Kathy in a frightened voice and so did the other children. In the end, I chased all of them out of my garden, standing still with both hands holding my head to show my upset after yelling, "*What can I do?*" The class went silent, awaiting my next move. I took out three large pieces of paper, wrote quickly on them the following warnings, and put the signs up on the wall to end up the dramatisation.

- I don't like children. GO AWAY!!
- This garden is NOT for children!
- Children OUT! (Journal_25/05/07)

As O'Toole and Dunn suggest (2002), teachers themselves are the most

valuable teaching resource in drama. When stepping into role, they “enrich the action beyond just being guide, facilitator and instructor” (p. 8). It is crucial for children to see their teacher’s willingness to play, and even more, “to play harder than children themselves.” In so doing, the teacher delivers a clear message to them—“their teacher takes playfulness very seriously” (Winston, 2004a, p. 10). However some teachers’ lack of confidence in their drama skills is likely to prevent them from taking on a role. Ms Lin gave the following remark in the interview:

Maybe we think one needs to be a professional in drama to be able to apply drama into teaching. And we ordinary teachers don’t know that much [about drama]....Not every teacher is like you who are extroverted and know both drama and English teaching. And I also think that teachers themselves need to be capable of being involved in drama. For those more introverted teachers, it may be difficult for them to act or take on a role.
(Interview_End_Lin)

Ms Lin’s comment is not unfounded. Judging from my past experience of running workshops and training schemes, I had heard similar concerns voiced by quite a few teachers. They thought they needed to receive training in acting techniques in order to “act well” in class. Although it is true that acting techniques like the use of voice tone and the paralinguistic features of communication can be vital for being a good actor, they are also important in terms of being an effective teacher. Very often primary English teachers use physical demonstration to introduce vocabulary which involves an element of acting to a certain degree as well. Acting in fact is a kind of pretend play. O’Toole and Dunn (2002) claim that the skills of pretend play are like riding a bicycle, something one never forgets. They argue that teachers even possess more skills than their pupils apart from pretend play such as “skills and

command of language register and vocabulary, of gesture and movement, that are important to model” (p. 8). Becoming a character in story enactment enables teachers to interact with their pupils through different status patterns, which not only adds fun in the classroom but also helps to change the classroom dynamics.

One of the reasons that children find pleasure and enjoyment in re-acting stories is because of their emotional engagement. As discussed in Section 3.5, through role-taking and role-creating in the drama, children are able to put themselves in others’ shoes. The significance of emotional engagement has been stressed by Winston (2004a) and it is worth to quote him here again:

Good drama is emotionally charged. When it works well, drama carries an emotional charge that holds children in its power. At different moments they might be intrigued, moved, amused, outraged, excited, tense, elated....These emotions are inextricably linked to their understanding of what is happening, and the extent of their emotional engagement will depend upon how much they care about the people in the story. (p. 12)

Various emotions such as happy, scared, angry, sad, are interwoven in the story of the Selfish Giant for the children to act out and observe. A pupil mentioned in the interview:

There may be a girl called Tina and a boy called Tony in the textbook dialogue. The teacher asked us to repeat after her and we just followed. But we don’t know what Tina and Tony are like. Stories are more interesting because the story characters have different personality traits. For example, the giant would get angry and Little Red Riding Hood would feel scared. And we know why they became so. But it is almost impossible to feel these emotions in the textbook dialogues. (Interview_End_Group 4)

Emotional engagement also helps the pupils to speak with proper stress and intonation. Not every word in English sentences is given equal emphasis. Words that are spoken with more volume or weight than others are the parts which

indicate certain information or carry the most meaning. Many native speakers of Chinese, however, tend to apply the rhythm of Chinese when speaking English, stressing almost every single word in English sentences. The overuse or misuse of stress may result in communication problems or misunderstanding. In the above dialogue, the giant is furiously asking the children whose garden it is. The sentence stress naturally falls on possessive determiners which were emphasised both by my increased volume and my hand gestures when I, in role of the giant, spoke the line “Is this *your* garden or *my* garden?” Interestingly, this sentence later became quite popular among the children. They liked to argue with each other in an amusing fashion by changing the sentence to something like “Is this YOUR pen or MY pen?” or “Is this YOUR book or MY book?” They were also able to reply with answers, e.g. “It is MY pen” or “It is MY book,” stressing the correct words in the sentence.

5.2.4 Teacher-Pupil Talk

How students and teachers interact in the EFL classroom usually takes on various forms different from what occurs in natural conversations. The classroom, as Breen and Candlin (1980) view it, “is a unique social environment with its own human activities and its own conventions governing these activities” (p. 98). It has been observed that in some language classrooms teacher talk tends to dominate up to 89 percent of the available class time (Nunan, 1989, p. 26). Teacher talk, according to Cullen (1998) was previously seen as “something of a danger area” for EFL teachers and should be used sparingly in the language classroom because “too much teacher talking time (TTT) deprived students of opportunities to speak” (p. 179). Nonetheless, some others hold an opposite

opinion on this issue. Moon (2000), for example, claims that teacher talk in an EFL setting offers the primary source of language exposure. She, therefore, stresses the importance of language teachers' interaction skills especially when working with young learners:

In order to communicate effectively, we need not only to take account of children's limited levels of English but also of their conceptual level. So we have two concerns: keeping our language simple, but also ensuring that our messages are framed in a way which makes sense to children. (p. 73)

Arguing in a similar vein, Pinter (2006) adds that teacher talk is essential for children learning new language forms as it provides a model of pronunciation and opportunities to receive new input from context. Good interaction skills (teacher-pupil talk) also help to scaffold children's language development. As discussed in Section 3.1, teachers can scaffold children's learning in various ways, such as guiding their attention to what is relevant by providing focusing activities, dividing the task into manageable sections, and offering them opportunities to integrate various components (part-skills) into the whole task. Cameron (2001) argues, "In directing attention and in remembering the whole task and goals on behalf of the learner, the teacher is doing what children are not yet able to do for themselves" (p. 9). These tutorial interactions enable young learners to move on to a new ZPD. Cameron furthermore refers to Schmidt's notion of "noticing" in second language learning as an echo of the concept of helping children to attend to what is important. According to Schmidt (1990), acquiring a second language requires learners' consciously noticing to all aspects of language. He affirms that "subliminal language learning is impossible, and that noticing is the necessary and sufficient condition for converting input to

intake” (p. 129). The following excerpt of classroom discourse is an example of how I built on what the pupils already knew, dividing a full-page dialogue into manageable parts to enhance their comprehension, and how I set up the story context for the following scene through joint effort with the children.

(Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.)

MYSELF: Do you remember that after the children are chased away from the garden, *they feel sad? Because in the garden there are beautiful...* [miming a flower]...*tall...* [miming a tree]...*and green...* [pointing to the floor].

CLASS: ...*flowers...trees...grass* [replying in accordance with my gestures]

MYSELF: *The children want to go back to the garden to play but the giant is very angry, right?*

CLASS: [nodding their heads]

MYSELF: *So what can they do?*

WAYNE: Just sneak in.

MYSELF: Is it all right to do so?

SOME: *Yes.*

SOME: *No.*

MYSELF: Did the children have the giant’s permission to play in the garden in advance?

CLASS: *No.*

MYSELF: So do you think the giant has the right to get angry?

CLASS: *Yes.*

WAYNE: They should have asked him first.

MYSELF: *The giant said, “I don’t like children!” “Bad children, go out!” but are they bad children?*

CLASS: *No.*

MYSELF: *Are they good children?*

SOME: *Yes.*

SOME: *No.*

MYSELF: So if they want to go back to the garden, what can they do?

SOME: Beg him.

MYSELF: How? *What can you say in English?*

SOME: *Please.*

MYSELF: So if the giant asks, “*Who let you in?*” What can you say to him? ... You can say “*Please ...*” [raising my intonation pattern to elicit replies]

LOUIS: *Please let me in.*

MYSELF: *Yes!* And what else can you say? Like *we will be...* [raising my intonation pattern to elicit replies]

SOME *Good.*

MYSELF: *Yes!* “*We will be good.*” [writing on the board]
And the giant thinks the children are too noisy. So they can tell him that “*we will be...*”

SOME: *Quiet.*

MYSELF: *Right.* “*We will be quiet.*” [writing on the board]
They can also tell him that “*wo men bu hui...*” (= we won’t ...).

LOUIS: *We won’t.*

MYSELF: *Correct.* “*We won’t be ...*” [writing on the board]
What is the opposite word of “*good*”?

CLASS: *Bad.*

MYSELF: *Right.* “*We won’t be bad.*” [writing on the board]
There’s a more difficult word that they can use. How do you say “*tiao pi*” (= naughty) in English?

ETHAN: *Naughty.*

MYSELF: Yes, good! Is it because you’re naughty so you know this word?
[Laughter from the class] So you can promise the giant that ...
[pointing at the sentences on the board]

CLASS: *We won't be bad. We won't be naughty. We will be good. We will be quiet.*

MYSELF: *Can you do something for the giant too? He has a very big garden, remember?*

SOME: *Bang mang (= help).*

MYSELF: *How do you say "bang mang" in English?*

SOME: *Help.*

MYSELF: *Good! So you can say, "We can help you to ..."* [writing on the board]

ETHAN: *Jiao hua (= water the flower).*

MYSELF: *When you "jiao hua," you need water, right? So how do you say it in English?*

LOUIS: *Water flowers.*

MYSELF: *Right. Water the flowers. Remember that the giant's garden has many beautiful flowers and ...?* [pointing to the floor]

CLASS: *Green grass.*

MYSELF: *The grass grows very tall. So you can help him to ...?*

SOME: *Cut the grass.*

MYSELF: *Very good! So "we can help you cut the grass."* [writing on the board]
OK. Do you think it is enough for the children to do all these? Will the giant be happy?

SOME: *Yes.*

SOME: *No.*

RICHARD: *Need to give him a massage, too.* [Laughter from the class]

MYSELF: *All right. So "we can massage you."* [writing on the board]

WAYNE: *Sing a song.*

MYSELF: *Yes, the children can sing a song for the giant.* [writing on the board]
Now let's think what gestures you can use to beg the giant? What do you do when saying "please"?

ERICSON: Like this. [kneeling down on the flower]

WAYEN: And like this. [interlacing his fingers, brings them to his chest high, and moves them up and down]

MYSELF: *Great.* Can you try all this when we role play the dialogue later?

CLASS: *Yes.*

(Journal_08/06/07)

Both L1 and L2 were used in the above teacher-pupil talk. Whether learners are allowed to use their mother tongue in foreign language teaching has long been a controversial issue. Attitudes towards the use of L1 have swung back and forth like a pendulum, between ‘to use’ and ‘not to use’. In the grammar-translation method, the classes are taught mainly in the mother tongue while the direct method and the audio-lingual method emphasise the monolingual principle. In communicative language teaching, judicious use of L1 is accepted. Some teachers insist on using the target language exclusively in the EFL classroom as learners normally are not able to receive sufficient input or produce output in L2 outside of the classroom. Some, on the contrary, argue that language learners can benefit from their mother tongue when the teacher incorporates it into explaining instructions, providing feedback, conducting parts of discussions, presenting new lexical items, or introducing grammar rules. Lucas and Katz (1994) carried out a study to investigate the roles of L1 in English-only programmes for language minority students. They concluded that “the incorporation of students’ native languages in instruction need not be an all-or-nothing phenomenon” (p. 537). Recognising the psychological benefits of the native language use, they have also found that it can serve as “a practical pedagogical tool for providing access to academic content, allowing more

effective interaction, and providing greater access to prior knowledge” (p. 539).

As Phillips (1993) points out, EYL teachers should use as much English as possible in their teaching; however, “there are times when the use of English is counter-productive” (p. 8). Especially for children with limited English, an English-only approach is likely to cause their anxiety for they may struggle with what is discussed in English between the teacher and the pupils with higher language proficiency. I share Prodromou’s (1992) concern that “it is all too easy for insecure students to feel isolated by incomprehension or their perceived failure, and to suffer a loss of self-esteem as a result” (p. 70). In a mixed ability class, the teacher needs to create a learning situation where children with different language proficiency levels can feel secure and confident so that they are willing to interact with their teacher. That was the reason I chose to switch between L1 and L2 when eliciting from the pupils the vocabulary and sentence patterns they would be practising later in a dialogue as follows. The interactive elicitation of vocabulary aided the pupils’ comprehension of the new dialogue, which also helps to enhance their confidence in reading long dialogues.

The children want to play in the garden, so they go back to beg the Giant.

Child 1: (Pushes Child 2) You knock on the door.

Child 2: No! Not me! (Pushes Child 3) You go!

Child 3: (Gets pushed by Child 2 and bumps head against the door) Bang! (Rubs the head) Ouch!

Giant: Who’s there? (Stands and opens the door.) What are you doing here? Do you see the signs over there?

Children: (Trembling) Yes.

Giant: Good! This garden is not for children. Go away! I don’t like bad children.

Children: But we're not bad children. We're good children.

Giant: Really? Show me.

Children: OK. How?

Giant: Just do what I say.

Children: Yes, we will.

Giant: Water the flowers.

Children: Yes, Mr. Giant. We're watering the flowers. (Mime watering the flowers)

Giant: Cut the grass.

Children: Yes, Mr. Giant. We're cutting the grass. (Mime cutting the grass)

Giant: Sing me a song.

Children: Yes, Mr. Giant. Listen. (Sing "If you're happy and you know it")

Giant: Oh, my ears! (Covers ears with hands) You're singing so badly! Bad children! Bad children! Go away! Go away!

After the pupils role-played the dialogue, I had a short discussion with them, asking what they thought about the giant's reaction to the village children's beseeching. The pupils did not think the begging worked and many of them placed the blame on the giant, seeing him as a grumpy old man. Wondering if they knew what made the giant behave so rudely, I continued with more questions:

(Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.)

MYSELF: Why do you think the giant acted like that?

SOME: Because he's lonely.

MYSELF: Lonely? Like Little Red Riding Hood's granny?

WAYNE: Yes, *he's home alone*. So he's not used to it.

MYSELF: Not used to what?

WAYNE: Not used to being with others. He feels jealous.

MYSELF: Jealous of what?

WAYNE: Jealous of the children's playing together.

ETHAN: Right. He wants to play with the children, too.

MYSELF: Then why he didn't do so?

ETHAN: He's shy.

ELISA: *He's too big.*

RICHARD: We can use an enlarging ray to make the children become bigger.

BEN: Or we can use a shrink ray to make the giant become smaller.

MYSELF: Does he need to be the similar height as the children so that they can play together?

CLASS: No. It doesn't matter.

MYSELF: So can we tell the giant that "*You're very tall and we're very short. But it's OK. We can still play together*"? Let's say so to the giant next time, *OK*?

CLASS: *OK!*

(Journal_08/06/07)

There are several points in this brief teacher-pupil exchange worth further elaboration. Firstly, the pupils attributed the giant's hostility to his loneliness. As they learned "she's home alone and sick in bed" in the story of Little Red Riding Hood, Wayne quickly recalled the sentence to answer my question in English. It indicates that language learned in a story context can be easily retrieved because similarities always exist in different stories. Secondly, the pupils related their experiences to explain why the giant did not play with the children even though he wanted to. In a previous English lesson, while most of the children had

already started to work in groups acting out a dialogue between Little Red Riding Hood and her mother, one group of girls were having quarrels about assigning the characters. The reason was that Kathy wanted to play Mama but Bella, who would be Little Red Riding Hood and was almost 30 centimetres taller than Kathy, thought she was too short to be the mother. Kathy burst into tears after being told so directly that she was too short. The other pupils were not able to concentrate on their work, seeing her crying sadly. Hence I asked the class to stop their group work and had a talk with them about whether one's height should limit the character he or she could play in stories or drama. The talk was soon expanded to the relationship between one's height and friendmaking. I was highly aware that a few pupils in this class were sensitive about their height and were often teased by others for being not tall enough for their age. At the end of the discussion, we all agreed that people can become friends regardless of how tall or how short they are. Therefore when Elisa mentioned that the giant was too big to play with the children, the talk that day came vividly back to me. It was interesting to hear the children propose the use of the enlarging ray or shrink ray to make the giant become the "right" size for the children. It was delightful for me to hear them agree that the giant did not need to be as tall as the children in order to play with them. Lastly, the learners' mother tongue had a facilitative role to play in deepening the story and exploring the character's inner world. In Section 3.5, I compared Corden's exploratory talk with Morgan and Saxon's analysis of drama questions and also spelled out the potential difficulties in applying teacher in role to engage the children in in-depth discussion in English. Allowing the children to use their mother tongue to talk about the characters and solve problems can arouse their interest in the story and make them want to know

what will happen next. Their interest and motivation can then feed into their English language learning.

5.2.5 Writing in Role

The initial version of General Guidelines of Grade 1-9 Curriculum of Elementary and Junior High School Education promulgated by Taiwan's Ministry of Education placed heavier emphasis on listening and speaking than on reading and writing. This policy gave much weight to oracy, which might be to the detriment of the children's literacy development. Concerns were then raised by many English teachers that the pupils might lack sufficient writing skills when entering junior high schools. As a consequence, in a later revised version of the guideline, literacy skills have been assigned equal importance to speaking and listening abilities. However, writing may be the most difficult language skill for EFL learners to master. The factors which make the production of written language an arduous task are many. One possible explanation, pointed out by Scott and Ytreberg (1990), is that writing is no easy task for many because "You can't make the same use of body language, intonation, tone, eye contact and all the other features which help you to convey meaning when you talk" (p. 68). Language learners in Taiwan tend to have lower confidence in their ability to write. Take the pupils in this research study for example. As shown in their self-evaluation of English proficiency (see Figure 5.32), more children consider their listening, speaking, reading to be "average" or "good" than their writing. Nearly half of the pupils, 15 out of 32, think that their writing abilities are poor. My teaching experience in the past also confirms that a host of students find it hard to express their ideas in written English as they do not have the vocabulary

or grammar they need. Quite a few of them even told me that they simply could not think of anything to write up. Writing is much more than learning basic skills to put words on paper. It also involves generating ideas about what to write. In this respect, drama has the particular strength of providing and stimulating thoughts for writing.

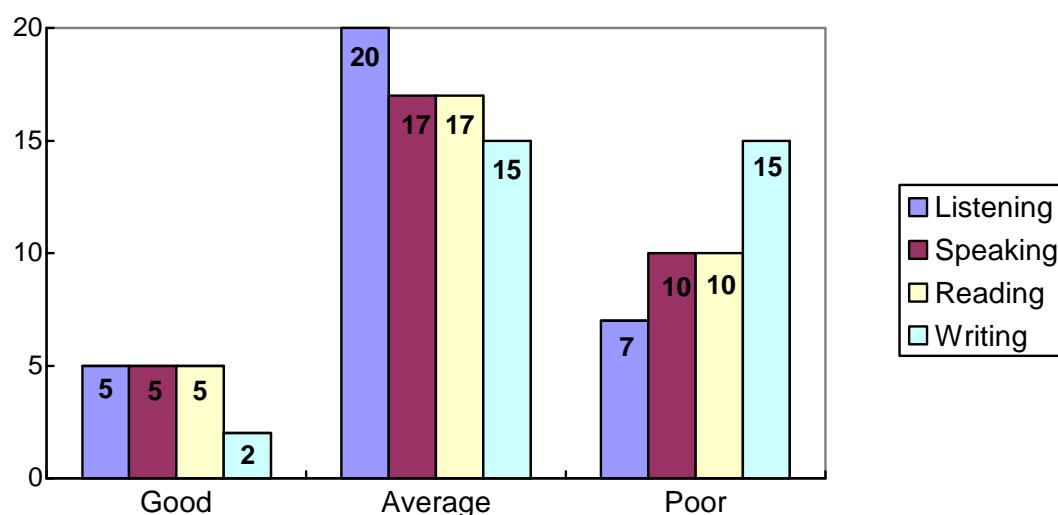


Figure 5.32 The Pupils' Self-evaluation of English Proficiency

The potential of drama for facilitating writing lies in the “imaginative involvement” (Booth & Barton, 2000, p. 95) arising in the dramatic context. Crumpler (2005) argues that drama can engage children “in thinking, doing, and imagining so that when they begin to compose texts, they weave these threads together in unexpected and interesting ways” (p. 358). One of the strategies that is often adopted to deepen the children’s drama experiences is letter writing in role. Role-driven writing, as Neelands et al. (1993) maintain, creates “a sense of purpose” and “[t]he presence of an audience, albeit a fictional one, is strongly felt” (p. 12). Letter writing is a popular activity in the language classroom as it allows children to produce short, meaningful written work (W. Scott & Ytreberg, 1990).

In this scheme of work, the pupils were given opportunities to write letters in different roles. The first role they took on for writing was the giant. He received a letter (see below) from the village children who wanted to know why he disliked them and did not let them play in his garden. In role as the giant, I opened the letter and appeared annoyed because the words in the letter were so small that I was not able to see them clearly. Therefore I asked a volunteer to read it out loud for me.

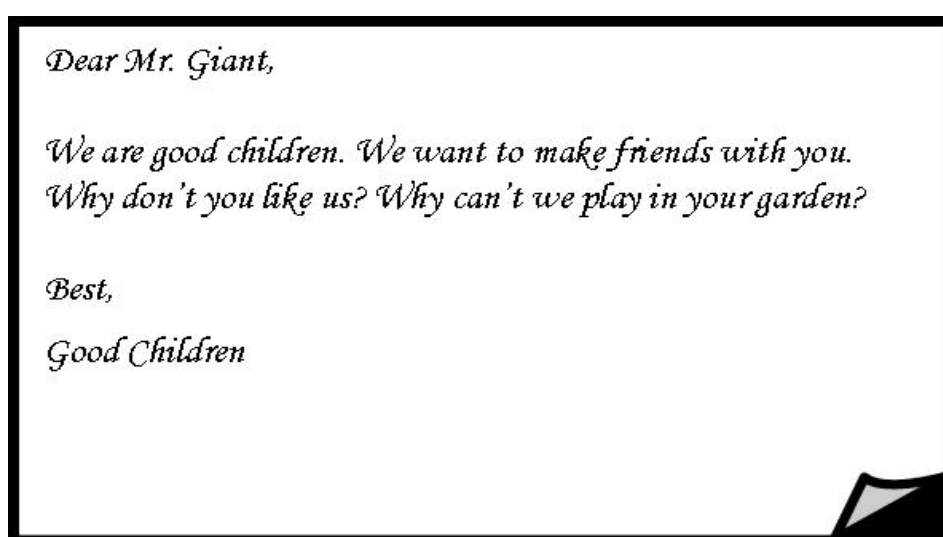


Figure 5.33 A Letter to the Giant

After the letter had been read out, I went out of role and told the class that the giant decided to reply to the children to let them know why he did not like them. I elicited from the pupils some possible reasons which were later included in a writing frame for a guided writing exercise. Similarly to the writing task of making mini books in the previous scheme, the pupils were allowed to choose between a more guided exercise and a less guided one to work at their own language level. For the pupils in need of more language support, they were offered a writing framework with the following set of sentences to fill in:

- I don't want to make friends with you because _____.
(I like to be alone/ I don't need friends / you are too small ...)
- I don't like you because _____.
(you are noisy / naughty / bad)
- You can't play in my garden because _____.
(it is MY garden / it is not for children ...)

This kind of restricted exercise helps gradually to build up learners' confidence by giving them the minimum language they would need to accomplish the task. Although the sentences were in a fixed, controlled pattern, the pupils could complete them with their preferred phrases. They could also add sentences to express their own voices. Below are two letters written by Mindy (see Figure 5.34) and Bella (see Figure 5.35) respectively which show how they incorporated their own words, indicated in bold, into the given frame.

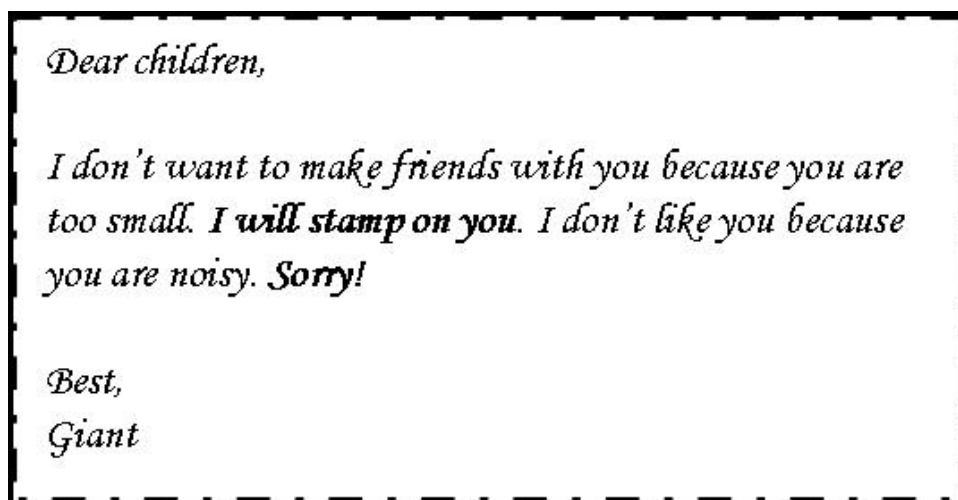


Figure 5.34 Giant's Letter to the Children written by Mindy

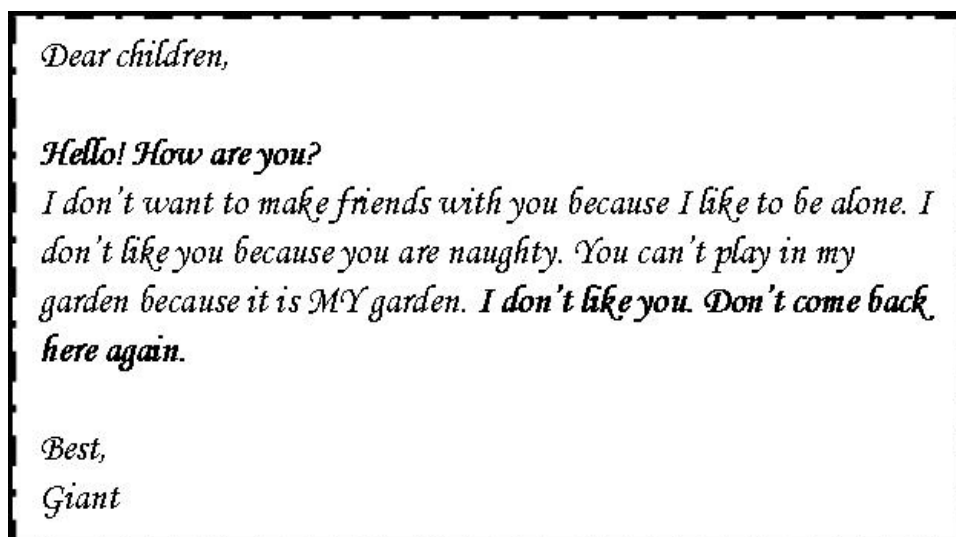


Figure 5.35 Giant's Letter to the Children written by Bella

The pupils who were ready for freer writing did not need to follow the structure of the writing frame. Olivia's letter below displays a clear sense of audience and demonstrates her ability to give explanations, to construct a short, meaningful text and to express emotions in written English.

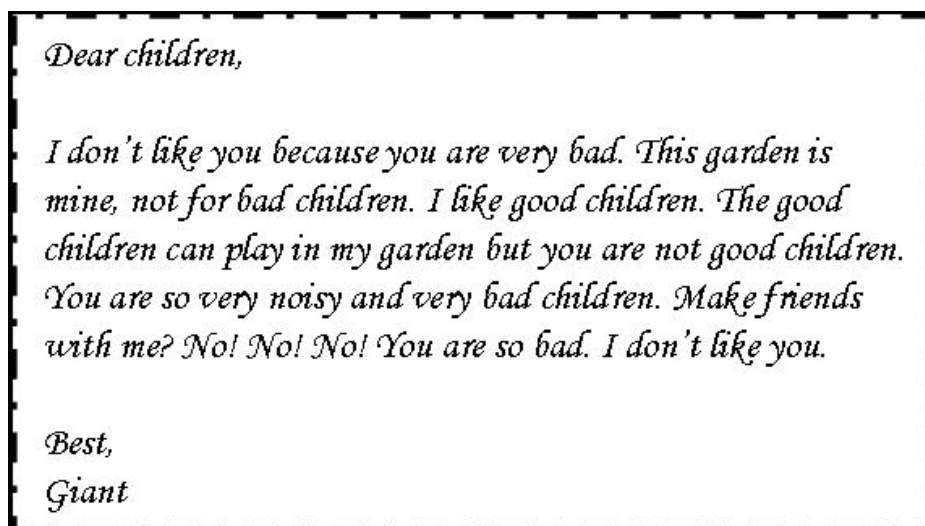


Figure 5.36 Giant's Letter to the Children written by Olivia

Being actively involved in the story-based drama has brought a positive influence to Olivia's learning. In the end-of-term interview, Ms Lin mentioned:

I didn't know that Olivia is so outgoing and enjoys performing in front of others a lot. She is indeed very good at acting and I think this teaching method suits her learning style. It seems that she likes it very much, too.
(Interview_End_Lin)

Ms Lin is right about Olivia's being fond of learning English through drama. In group rehearsals, she always did an excellent job of directing, negotiating, and assigning tasks, which not merely gave her a sense of achievement but proved her leadership qualities. Her group members enjoyed working with her, giving her the title of "our super big director." She volunteered to participate in all the drama activities and was always attentive and highly motivated in class. She even pretended to be one of the village children and wrote a letter as follows to the Giant as her self-assigned homework.

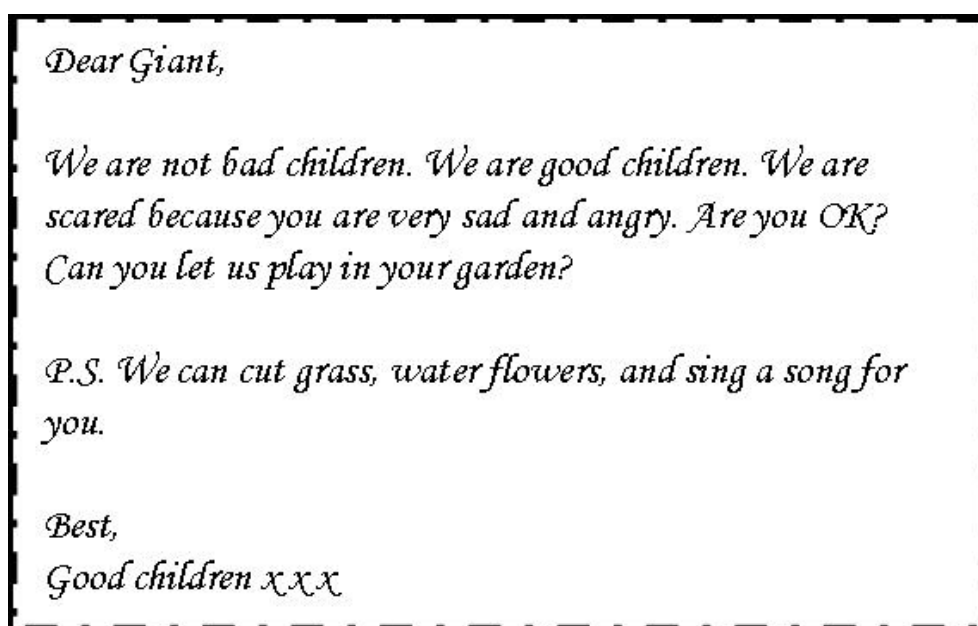


Figure 5.37 Children's Letter to the Giant written by Olivia

Before the class moved on to the second writing-in-role task, they took part in physical work to create a barrier for the giant who discovered that simply putting up the warning signs could not stop the children from sneaking into his

garden. He called in a group of constructors to build a high wall with threatening signs on it to keep the children out. Working in groups of four, the pupils needed to use their bodies to form the wall and vocalise the warnings on the signs. They were also asked to draw the walls they physicalised in class as their homework. Some of their drawings are shown as follows. Bella's group came up with a creative idea of having an extremely nagging old lady patrol the wall. She would curse any children who came near the garden.



Figure 5.38 Giant's High Wall Drawn by Bella



Figure 5.39 Giant's High Wall Drawn by Kathy

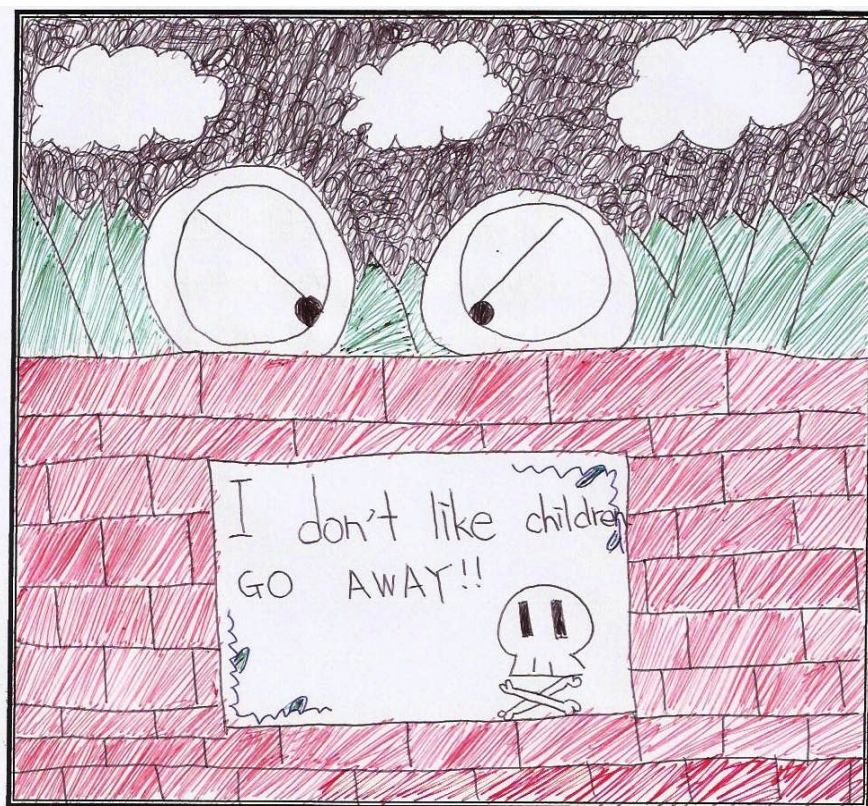


Figure 5.40 Giant's High Wall Drawn by Sandra

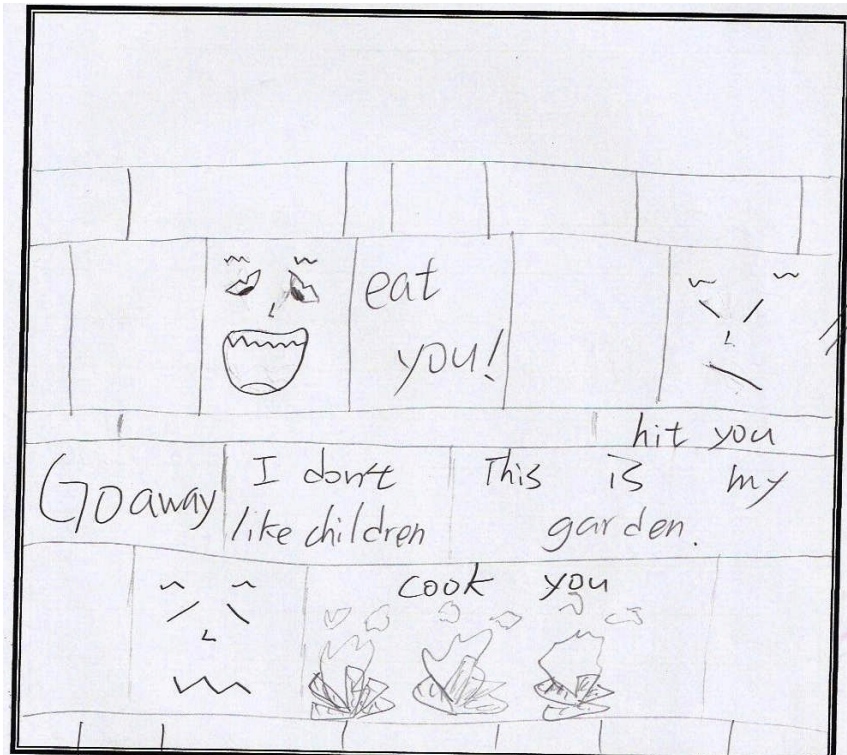


Figure 5.41 Giant's High Wall Drawn by Louis



Figure 5.42 Giant's High Wall Drawn by Mindy

To set up for the second writing task, I told the class that I received a letter from a previous student, Amy, who would move to the giant's village soon and become his neighbour. She heard about the giant's beautiful garden from her mother and wondered if she could play in it. I asked the pupils (in role as the village children) about their opinions as they had met the giant and had played in his garden before. Some guided questions were provided to assist them in composing their letters. They could choose to reply to Amy on my behalf or as the village children. Most of the pupils believed that the giant would refuse Amy's entry into his garden and gave specific reasons to explain (see below for examples).

Dear Amy,

How are you? I am very happy to hear from you! Your mama is not right. I know the giant. He is very big and he is not nice. He does not like children so he won't like you. I don't think he will let you play in the garden.

Hope to hear from you soon!

Love,
Sabina

Figure 5.43 A Letter to Amy Written by Bella

Dear Amy,

Your mama is not right. The giant is very selfish! He look like a pig, very big and selfish. He will kick you. He won't like you because he doesn't like children, so he won't let you play in his beautiful garden!

Love,
Sabina

Figure 5.44 A Letter to Amy Written by Mindy

Dear Amy,

I am Olivia. Sabina is my teacher. Can you make friends with me?

The giant is bad. His beautiful garden is not for children, flowers, grass, butterflies, bird, bees, and spring. The giant is selfish and very angry. He is sad, too. But we can help the giant.

Best,
Olivia

Figure 5.45 A Letter to Amy Written by Olivia

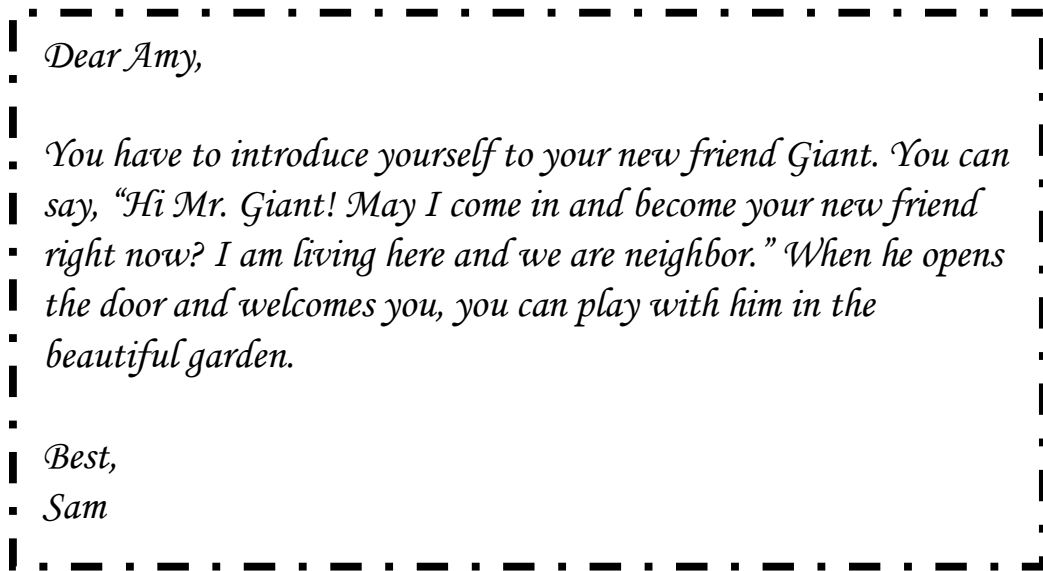
Dear Amy,

I don't think your mom is right. I know the giant. He is very tall and strong. He is very bad. He doesn't like children so he will not like you. He will not let you play in his beautiful garden.

Best,
Terry

Figure 5.46 A Letter to Amy Written by Terry

Sam had an alternative perspective, compared to his peers. He suggested in his letter as follows that Amy should introduce herself to the giant politely and he might let her in.



Dear Amy,

You have to introduce yourself to your new friend Giant. You can say, "Hi Mr. Giant! May I come in and become your new friend right now? I am living here and we are neighbor." When he opens the door and welcomes you, you can play with him in the beautiful garden.

Best,

Sam

Figure 5.47 A Letter to Amy Written by Sam

Louis's letter shown in Figure 5.48 was written from a self-created character's viewpoint—Little Red Riding Hood's father. Louis likes adapting stories and asking questions about stories. He once asked if he could change Little Red Riding Hood to Little "Blue" Riding Hood. I then started a discussion with the class around the topic of the meanings of colours in different cultures. In the previous scheme, his mini book re-told an interesting version of Little Red Riding Hood, who killed the big bad wolf with a pistol in a convenience store and turned his fur into a new cloak. As noted in Section 5.1.12, he indicated in a group interview that he preferred more challenging written assignments such as writing letters and making mini books. His letter to Amy is imaginative and intriguing. The description of the brutal event witnessed by Little Red Riding Hood's father portrays the giant as a cannibal, which generates an atmosphere of horror and darkness. Although there are a few spelling and grammar mistakes in

the letter, the general meaning still gets across clearly.

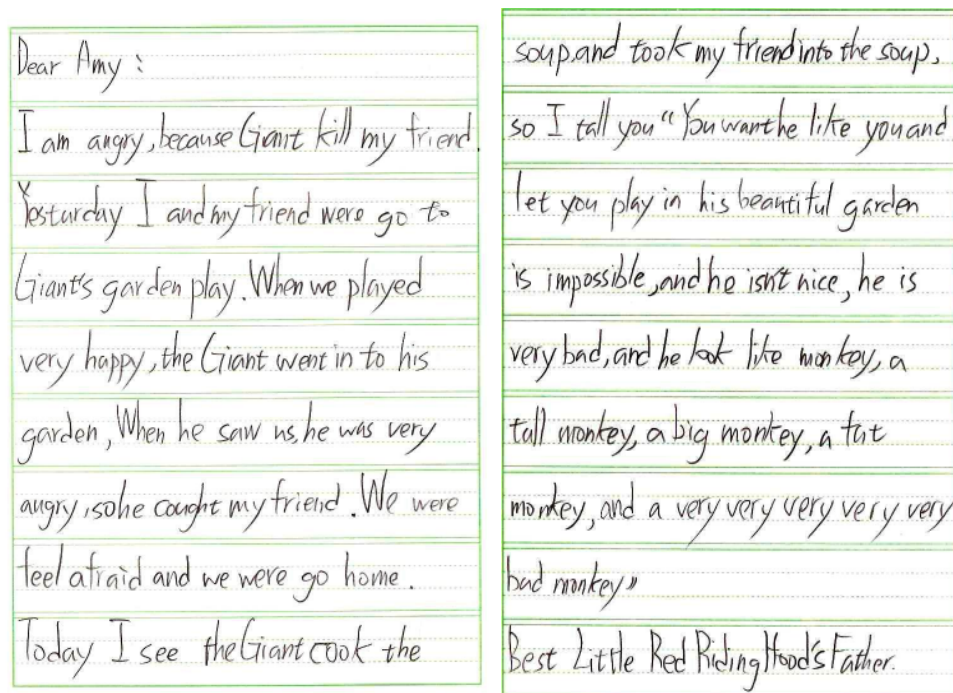


Figure 5.48 A Letter to Amy Written by Louis

Children's ability to imagine, according to Halliwell (1992), is conducive to their language development. She argues that even though it is important to connect language teaching with real life, teachers should not forget that "[t]he act of fantasising, of imagining is very much an authentic part of being a child" (p. 7). Therefore, teachers need to find ways of building on children's imagination so as to stimulate them to use the target language to express what's in their minds. Crumpler and Schneider (2002) claim that integrating drama into teaching writing to young learners "allows them to use their imagination as a tool to explore characters and solve problem" (p. 78) and participating in drama further enhances their writing as "their *whole being* is engaged" (p. 78). In her study on the influence of drama on the imaginative writing of primary school children, McNaughton (1997) compared two groups of children's written work. For prewriting activities, one group took part in drama and the other in discussion.

Both prewriting activities yielded positive results; nonetheless, those children with drama experiences were “able to express the thoughts or feelings of characters more fully” and “identify with the characters and to get ‘under their skin’ more successfully” (p. 84). She concludes, “Drama seems to have given this group something ‘extra’ to say in their writing and ‘extra’ language to say it with” (p. 85). Tarlington (1985) claimed that the majority of her pupils, ranging in age from 7 to 17 and representing a wide array of abilities, could write easily after being given drama acts as a prewriting activity because “the dramatic context supplies them with something to say and a purpose for saying it” (p. 199). The importance of writing in role is highlighted by Neelands et al. (1993), who state that “Providing a role often ignites the interest and awakens the imagination of the students” (p. 13).

In this study, the pupils’ imaginative involvement in drama has brought about certain improvement in their writing. Ms Lin made the following comments in the interview:

Sometimes when I looked at the written assignment you gave the pupils, I wondered if they were capable of doing it. Even though for some children, it was a bit difficult, most of them did a great job at letter writing, which is beyond my expectations! We didn’t give the children this kind of practice before. The assignment they had was quite traditional, like questions and answers or copying vocabulary and sentences. Therefore, we are not able to discover their talent in writing. (Interview_End_Lin)

It is mentioned at the beginning part of this section that about half of the pupils had low confidence in their writing skills. At the end-of-term questionnaire survey, more than three quarters of the children think that they have made progress in writing as shown in Figure 5.49.

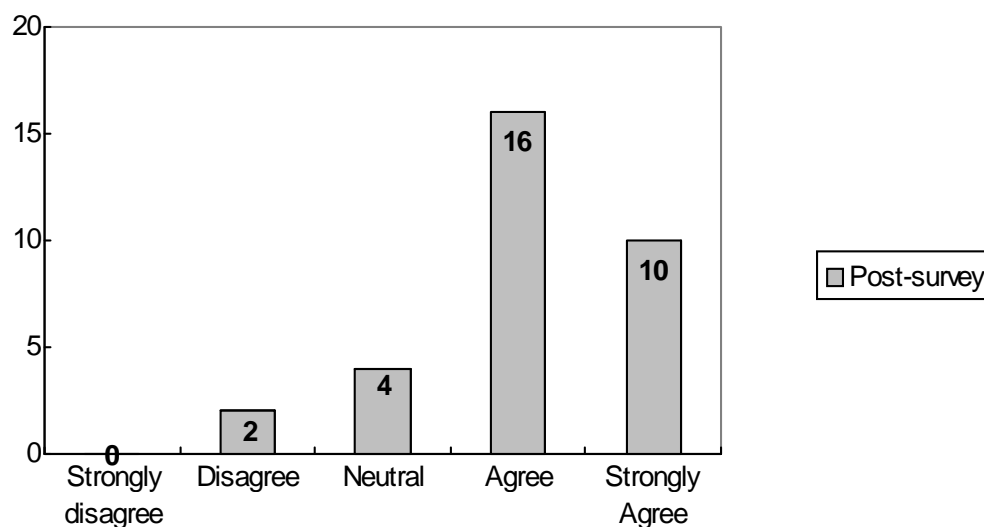


Figure 5.49 Pupils' opinions concerning the statement "I have made progress in writing this semester."

I am not claiming that these comments provide cast iron proof that only drama can be responsible for such improvements but there should be little doubt about their here-and-now involvement acting as a catalyst for writing. As Neelands et al. (1993) accentuate, "Writing in role provides a necessary outlet for their responses as the experience of drama touches them affectively, creatively and intellectually" (p. 13).

5.2.6 Chant a Poem

*No children in the garden.
No flowers in the garden.
No green grass.
No butterflies.*

*No children in the garden.
No flowers in the garden.
No birds singing.
No bees humming.*

*And no more spring coming
Only winter still staying*

*Shouting, the angry giant,
Wind, go away!
Rain, go away!
Snow, go away!
Hail, go away!*

*But they won't go away
They all want to stay
Stay with the angry selfish giant!*

The poem above was written by me to describe the scene of the giant's garden after he built up the high wall to keep the village children away. I showed the pupils the following two illustrations before presenting the poem, asking them how the children were feeling and what was happening in the garden.

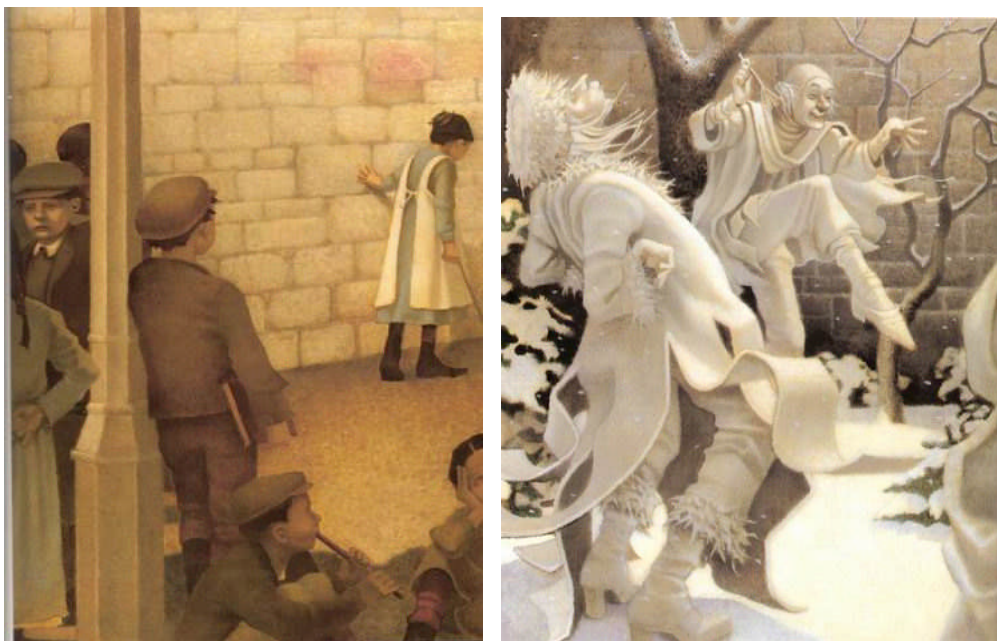


Figure 5.50 Illustrations from Susan Saelig Gallagher's *The Selfish Giant*

The class were more responsive to my questions this time compared to their limited response in the previous time when asked what they thought about the story after seeing the illustrations displayed via the PowerPoint slides (see 5.2.2):

(Text in *italics* indicates words or sentences *originally spoken in English*.)

MYSELF: *Where are the children? Inside or outside of the giant's garden?*

CLASS: *Outside.*

MYSELF: How are they feeling? *Are they happy, scared, or sad?*

SOME: *Sad.*

WAYNE: *Bored.*

MYSELF: *Bored? Who is bored?*

WAYNE: [pointing to the children sitting on the ground] These two.

MYSELF: Yes. They look a bit *bored*. You have good observation skills! *But why do they feel sad or bored?*

OLIVIA: They want to play in the garden but they can't.

MYSELF: *Why can't they play in the garden?*

SOME: *The giant will cook them.
The giant don't like the children.
This is MY garden. Go away!*

MYSELF: *I see.* The garden looks different now, doesn't it? What's the difference?

ETHAN: The trees have no leaves. And there are strange people in there.

MYSELF: *And there are no beautiful flowers and green grass now, right?* Do you know who these strange people are?

SOME: No.

ERICSON: Yes, I know. They are ghosts! [The class and I are laughing.]

MYSELF: They are not ghosts. They are winter's best friends.

(Journal_15/06/07)

I then introduced wind, rain, snow, and hail to the pupils and told them that these four friends of winter occupied the giant's garden, turning it into a freezing,

barren place. In order to make clear what the garden was like under the power of the winter, I read aloud the aforementioned poem to the class.

The advantages of integrating chants, rhymes, poems, and songs into English instruction have been examined from several perspectives (Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, 2003; Dunn, 1983; Kirsch, 2008; Tomlinson, 1986) and noted in a number of studies (L.-T. Hsieh, 2006; Kolsawalla, 1999). Cross (1992) states that “When students sing or recite, they automatically assume command of the prosodic features of the language” (p. 164). He also accentuates the importance of the prosody of English as it is a stress-timed language in which stress, rhythm, intonation, and syllable length have a determinant effect on oral proficiency and listening comprehension. This is especially true for learners whose mother tongue is a tone language like Chinese, in which intonation functions differently than in English. They need chants, rhymes, and poems to familiarise themselves with the stress pattern and rhythm of English. In poems or chants, viewed by Cameron (2001) as a kind of “language play” (G. Cook, 2000), “intonation and stress can be exaggerated dramatically, allowing children to notice (probably not consciously) and practise aspects of the foreign language that may be different from their first language” (p. 65). Being aware of prosodic cues in speech helps learners to reach higher levels of expressiveness and articulacy in English. The suprasegmental aspects of speech, however, should not be taught in an isolated manner but in a given context. Dunn (1983) argues that “Isolated items of language, especially if not linked to situations, are often much more difficult for young beginners to understand, use or remember” (p. 80).

Poems and chants within a story-based dramatic context are one of the ideal vehicles for practising suprasegmental features such as intonation and stress. As

Maley and Duff (2001) write, “Much of our feeling, especially in English, is conveyed through intonation, and it is important for students to associate the intonation pattern with the feeling that gives rise to it” (p. 11). They find it difficult to “work with second-hand feelings derived from texts or dialogues, yet most students are given no more than a few innocuous exclamations (‘What a pity! ... ‘How nice!’) to cover all their emotional needs in language” (p. 11). Drama techniques can directly engage learners’ feelings and enable them to apply vocal elements to attaching affective information to the word message. Stories, furthermore, provide contextual clues for the children to identify with the characters, which helps them to infuse genuine feeling into the spoken text.

After presenting the poem to the children, I called on four volunteer pupils to stand in front of the class for a poem chanting activity. They needed to recite the poem as a joint presentation according to the suggestions made by their classmates. The suggestions given included intonation, speed, choral repetition, and gestures. The volunteers were also asked to experiment with chanting alternate lines in various combinations to see which pattern could bring out the best effect of rhythmic recitation. I led the class to use clapping to create a clear, steady beat for the volunteers to chant along with. The following recitation pattern was voted by the class as their favourite one.

LINES	CHANTERS	GESTURES
<i>No children in the garden.</i>	Wayne, Olivia	Mime children.
<i>No flowers in the garden.</i>	Ethan, Victor	Mime flowers.
<i>No green grass.</i>	All	Point to the floor.
<i>No butterflies.</i>	All	Point in the air.
<i>No children in the garden.</i>	Wayne, Olivia	Mime children.

<i>No flowers in the garden.</i>	Ethan, Victor	Mime flowers.
<i>No birds singing.</i>	All	Mime birds.
<i>No bees humming.</i>	All	Mime bees.
<i>And no more spring coming</i>	Wayne, Olivia	Shake heads.
<i>Only winter still staying</i>	Ethan, Victor	Stamp feet.
<i>Shouting, the angry giant</i>	Wayne, Olivia	Wayne and Olivia place their hands on their waists, and then turn to shout at Ethan and Victor in an angry voice. Ethan and Victor look scared, fall down and sit on the floor.
<i>Wind</i>	Wayne, Olivia	
<i>go away</i>	Ethan, Victor	Move their hands from right to left to point at the door.
<i>Rain</i>	Wayne, Olivia	
<i>go away</i>	Ethan, Victor	Move their hands from right to left to point at the door.
<i>Snow</i>	Wayne, Olivia	
<i>go away</i>	Ethan, Victor	Move their hands from right to left to point at the door.
<i>Hail</i>	Wayne, Olivia	
<i>go away</i>	Ethan, Victor	Move their hands from right to left to point at the door.
<i>But they won't go away</i>	Wayne, Olivia	Look at each other and shake heads.
<i>They</i>	Victor	
<i>all</i>	Ethan	
<i>want to</i>	Olivia	
<i>stay</i>	Wayne	
<i>Stay with the angry selfish giant</i>	All	Stamp feet when saying "stay" and cross arms in front of the

chest when saying “angry.”

During the rehearsal process, the children contributed their ideas enthusiastically. They were eager to see how their suggestions worked in the presentation. The chanters also came up with their own ideas:

MYSELF: I remember that in the presentation of poem chanting, you two fell down on the floor when hearing “Shouting, the angry giant.” It was quite dramatic. How did you think of such an idea?

VICTOR: We thought that when someone shouts so angrily at you, normally you will feel very scared. So scared that you will just fall down on the floor. That’s why we did it.

ETHAN: It would be fun to see our classmates laugh too! We practised falling down several times outside.

VICTOR: Yes, we did. And they really liked that part!

MYSELF: Yes, I liked it, too. So do you like to chant a poem the way we did in class?

VICTOR: Yes!

ETHAN: I like the rhythm created by the clapping. It’ll be even cooler if we can adapt it to a song or a rap.

(Interview_End_Group 5)

The class indeed had fun watching the poem chanted with exaggerated tones of voice and gestures. Through the clapped beats and listening to the poem repeatedly, most of the pupils were able to recite the poem by rote at the end of the lesson.

Chanting was not a popular activity for the pupils, as is seen in their answers to the questionnaire in the pre-survey. Half of the class claimed that they disliked chants and rhymes, with only two pupils expressing a liking for chanting

and 14 claiming a neutral stance. Comparatively, the pupils showed an attitudinal change towards chanting in the end-of-term survey. No one answered negatively for chants and rhymes while there was a huge increase in the number of pupils who indicated a favourable attitude as shown in Figure 5.51. One key factor attributed to such a change, according to the pupils, was that they were able to play with tones of voice and be emotionally engaged.

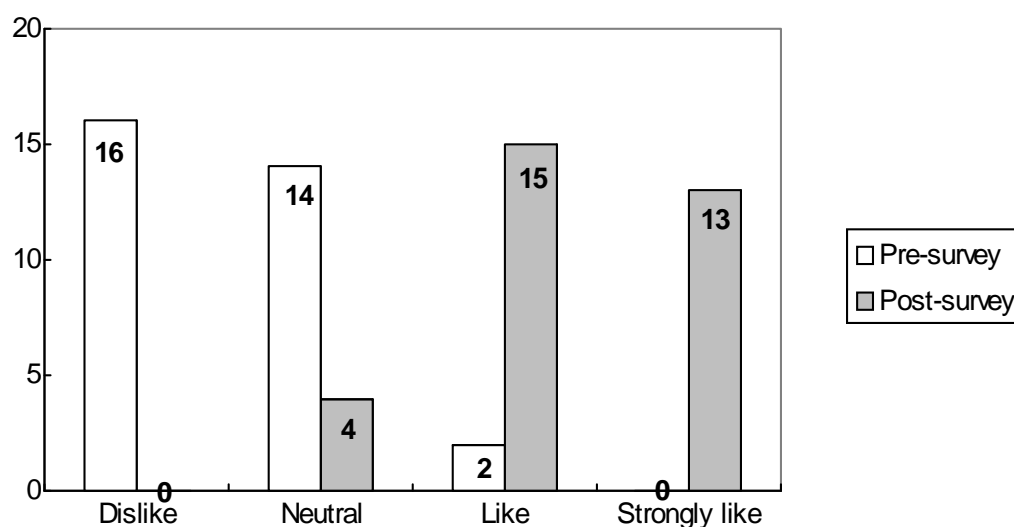


Figure 5.51 Pupils' opinions concerning the question "Do you like learning English through chants?"

5.2.7 Draw the Story

It's morning now and the Giant is up. He hears birds singing outside. He sees the sun up in the sky. He sees bees and butterflies flying around the beautiful flowers. He sees children playing on the green grass. "What? Children playing in my garden!" says the Giant. Then he sees a hole in the wall. Some children are coming into the garden through that hole.

"But where are the Wind, the Rain, the Snow and the Hail? The children are here. The Winter and his friends are all gone! Now I know why the Spring would not come here. Because I'm selfish!"

The Giant goes out into the garden and says to the children, "I'm really very sorry. I will knock down the wall. You can all play here forever. Can you help me knock down the wall?" "Yes!" say the children. Together, they knock the wall down and shout "Hurray!"

The last part of the story, shown as above, is presented in a combination of

narrative and dialogue, a format also used previously in the story of Little Red Riding Hood described in Section 5.1.5. In an attempt to provide comprehensible input that facilitates the pupils' understanding of this short text, I invited them to draw on the board what I read to them from the story (see Figure 5.52). In doing so they could present visualisations of what they heard. While the volunteers were drawing, the rest of the class eagerly offered suggestions. For instance, Ethan was not sure how to depict the giant getting up from his bed. Ericson told him to draw a stick figure with hands stretching up. Terry suggested that some muscles be added to the giant's arms to show that he was big and strong.



Figure 5.52 Drawing the Story on the Board

After the drawing of the scene was completed, I read the story again, pausing at the end of each sentence and pointing to the relevant details sketched on the board. For the dialogue part, I had volunteers come to the front to act it out and encouraged them to utilise appropriate gestures and tone of voice to enhance what they were saying. To help the pupils express themselves better

vocally, I asked them to compare the mood behind the following three lines said by the giant in the story:

- What? Children playing in my garden?
- Because I'm selfish.
- I'm really very sorry.

As the children had already come into contact with the giant in several dramatic activities previously, they did not find it difficult to imagine the giant's mood and show it through their tone of voice and body language. Some children offered to be the wall knocked down by the giant at the end of the story. It was obvious that they were accustomed to and also enjoyed this kind of physical work, in their words, "using the body to be everything." In the end-of-term questionnaire, the pupils generally agreed that they were able to practise more on vocal expression in the English class this semester and learned more about how to make use of body language (see Figure 5.53 and Figure 5.54).

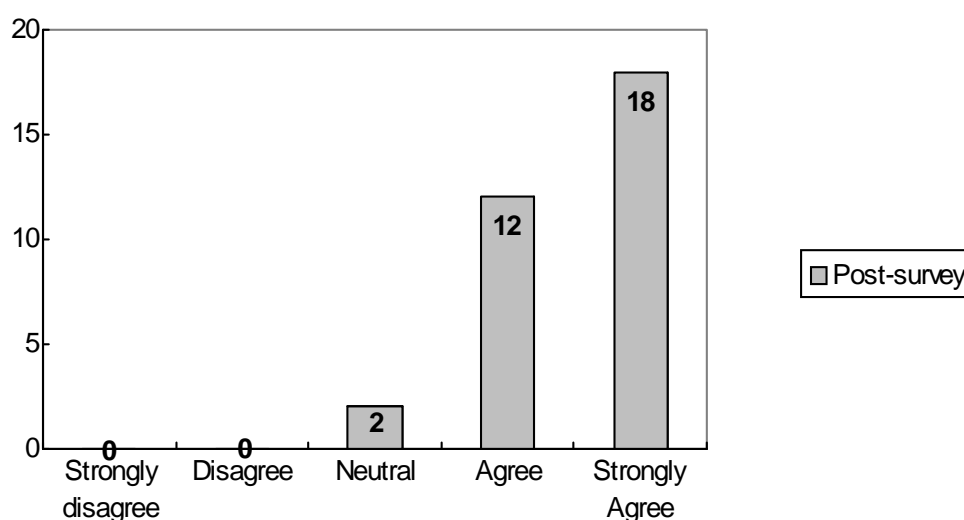


Figure 5.53 Pupils' opinions concerning the statement "I practised more on vocal expression this semester."

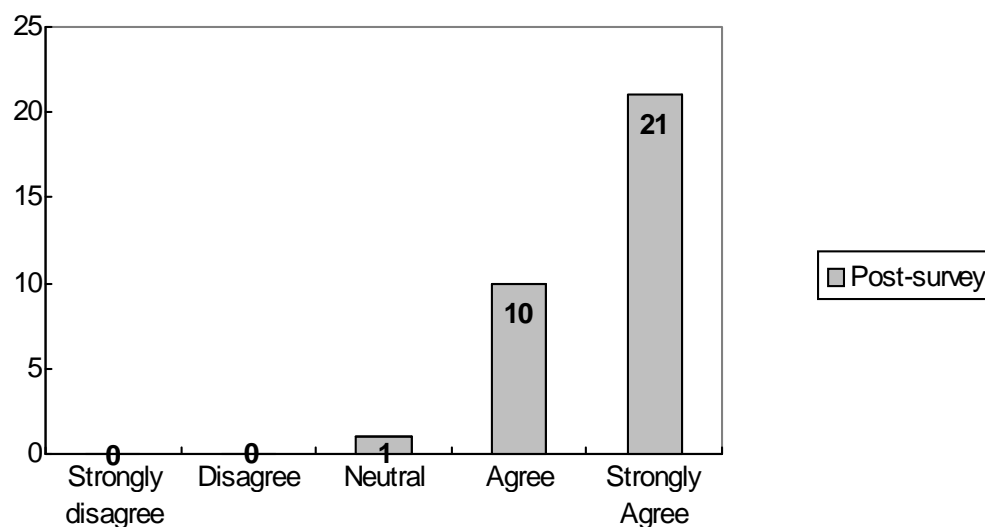


Figure 5.54 Pupils' opinions concerning the statement "I learned how to make better use of body language this semester."

The pupils' drawing, acting, and physicalisation moved the abstract written words to a more concrete form of visual representation, which dismantled the barriers to comprehending a written text especially for those who lacked confidence in reading on their own. Ur (1996) claims that the lack of aural stimulus, relatively speaking, is more tolerable for young learners than the lack of visual support in terms of learning. The visual is so dominant a channel of input that "if young learners are not supplied with something to look at that is relevant to the learning task in hand they will find and probably be distracted by something that is not" (p. 289). Parallel to this view, Brewster (1995) argues that with visual aids to contextualise the language, storytelling tends to become more comprehensible to the child. She continues, "If these visual aids are also available afterwards to encourage children to rehearse the language of the story in retelling or rewriting, the teacher creates a learning environment where intake is more likely" (p. 7). The drawings on the board allowed the pupils to form visual imagery in their mind, referred to as "the mental representative of

meaning” by Paivio (1969). Drawing, like drama, can bring visual quality to learning. Research has shown that more proficient readers tend actively to construct meaning while reading through creating mental imagery and enacting various roles. Less proficient readers, on the contrary, are not able spontaneously to induce mental imagery to facilitate their reading comprehension (Gambrell & Ruby, 1986). Drawing on Pierce’s semiotic theory, Wilhelm (1997) points out, “The word is a symbol that evokes an icon, or concrete image. If the word doesn’t evoke a picture, no meaning has been made” (p. 92). He elaborates:

If iconic response is prerequisite to other forms of response, then reluctant readers might benefit from learning to project concrete, iconic representations of stories such as those achieved through activities such as drama and visual art. They then might be able to sustain or extend these representations in their mind, and use them as objects to think with. (pp. 92-93)

What the children said in the interviews supports the aforementioned arguments.

MYSELF: What do you think about drawing the story on the board? Did it help you understand the text better?

BELLA: Yes. I liked the idea of using drawing to show the story.

MYSELF: I remember that you added ears on the face of the giant which was originally drawn by Ethan.

BELLA: [Laughing] Yes, I did because Ethan didn’t draw ears for the giant. And the story said “He hears birds singing.” So I wanted to draw ears to show that the giant is listening to something like this. [Placing her hand behind her ear.]

JULIA: The picture they drew stayed in my mind when I read the story at home.

MINDY: And at the end you had the boys go up to become the high wall which was knocked down by the giant. It was fun! So I remember it, too!

MYSELF: So how did all this help you understand the text better?

AUDREY: It made reading so many words less difficult. I can guess meaning from the picture they drew.

MINDY: And it helped me to memorise the story.

(Interview_End_Group 1)

5.3 Summary

This chapter consists of two main parts concerning the teaching project in my fieldwork. Each part addresses one action research cycle, which comprises a scheme of work based upon story and dramatic activities. I describe how the schemes were implemented, how the pupils responded to the activities, and what the co-teacher and I observed in class. Various sources of data were utilised in the analysis to reduce the potential for bias and provide greater opportunity for a balanced picture of this project. The analysis of data shows the effectiveness of story-based drama as a pedagogical medium for teaching children English as a foreign language. Following on from that discussion, the final chapter will focus on the implications derived from this study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

This thesis has described a study in which I sought to tackle the problems of mixed ability English classes by working with 32 fifth-graders using drama and story as the basis for designing a syllabus, compiling materials, and organising instruction. The results of the baseline study showed that most primary English teachers in Taiwan held a positive attitude towards story and drama as a learning tool; however, the integration of story and drama is not yet the norm in teaching primary English. This semester-long action research project has illustrated how to incorporate story-based drama into formal English instruction and has offered empirical evidence of its impact on children's learning. A great majority of the participants reported in the end-of-term questionnaire survey that they had made progress in their four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. With only one pupil expressing a neutral view, the rest of the class indicated that they liked learning English through drama and stories. They also agreed that drama and stories make English learning easier. The pupils' various types of written work and in-class drama presentations have demonstrated a tangible improvement in their English language abilities. Based on the co-teacher's observation of the pupils' classroom participation and performance during the course, it can be concluded that this project has led to positive learning outcomes for children with different levels of English language proficiency.

6.1 Implications

The aforementioned literature review of this thesis has identified a number of fundamental factors that influence children's foreign language learning. In order to bring about effective learning, the following elements should be taken into account in formulating teaching strategies and developing a language course:

- Comprehensible input
- Contextualised language
- Interaction and collaboration
- Opportunities for negotiating meaning

Characteristics and needs of young learners are also critical factors for consideration. Children are physically active, creative, and playful by nature. As Halliwell (1992) points out, "through their sense of fun and play, the children are living the language for real" (p. 7). They are motivated by enjoyable and stimulating classroom activities that allow for multiple ways of learning. Story-based drama synthesises various activities, strategies, methods, and approaches which tap into recent research on second language acquisition and theories of children's development. This study aimed to explore the use of story-based drama in children's EFL classes through answering the following questions:

1. In what ways does story-based drama affect children's learning English as a foreign language?
2. In what ways does story-based drama encourage children's participation in class?

In this section, I draw together the threads of the findings in order to discuss the implications of story-based drama for promoting children's learning of English

as a foreign language and for engaging their classroom participation.

6.1.1 Story-based Drama vs. Young Children's EFL Learning

When discussing second/foreign language learning, people tend to refer to the mastery of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. As Usó Juan and Martínez Flor (2006) claim in the Preface of their book, “the four language skills are the heart of L2 classes” (p. vii). What is often neglected in the traditional L2 classroom is the non-verbal aspect of language such as paralinguistic communication and kinesic communication. Learning a second language through stories and drama allows children to practise those verbal and non-verbal skills required for effective communication in an integrated manner. For the sake of a clear discussion, however, the implications of story-based drama in language learning are presented below as separate components.

■ Listening

Listening input is “a rich source of language data from which the children begin to build up their own idea of how the language works” (S. Phillips, 1993, p. 15). Due to their limited linguistic knowledge of L2 and a less developed schematic knowledge compared with adults, Pinter (2006) argues that young learners need more support with their listening. She suggests that teachers should embed listening “in the here and now context of familiar games and routines such as stories and action rhymes,” utilise gestures and visuals to enhance comprehension, and incorporate easier “listen and do” activities (p. 46). Many activities in this study used a combination of visual aids and body language to make linguistic input more comprehensible. In the picture book storytelling (see 5.1.12), for instance, the illustrations served as strong visual clues and a form of

visual reinforcement to the story's meaning. Physical representation such as mime (see 5.1.5) and story enactment (see 5.2.3) also worked well to help the children understand the target language better while listening. Having the pupils mime or draw the story on the board (see 5.2.7) provided them with opportunities to respond non-verbally, which can lower the anxiety level of the less fluent learners.

■ Speaking

For most young EFL learners, the production of spontaneous speech in the target language is a challenging task. Brewster and her colleagues (2003) make it clear that “In the early stages of learning, not much spontaneous speech can be expected from pupils” (p. 105). Thus classroom-based speaking practice normally focuses on reciting dialogues or simple question and answer exchange between the teacher and students or among students. Formulaic language is frequently used by young learners to get their meaning across because it enables them “to communicate with a minimum of linguistic competence” (p. 105). Language in stories, chants, rhymes, and songs is often presented in chunks that appear over and over again. A large amount of formulaic phrases was taught in this project. Through repeatedly listening to the stories as well as singing and chanting (see 5.1.7 and 5.2.6), the children were able to internalise the chunks and creatively brought them into use to produce language output.

Many studies have shown that much L2 classroom discourse is dominated by teacher talk. To break such a discourse pattern and motivate children to speak more, the teacher can involve them in role-taking activities. By taking on a role in the dramatic story world, pupils are able to place themselves in the character's shoes to experience the conflict. This emotional engagement tends to create an

immediate need for children to speak up. For those pupils who remain quiet in class out of shyness or lack of confidence, they may find it easier to talk through finger puppets (see 5.1.9) as the puppets take the focus off the individual.

■ Reading

Orthographic and phonological skills are essential to learning to read a language (Talcott et al., 2000). Although drama may not be an efficient tool for teaching these basic skills of reading, being a multitextual art form, it “provides students with different points of entry into the work, and different ways of becoming involved” (Nicholson, 2000, p. 118). The dramatic contexts can stimulate children’s higher-level reading skills of inferring meaning from text (Winston, 2004a). Cameron (2001) urges teachers to make sure that their pupils gain an overall understanding of the text before having them read aloud. In story-based drama, teachers can increase children’s comprehension of the text by demonstrating its meaning with body language (see 5.1.5) and illustrations in the picture books (see 5.1.12). Through teacher in role (see 5.1.10) and discussion (see 5.2.4), young learners are encouraged to actively construct meaning beyond words. The participant pupils in this project indicated that the experience in dramatising stories increased their motivation to read and their confidence in reading.

■ Writing

If the teaching of writing is regarded as a mere transmission of knowledge about punctuation, spelling, and writing structure, then it may produce “technically competent, though disengaged young writers who find little purpose in writing” (Cremin et al., 2006, p. 273). When assigning writing tasks to my pupils, I often heard them say, “I just don’t know what to write about.” Drama

and stories can contribute to the development of ideas for writing. As Grainger (2005) claims, “Stepping inside texts imaginatively fosters children’s creative capacity as writers since writing in role in imagined contexts has increased authenticity and often a real sense of audience” (p. 82). In this study, the children’s written work such as role description (see 5.1.4) and letter writing (see 5.2.5) has clearly shown how drama and stories enabled them to “voice their views and express their feelings, trying out, absorbing and transforming others’ voice, as they begin to trust and stretch their own” (Grainger, 2005, p. 82). It is important for teachers to include writing tasks to engage less-able pupils and to challenge and extend more-able ones. Designing comics (see 5.1.7) and making mini books (see 5.1.12) are suitable writing activities to satisfy diverse learning needs of children with different backgrounds and varying levels of knowledge of the English language.

■ **Non-verbal Communication**

The messages in everyday conversation are delivered “from our facial expressions, eye signals, hand gestures, and physical positions along with the words we say, the voice we produce, and the tone we select” (Kao & O’Neill, 1998, p. 105). These non-verbal elements should be integrated into language teaching rather than treated separately. The physical nature of drama activities can enable teachers to go beyond the teaching of disembodied language. Being physically and emotionally involved in the make-believe situation is likely to promote children’s spontaneous use of tones of voice and body language (see 5.1.9, 5.1.11, and 5.2.3). Many pupils in this study mentioned their enjoyment at being able to use gestures and tone of voice to indicate their feelings and attitudes in acting out the story. They are unlikely to gain such a learning

experience from reading the traditional textbook dialogues which are typically function-oriented and bear little relation to children's emotional and physical engagement.

6.1.2 Story-based Drama vs. Young Children's Classroom Participation

One of the challenges of mixed ability classes that primary teachers of English need to overcome is how to encourage children's classroom participation. With the use of stories and drama, many of the pupils in this project were drawn out of their silence into more active classroom participation. How children feel in the classroom determines their willingness to participate in activities. Drama requires active participation from attendees. It is essential to create an atmosphere of trust and playfulness conducive to boosting cooperation, collaboration, and interaction. Hayes (1984) argues that "unless students feel relaxed and safe as a group it is almost impossible for any drama to take place" (p. 16). Positive emotions such as happiness, interest, amusement, and enjoyment have a beneficial effect on information processing and permanent learning. One pupil told me in the interview that learning happily helped her to remember better. It is, in fact, not a complicated notion to understand but not always easy to put into practice. When re-reading my journal, I found that many entries had captured the moments of pupil laughter. They enjoyed physical activities, performing for others, and watching others' performances. Phillips (1993) has cogently stated, "If an activity is enjoyable, it will be memorable; the language involved will 'stick', and the children will have a sense of achievement which will develop motivation for further learning" (p. 8). In this cyclical process teachers play a significant role. Their praise, encouragement, and positive

feedback are crucial in promoting pupils' overall performance and self-esteem (see 5.1.5 and 5.1.8). Through taking on a role to interact with children in the imagined world, the teacher also fosters greater participation from pupils as they become convinced that their teacher really treats playfulness as a serious matter.

6.2 Further Reflections

The results of the study are encouragingly positive, but not conclusive, owing to the fact that there are only thirty-two pupils participating in this one-semester project. This inevitably gives rise to some questions or problems which came into my mind while the research was ongoing. These issues do have importance. Nevertheless, partly because they are not directly related to the researched questions and partly because the whole research is relatively a small-scale project, that is why a full discussion of them is out of the question. In spite of that, it is still necessary to take a quick look at these issues at the end of the study for they may make a contribution to further research on the similar subjects in the same field. These significant issues, as I look back on the two action research cycles, are briefly discussed as follows.

First of all, it is important to think ahead of time about how to group pupils because many drama activities require group participation or collaboration among peers. In this study ever since the children were given a green light to choosing their own group members in the second scheme of work, the majority of them have felt satisfied with such a new arrangement which also brought a positive impact on their performance. But unfortunately, there seemed to be a handful of children who were sorrowfully out of favour, and they were excluded or purged from joining any groups. To nip this bad situation in the bud, I had to

mediate or arbitrate in such disputes. According to my experiences I obtained from the research project, I would like to propose that grouping, especially for children who have already known each other over a period of time, be conducted primarily on a voluntary basis on account of their better understanding of each other at the beginning stage. However, whenever there is someone unable to join any groups for whatever reason, the teacher's intervention plus moral suasion are required. The bottom line is that on grouping, no one should be left out. Once the pupils are accustomed to group work, the teacher should encourage them to work with new partners so they can learn to cooperate with peers of different personalities and talents.

The next problem is about the textbook. The application of story-based drama to the Taiwanese primary school curriculum, though not completely new, is still in its infancy, so it may not be easy to find a textbook in the market which can suit the specific needs. Take the research project for example. The booklet, containing stories, dialogues, word lists, illustrations, etc, had to be tailor-made so as to fulfil the teaching objectives. Therefore, a careful preparation beforehand can reduce the risk of the failure of the project, and as far as the customised textbook is concerned, leaving a few intentionally blank pages at the end of it can provide a buffer in case of necessity. For instance, pupils' drawings can be cut and pasted to those pages, which turns the textbook into a personalised portfolio of their work, and this may increase their interest and motivation in learning the subject.

Another point which I omitted to discuss in the thesis due to its limited scope is that whether the nature of the stories used in this action research had anything to do with the pupils' learning. As for that, there are quite a few

questions worth further exploration in the future. For example, is it likely to establish a correlation between story types and children's performance in class? Or are there any particular kinds of stories which might be more suitable for younger/older children than others once the age factor is taken into consideration? Or do children have different responses to the two categories of stories: one includes those they are familiar with, while the other contains the stories they have never heard before? Large-scale studies are needed to address those questions above. In my case, I could only presume that since the pupils were exposed to story-based drama for the first time, an unheard story might compound the difficulty of my teaching; as a consequence, I used the well-known story of Little Red Riding Hood in the first cycle in order to build their confidence and relieve their anxiety about the new teaching method, and then the unheard story, The Selfish Giant, was introduced in the second cycle right after they got the hang of story-based drama. From my direct observation, this arrangement seems adequate.

Last but not least, as a teacher researcher, I find that the methodology, action research adopted in this thesis, is mostly beneficial to the integration of theory and practice. As far as the real situation of English teaching in Taiwan is concerned, there has been a chasm between research and practice. Generally, those capable of conducting research in a more abstract or theoretical way are mainly academics or scholars in university who have a higher status in the academic field, whilst those inclined to the pragmatic use and application of ideas are usually school teachers and they are at the bottom of the academic hierarchy. Bureaucratically, the former tends to be in a stronger position in making policies which the latter may consider impractical and impracticable.

Action research helps to bridge the huge gap between these extremes—academics vs. teachers, theory vs. practice. It requests academics to take a down-to-earth approach to research, and it empowers the teachers, as well, by applying theories into their daily teaching routines.

Notwithstanding its usefulness, action research has some potential pitfalls of its own which action researchers should be cognizant of. Take my research. The process of sorting out the massive amounts of data gathered from questionnaires, interviews, videotapes, pupils' work, etc, was so messy and formidable that it took me a lot of time and effort to pin them down. In addition, as I was undertaking research, I found that it was not an easy task to strike a delicate balance between engaging and distancing. Since I was both a teacher and researcher at the same time, not only did I have to be actively involved in teaching but I also had to manage hard to observe from a distance, and then to present and interpret the collected data in an objective and unbiased sense. That balance lost, the study results are so apt to be one-sided advocacy, which any sensible researchers should prevent from happening.

6.3 Suggestions for Future Research

The integration of drama and stories into teaching children English as a foreign language is a promising area for further research. This study shows that story-based drama provides a variety of learning modalities to accommodate varying learner styles and characteristics. It also enables children with different levels of English proficiency to cooperate and contribute to group work on an equal basis. Despite its beneficial effects on children's foreign language learning, there is a dearth of relevant research in the field in Taiwan. Even though an

increasing number of teachers are introducing stories to their pupils, very few of them combine educational drama techniques with their teaching (e.g. Lai, 2007; Chen, Y.-C, 2007). Some of this apparent trepidation is due to the teacher's fear of not being able to design and carry out the drama activities on his/her own. For primary English teachers who are normally occupied with teaching for most of the day, there are indeed difficulties in developing a syllabus which uses stories and drama as the principal means of pedagogy throughout a semester or a school year. My suggestion is a collaborative approach to curriculum design and research methodology in order to minimise the burden on teachers and to help them "break out of the isolation of the teacher's role" (Wallace, 1998, p. 207). It is important for teachers to share their knowledge and expertise when planning units of work, observe others' teaching, and reflect on lessons taught.

Collaborative action research, according to Díaz-Maggioli (2004) "allows practitioners to tap the internal resources of their school while also providing a forum for reflection on improvement" (p. 73). There are many possible ways to conduct collaborative action research as suggested by Wallace (1998) and Herr and Anderson (Herr & Anderson, 2005). This research could provide a working model for teachers and researchers to disseminate collective knowledge production beyond the local level and present it "as public knowledge with epistemic claims" (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 52). I hope that these suggestions will stimulate more research on the use of story-based drama in similar contexts in order to deepen our understanding of this resourceful teaching approach.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

“Stories are both mirrors of our own practice and windows on the practice of others.” (Jalongo, Isenberg, & Gerbracht)

I began my thesis with stories which inspired me to conduct this research project. I should like to end with another brief anecdote that encourages me to continue pursuing insights into my teaching and the best possible way for children to learn English:

It was my last day of teaching. The rain started to pour down again when I left the classroom. The school children all gathered on the playground and waited for the gate to open. With an umbrella in my hand, I fixed my eyes on the ground, walking carefully not to land in any puddles. Suddenly I heard someone calling my name. Raising up my head, I saw Bella, in a red raincoat with a hood, standing in front of me. She looked like Little Red Riding Hood coming out of the story. “Where are you going?” I asked in English with a wide grin on my face. Without even thinking, she lifted up her right arm with her index finger pointing forward. “I’m going to Granny’s house over there,” she replied in English. I grinned even wider, saying, “Go straight to Granny’s house.” Nodding her head, she continued with a knowing wink, “Don’t talk to strangers. Be very careful!” We both laughed. She then waved her hand at me and said, “Bye-bye, Sabina.” I bade her farewell by saying “Bye-bye, my dear.” Turing to leave, I began talking to myself gleefully, “She still remembers!” I felt a sense of achievement having completed this research project as I could actually see Bella applying to a real life situation what she had learned and practised in class. It was a moment that made all my efforts seem worthwhile and the whole research process feel like a rewarding teaching experience.

Though my heart is still flooded with flashbacks of that day, my head knows fully well that it is over and much remains to be done. Looking back on the whole research process, I realise that it has served to help me deeply understand the status quo of teaching children English at the primary level in Taiwan, while offering insights into the vexed issues of mixed ability class and limited teaching hours. More and more people in Taiwan are noting how effective and powerful a role educational drama can play in teaching English to children. For example, there is now an annual International Conference on English Education and

Drama in Taiwan which brings teachers, practitioners, and academics together to stimulate an ongoing dialogue about the application of drama in English language teaching. Yet its practical applications are still relatively rare. This is because most teachers in Taiwan are ill-informed about educational drama, so they instinctively associate drama with pure acting, of which most of them are so scared. As the Japanese saying goes, however, a candle can light up a place that has been dark for billions of years. Acting as a small candle, this research may hopefully shed some light warm and bright enough to attract more people to become interested in using educational drama as a learning medium. With more candles burning, a dark room can be brightly lit.

Appendix 1: Baseline Study Interview Questions

1. Please talk about the status quo of primary English teaching in Taiwan.
2. What is the most challenging aspect of teaching primary English nowadays?
3. What can teachers do to arouse children's interest in learning English?
4. What brings you a sense of achievement when teaching?
5. What pops into your mind when hearing the word 'drama'?
6. What is your opinion about integrating drama and stories into teaching primary English instruction?

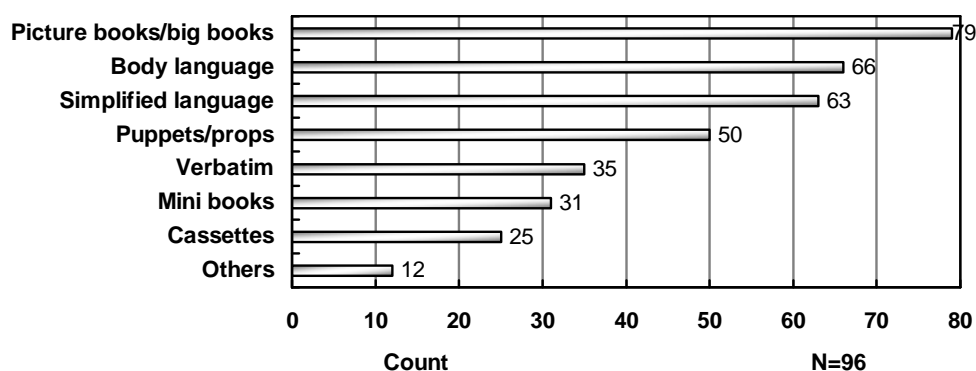
Appendix 2: Teachers' Responses to the Baseline Study Questionnaire

Part A: Teachers' English teaching practices

1 Have you used stories when teaching English to children?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	96	88.1
No	13	11.9
Total	109	100.0

2 What methods or activities have you used in your classroom?



3 What stories have you told in your classroom?

(The figures in the parentheses indicate the number of respondents)

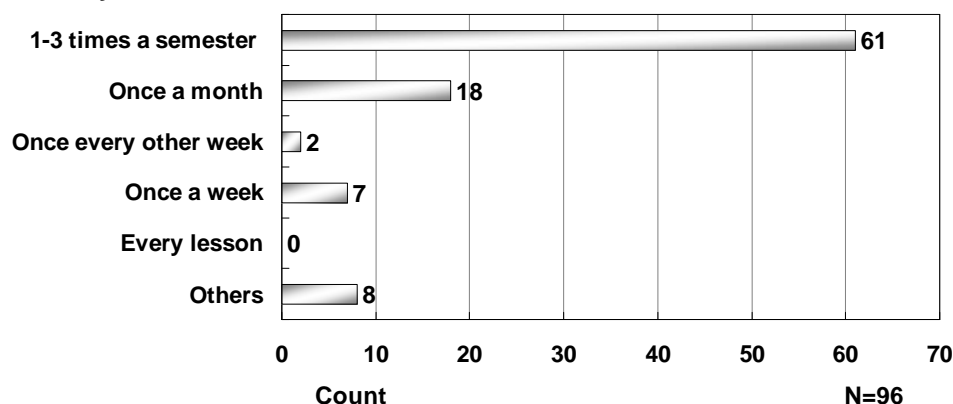
Brown Bear Brown Bear What Do You See? (20)	The Princess and the Pea (1)
Three Little Pigs (13)	Elmer the Elephant (1)
The Very Hungry Caterpillar (11)	The Zookeeper (1)
No, David! (5)	Me and My Family (1)
In a Dark Dark Room (4)	A Very Big Strawberry (1)
Goldilocks and the Three Bears (4)	Five Little Monkeys (1)
Silly Willy (4)	Trick or Treat (1)
The Gingerbread Man (3)	Willy the Dreamer (1)
Goodnight, Gorilla (3)	Tuesday (1)
David Goes to School (2)	The Boy Who Was Always Late (1)
Little Red Riding Hood (2)	Look Look Look (1)
Winnie the Witch (2)	The Tale of Peter Rabbit (1)
Does a Kangaroo Have a Mother, Too? (2)	The Tale of Benjamin Bunny (1)
There Was an Old Lady Who	Hop Hop (1)
	Kevin Loves Chocolate (1)
	The Hare and the Tortoise (1)

Swallowed a Fly (2)	Big Bad Bunny (1)
Piggy Book (2)	The photo by Neal Layton) (1)
Go Away, Big Green Monster! (3)	Egg Drop by Mini Grey (1)
Where is my Broom? (2)	The Lion and the Mouse (1)
The Ugly Duckling (2)	Joy Has a Problem (1)
If You Give a Moose a Muffin (2)	Frog and Toad (1)
Speak up! I Can't Hear You (2)	The Story of Moon Festival (1)
Self-created stories (2)	Is Your Mama a Llama? (1)
The Hungry Wolf (1)	Have You Seen my Cat? (1)
The Cat and the Fox (1)	Series of Eric Carl (1)
Cinderella (1)	Alphabet A to Z (1)
Follow Me (1)	A Very Noisy House (1)
The Giving Tree (1)	Kathy's Pocket (1)
Going to a party (1)	Valentine's Day (1)
The Brave Little Owl (1)	Froggy's First Kiss (1)
Lots of Dads (1)	Is that You, Santa? (1)
Tikki Tikki Tembo (1)	From Head to Toe by Eric Carle (1)
Dear Zoo (1)	Apple Fractions (1)
Big Tree (1)	The Carrot Seed (1)
Yo! Yes? (1)	The Hippo (1)
Eat Your Peas (1)	City Mouse and Country Mouse (1)
Seven Blind Mice (1)	Henny Penny (1)
Pete's a Pizza (1)	Supplementary readers (1)
The Little Red Hen (1)	Scholastic series (1)
Picky Nicky (1)	Classic fairy tales and folk tales (1)

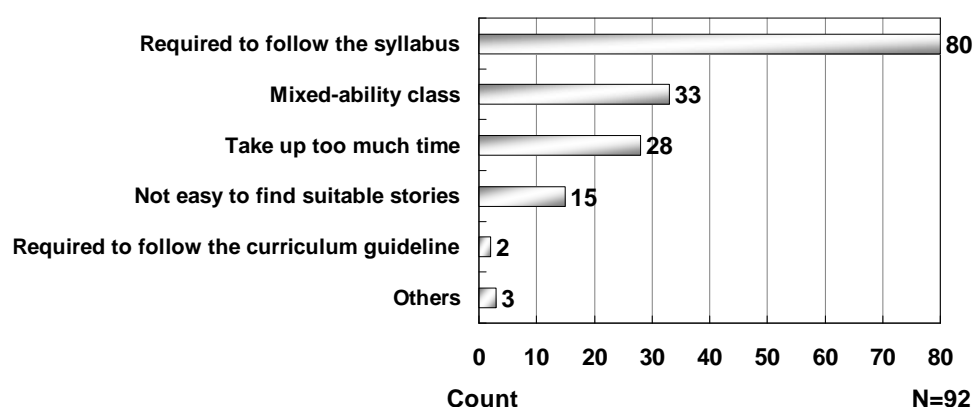
4 Do your pupils like the stories?

		Frequency
Valid	Like	60
	Dislike	1
	It depends	34
Missing		1
Total		96

5 How often do you use stories in the classroom?



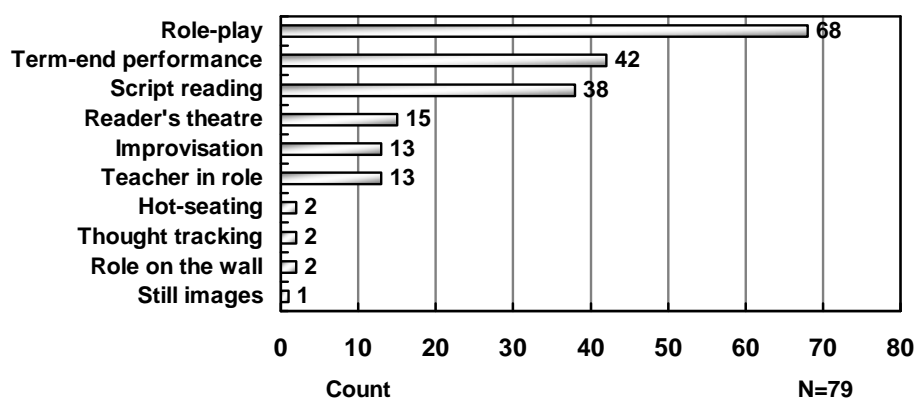
6 Why have you never/seldom used stories in the classroom?



7 Have you used drama activities when teaching English?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	79	72.5
No	30	27.5
Total	109	100.0

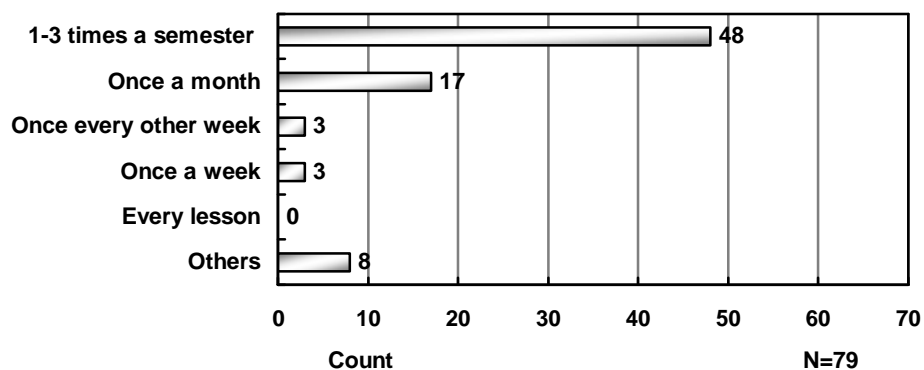
8 What drama activities have you used in the classroom?



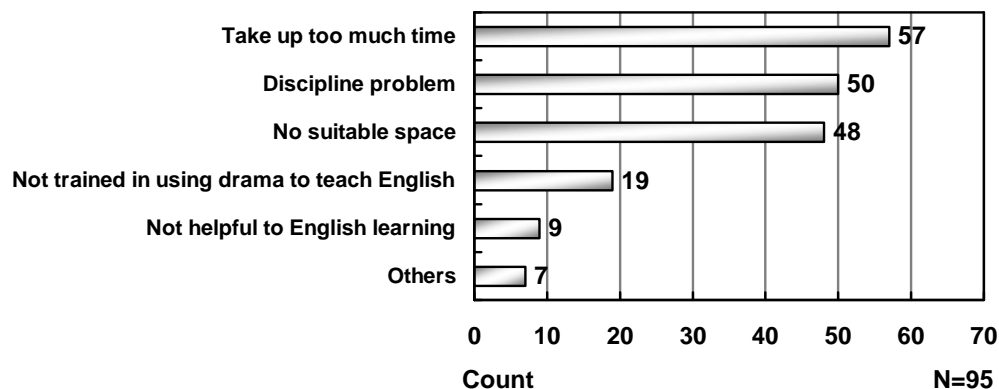
9 Do your pupils like the drama activities?

	Frequency
Valid	
Like	51
Dislike	2
It depends	25
Missing	1
Total	79

10 How often do you use drama activities in the classroom?



11 Why have you never/seldom used drama activities in the classroom?



Part B: Teachers' opinions about using stories in the classroom

12 Stories motivate pupils to learn English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	1.8	1.8	1.8
	Disagree	1	.9	.9	2.8
	Agree	72	66.1	66.1	68.8
	Strongly agree	34	31.2	31.2	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

13 Stories encourage pupils' classroom participation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	1.8	1.9	1.9
	Disagree	5	4.6	4.6	6.5
	Agree	74	67.9	68.5	75.0
	Strongly agree	27	24.8	25.0	100.0
	Total	108	99.1	100.0	
Missing		1	.9		
Total		109	100.0		

14 Stories enhance teacher-pupil interaction.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	1.8	1.8	1.8
	Disagree	8	7.3	7.3	9.2
	Agree	70	64.2	64.2	73.4
	Strongly agree	29	26.6	26.6	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

15 Stories enhance pupil-pupil interaction.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	1.8	1.9	1.9
	Disagree	21	19.3	19.4	21.3
	Agree	57	52.3	52.8	74.1
	Strongly agree	28	25.7	25.9	100.0
	Total	108	99.1	100.0	
Missing		1	.9		
Total		109	100.0		

16 Stories cause pupils' anxiety of learning English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	9	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Disagree	71	65.1	65.1	73.4
	Agree	25	22.9	22.9	96.3
	Strongly agree	4	3.7	3.7	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

17 Stories decrease the opportunities for pupils to communicate in English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	11	10.1	10.1	10.1
	Disagree	82	75.2	75.2	85.3
	Agree	15	13.8	13.8	99.1
	Strongly agree	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

18 Stories provide meaningful contexts for language use.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	6	5.5	5.5	5.5
	Agree	82	75.2	75.2	80.7
	Strongly agree	21	19.3	19.3	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

19 Stories help to develop pupils' listening ability.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	2.8	2.8	2.8
	Agree	80	73.4	73.4	76.1
	Strongly agree	26	23.9	23.9	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

20 Stories help to promote pupils' speaking ability.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	23	21.1	21.1	21.1
	Agree	74	67.9	67.9	89.0
	Strongly agree	12	11.0	11.0	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

21 Stories do not facilitate pupils' reading ability.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	14	12.8	12.8	12.8
	Disagree	81	74.3	74.3	87.2
	Agree	13	11.9	11.9	99.1
	Strongly agree	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

22 Stories are not conducive to pupils' writing ability.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	10	9.2	9.3	9.3
	Disagree	69	63.3	63.9	73.1
	Agree	26	23.9	24.1	97.2
	Strongly agree	3	2.8	2.8	100.0
Total		108	99.1	100.0	
Missing		1	.9		
Total		109	100.0		

23 Apart from language learning, English stories can also be used to promote pupils' cognitive skills, thinking skills, and cross-cultural experience in the classroom.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	.9	.9	.9
	Disagree	10	9.2	9.3	10.2
	Agree	62	56.9	57.4	67.6
	Strongly agree	35	32.1	32.4	100.0
Total		108	99.1	100.0	
Missing		1	.9		
Total		109	100.0		

24 The incorporation of stories in teaching is incompatible with the existing school curriculum.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	18	16.5	16.5	16.5
	Disagree	64	58.7	58.7	75.2
	Agree	26	23.9	23.9	99.1
	Strongly agree	1	.9	.9	100.0
Total		109	100.0	100.0	

25 If possible, I'd like to include stories into teaching English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	6	5.5	5.8	5.8
	Agree	67	61.5	64.4	70.2
	Strongly agree	31	28.4	29.8	100.0
Total		104	95.4	100.0	
Missing		5	4.6		
Total		109	100.0		

Part C: Teachers' opinions about using drama activities in the classroom

26 Drama activities motivate pupils to learn English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	10	9.2	9.2	9.2
	Agree	76	69.7	69.7	78.9
	Strongly agree	23	21.1	21.1	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

27 Drama activities encourage pupils' classroom participation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	6	5.5	5.6	5.6
	Agree	84	77.1	77.8	83.3
	Strongly agree	18	16.5	16.7	100.0
	Total	108	99.1	100.0	
Missing		1	.9		
Total		109	100.0		

28 Drama activities enhance teacher-pupil interaction.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	10	9.2	9.2	9.2
	Agree	81	74.3	74.3	83.5
	Strongly agree	18	16.5	16.5	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

29 Drama activities enhance pupil-pupil interaction.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	7	6.4	6.4	6.4
	Agree	78	71.6	71.6	78.0
	Strongly agree	24	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

30 Drama activities cause pupils' anxiety of learning English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	4.6	4.6	4.6
	Disagree	53	48.6	49.1	53.7
	Agree	46	42.2	42.6	96.3
	Strongly agree	4	3.7	3.7	100.0
Total		108	99.1	100.0	
Missing		1	.9		
Total		109	100.0		

31 Drama activities decrease the opportunities for pupils to communicate in English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	13	11.9	12.1	12.1
	Disagree	71	65.1	66.4	78.5
	Agree	21	19.3	19.6	98.1
	Strongly agree	2	1.8	1.9	100.0
Total		107	98.2	100.0	
Missing		2	1.8		
Total		109	100.0		

32 Drama activities provide meaningful contexts for language use.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	10	9.2	9.3	9.3
	Agree	74	67.9	68.5	77.8
	Strongly agree	24	22.0	22.2	100.0
Total		108	99.1	100.0	
Missing		1	.9		
Total		109	100.0		

33 Drama activities help to develop pupils' listening ability.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	11	10.1	10.1	10.1
	Agree	81	74.3	74.3	84.4
	Strongly agree	17	15.6	15.6	100.0
Total		109	100.0	100.0	

34 Drama activities help to promote pupils' speaking ability.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	9	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Agree	74	67.9	67.9	76.1
	Strongly agree	26	23.9	23.9	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

35 Drama activities do not facilitate pupils' reading ability.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	6	5.5	5.6	5.6
	Disagree	69	63.3	63.9	69.4
	Agree	32	29.4	29.6	99.1
	Strongly agree	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	108	99.1	100.0	
Missing		1	.9		
Total		109	100.0		

36 Drama activities are not conducive to pupils' writing ability.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	4	3.7	3.7	3.7
	Disagree	56	51.4	51.4	55.0
	Agree	45	41.3	41.3	96.3
	Strongly agree	4	3.7	3.7	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

37 Drama activities develop pupils' non-verbal communication skills.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	2.8	2.8	2.8
	Agree	56	51.4	51.4	54.1
	Strongly agree	50	45.9	45.9	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

38 The incorporation of drama activities in teaching is incompatible with the existing school curriculum.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	15	13.8	13.8	13.8
	Disagree	61	56.0	56.0	69.7
	Agree	33	30.3	30.3	100.0
	Total	109	100.0	100.0	

39 If possible, I'd like to include drama into teaching English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	20	18.3	18.5	18.5
	Agree	66	60.6	61.1	79.6
	Strongly agree	22	20.2	20.4	100.0
	Total	108	99.1	100.0	
Missing		1	.9		
Total		109	100.0		

Part D: Teachers' background information

40 Gender of teachers

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	6	5.5
Female	103	94.5
Total	109	100.0

41 Age of teachers

	Age (Years)	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	25 and below	28	25.7	25.9
	26 – 30	15	13.8	13.9
	31 – 35	37	33.9	34.3
	36 – 40	17	15.6	15.7
	41 – 45	10	9.2	9.3
	46 – 50	1	.9	0.9
	Total	108	99.1	100.0
Missing		1	.9	
Total		109	100.0	

42 Years of teaching in the primary school

	Years	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Less than 1 year	27	24.8	26.0
	1 – 5	49	45.0	47.1
	6 – 10	21	19.3	20.2
	11 – 15	3	2.7	2.9
	16 – 20	3	2.7	2.9
	21 years or over	1	.9	.9
	Total	104	95.4	100.0
Missing		5	4.6	
Total		109	100.0	

43 Years of English teaching experience

	Years	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Less than 1 year	30	27.5	28.3
	1 – 2	14	12.9	13.2
	3 – 4	28	25.7	26.4
	5 – 6	31	28.5	29.3
	7 – 8	3	2.7	2.8
	Total	106	97.3	100.0
Missing		3	2.7	
Total		109	100.0	

44 English sessions per week

	Sessions	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	1	10	9.2	9.5
	2	83	76.2	79.0
	3	7	6.4	6.7
	4	3	2.7	2.9
	5	2	1.8	1.9
	Total	105	96.3	100.0
Missing		4	3.7	
Total		109	100.0	

45 Attendance of storytelling workshops attended

	The Number of Workshop Attended	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	0	16	14.7	15.1
	1	8	7.4	7.6
	2 – 3	44	40.4	41.5
	4 – 5	19	17.4	17.9
	6 or over	19	17.4	17.9
	Total	106	97.3	100.0
Missing		3	2.7	
Total		109	100.0	

46 Attendance of drama workshops attended

	The Number of Workshop Attended	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	0	29	26.6	27.4
	1	26	23.9	24.5
	2 – 3	33	30.3	31.1
	4 – 5	12	11.0	11.3
	6 or over	6	5.5	5.7
	Total	106	97.3	100.0
Missing		3	2.7	
Total		109	100.0	

47 School locations (city/county)

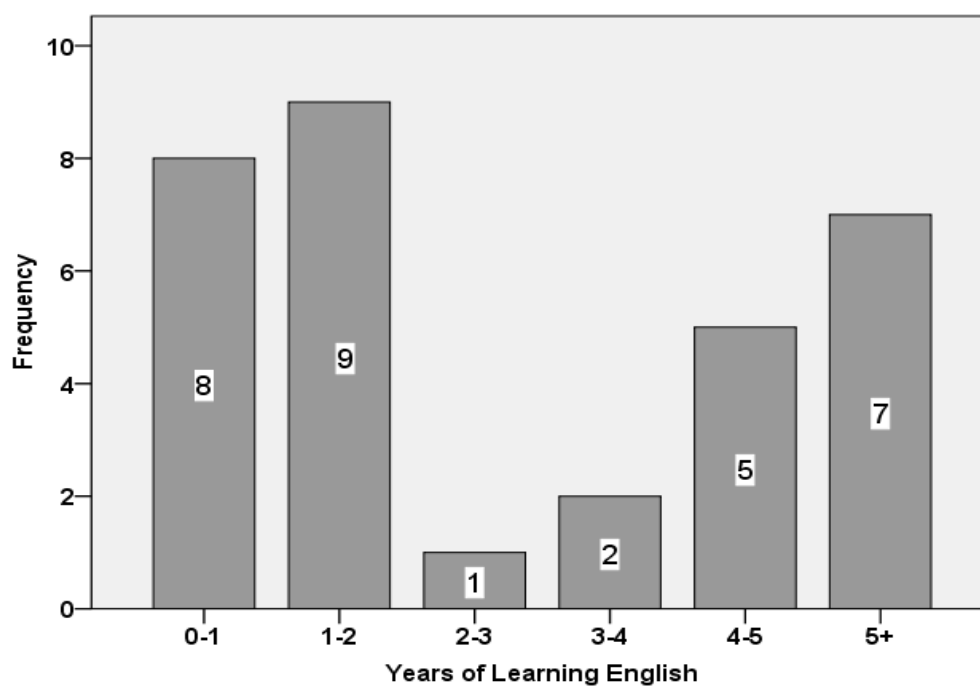
	Frequency	Percent
Taipei City	45	41.3
Taipei County	64	58.7
Total	109	100.0

48 School Types

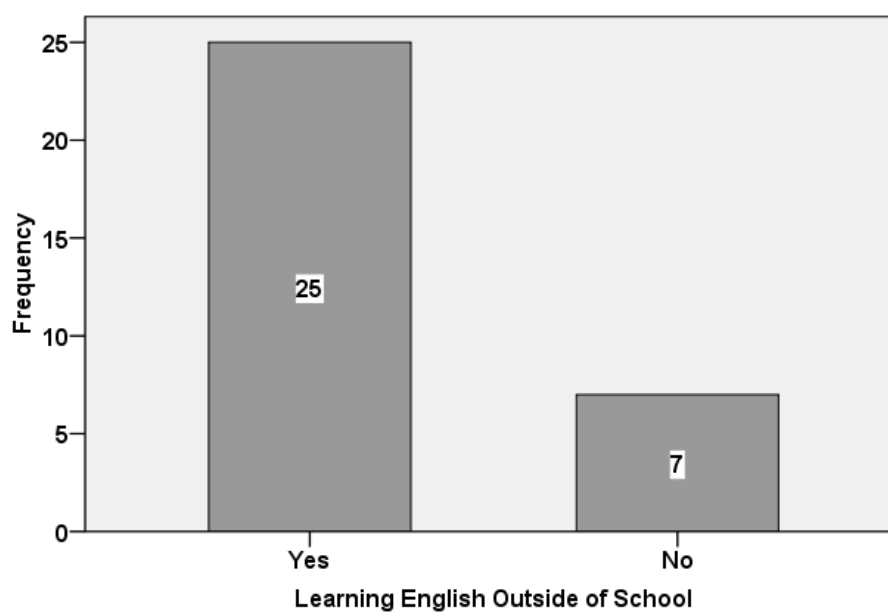
	Frequency	Percent
Public school	99	90.8
Private school	5	4.6
Other	5	4.6
Total	109	100.0

Appendix 3: Pupils' Responses to the Pre-questionnaire Survey

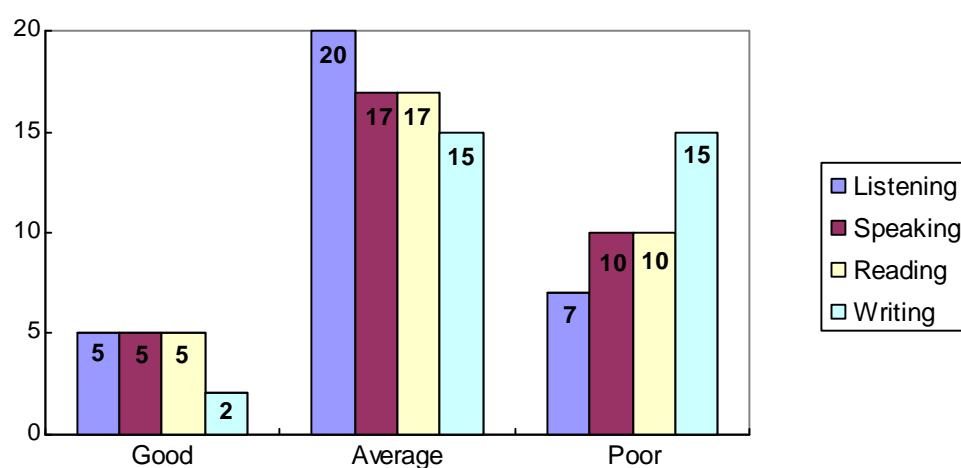
1. The pupils' English learning background



2. The pupils' experience of learning English outside of school



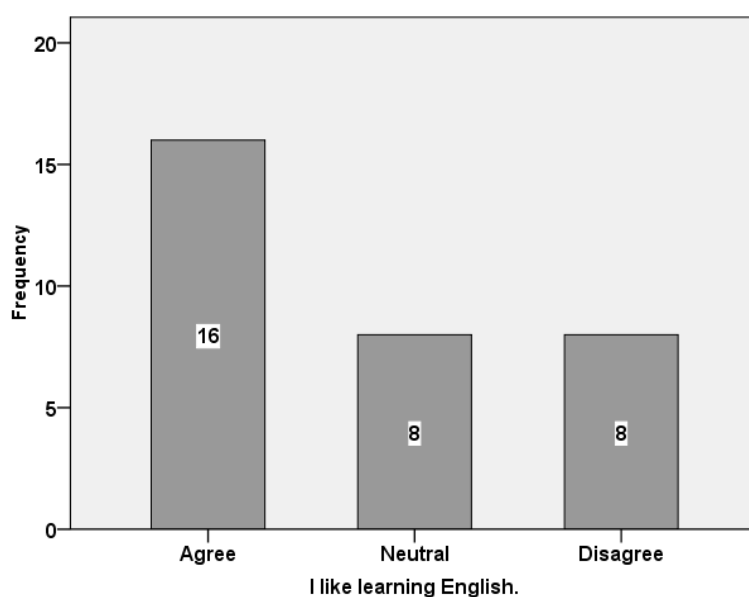
3. The Pupils' self-evaluation of English proficiency



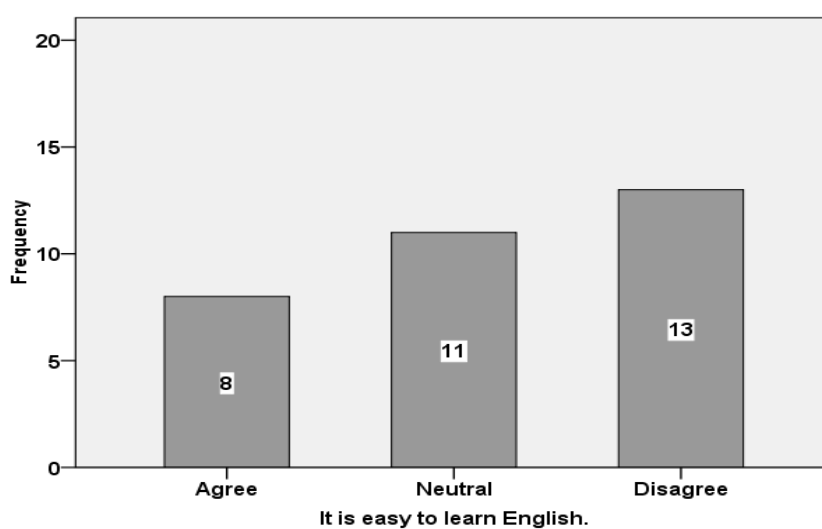
4. Pupils' opinions regarding the following activities

Activity	Frequency			Total
	Like	Neutral	Dislike	
Songs	8	14	10	32
Chants	2	14	16	32
Role play	12	12	8	32
English drama	9	12	11	32
Stories	15	10	7	32
Games	20	10	2	32
Pair work	11	15	6	32
Group work	15	11	6	32

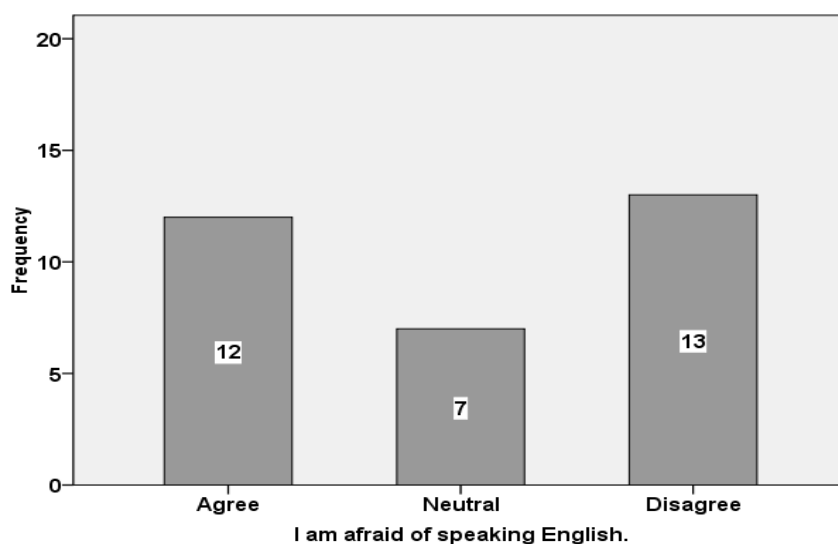
5. The pupils' opinions concerning the statement "I like learning English".



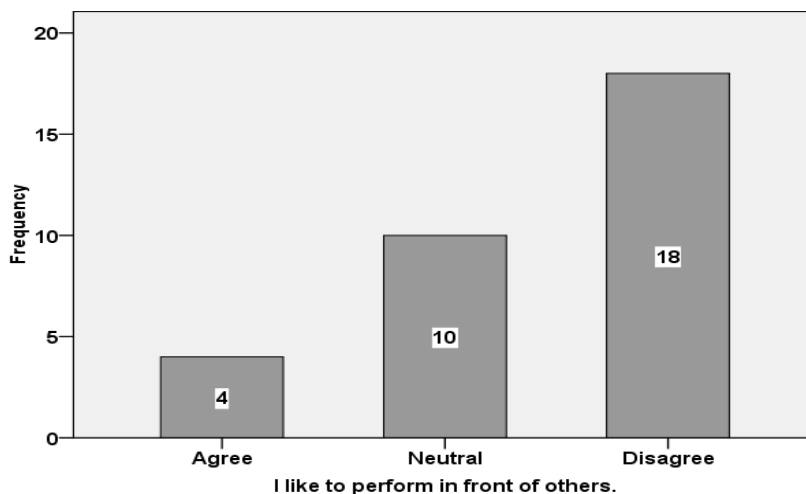
6. The pupils' opinions concerning the statement "It is easy to learn English."



7. The pupils' opinions concerning the statement "I am afraid of speaking English."



8. The pupils' opinions concerning the statement "I like to perform in front of others."



Appendix 4: The Pupils' Responses to the Midterm Questionnaire

1. Do you enjoy learning English through stories and drama? If so, why?

- I enjoy a lot because we can put those textbook dialogues in a drama context, which is more practical, I think.
- I like it a lot because it's fun.
- I love it so much. It's interesting and very enjoyable.
- I feel OK because it's not always interesting.
- I like it very much. It's a fascinating way to learn English.
- Yes, definitely. It's more fun and we have more activities and interaction while we learn through stories and drama.
- Yes. I love it. The combination of stories and drama helps me learn English well, particularly my speaking. I go to a crammer every Tuesday night, and my English teacher is a native speaker. I didn't dare to speak with her, but now I have more courage to talk with her in English.
- I love it because it's so fun!
- I enjoy it a lot. It's fun and interesting. Through stories and drama, we build up a good rapport with each other, while our English becoming better.
- I feel OK.
- I like it.
- I love it. It's fun and besides, we don't have to use the textbook.
- I enjoy it so much. It's never dull to learn English through this way!
- I am so into it for it was fun and interesting, and we seem so happy while in class. Plus, we don't have to learn vocabulary by rote.
- I like it. It helps us to know more stories and learn more English.
- I just love it. We can have so much fun learning English through stories and drama. I also learn the English version of LRRH.
- I love it. I had had little interest in English before we learned it through stories and drama. Now I am so keen to learn English.
- I enjoy learning English this way! We didn't try it before in our class.
- Of course, I enjoy it a lot. It's fun and so different from the way we used to have.
- Sure, I'm really into it. We have a pretty relaxed atmosphere and we are so alive when performing. (I guess we always feel so high in your class!)
- I like it because it's fun.
- I so much love it because it's so fun.
- I feel OK about it.
- No bad.
- I enjoy it very much. Through stories and drama, I am eager to learn more about English.
- I enjoy it. We can happily learn English through stories and drama.
- I'm loving it! (Note: Originally in English)
- I just like it.
- I think it's so so.
- I love it because I love acting.
- Sometimes I like it and sometimes I don't. It depends.

- I like it when it's fun.

2. As far as language learning outcomes are concerned, what kind of help do you feel you can get from learning English through stories and drama?

- It is of great help to my speaking ability; I suppose I've made a lot of progress in the daily conversation with people.
- I think this way helps me comprehensively as I've also made steady progress in the crammer I attend.
- Writing, especially. You teach us how to spell through phonics.
- Stories and drama make it easier for me to remember those words, phrases, and grammar.
- It helps all of the four skills. It's amazing that I could finish the exam very quickly.
- I take a stronger interest in learning English now. I used to think English classes were boring, but now with more interaction, I start to like it more.
- This new approach helps me to speak English and memorise vocabulary. We see lots of English on many things, so I think it's important to memorise a lot of vocabulary.
- It helps me a lot.
- It has increased my abilities in all aspects, which is excellent.
- I'm able to sharpen my four skills and make some progress.
- Writing.
- Average to say, I've made a lot of progress in four skills, but my speaking ability is becoming even better.
- I've made improvement in my four skills.
- My four skills. I can use English more fluently these days.
- My four skills are all becoming better now.
- Both my speaking and listening abilities.
- Listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- It helps all.
- It specifically helps me effectively memorise vocabulary, phrases, and texts.
- All.
- My listening. It is because we need to carefully listen to others when they tell their stories.
- I'm so fond of it. Now, I have the courage to go on stage.
- It helps me a lot in terms of the four language skills. Above all, it's fun!
- It helps a lot.
- I've made progress in all of the language skills.
- I've made lots of progress because I think it's a holistic approach in which we can practice four skills.
- I don't know.
- Maybe speaking.
- I'm not sure.
- Speaking and listening.
- I can memorise dialogues much better.
- Speaking.

3. Other than English learning outcomes, what additional help do you think you can get from learning English through stories and drama?

- Through stories and drama, not only does learning English become more interesting, but they are also beneficial to my creativity, team spirit, and communication with others!
- Your teaching way gives me assistance in all aspects. And I have become more cheerful these days.
- I become more expressive.
- I think learning this way makes me cooperate and communicate with others easily.
- I learn how to cooperate with others.
- There is more room for my creativity now, especially in English classes.
- I think the new way encourages us to be more creative.
- It helps me in all aspects.
- I learn how to work with others in groups.
- I'm able to be creative and collaborative with others.
- I also learn a lot of drama skills.
- I become courageous enough to speak English in public.
- It seems that we are having a tacit support among us.
- I've become more creative and expressive when I cooperate with my teammates.
- Specifically, I have learned what team spirit is, and cooperating with others also helps my English become better.
- I have learned how to better collaborate and communicate with my classmates.
- Being an actor, you have to be creative; as a member of the audience, you need to be observant.
- I don't know what to say.
- I have learned how to use my body to be different things.
- We really have a good time in the class.
- I have much more chance to talk with my friends in English than before.
- Through cooperation and communication with others, we have more contacts with one another than we did before. We have great fun in class.
- I've learn to be more communicative, creative, and expressive. It not only helps me learn well, but my classmates and I have a closer friendship.
- I have more creativity now than before.
- I've become more expressive now since I learned how to better communicate and collaborate with my friends when we were making finger puppets.
- It is helpful to my abilities to cooperate and communicate with others as we practiced them a lot in this semester.
- I've learned how to be more creative.
- I know the importance of body language now.
- I don't know.
- Too many.

- How to be a narrator.
- Make finger puppets.

4. Which activities we did in class impressed you most? Why?

- The dialogue part between Mama and LRRH impressed me most. It gave me and my partners a great sense of achievement because we completed the job together.
- I'm really into the part that we acted out the conversation between LRRH and her mom. Every group did so well that I was full engrossed in their performances.
- Finger puppet show is my favorite because it's entertaining.
- I remember it the best that we acted out the dialogue between LRRH and her mummy. It's so fun!
- Finger puppet show. I learned a lot of useful English through it. Besides, the show was so funny.
- The dialogue between LRRH and Mama. The reason it impressed me most is that I was hit by a broom. Hahaha!
- It helps me greatly.
- Finger puppet show. It's so fun!
- Use narration to tell stories.
- All of those activities we did are so fun, especially when we don't have to follow the contents in the textbook.
- When we were divided into different groups to act out the dialogue between Mama and LRRH, it's so interesting.
- I love the way we used simple costumes and props to tell the stories. Actually, we were so artistically creative when performing!
- In my opinion, what impress me the most is the part that Sabina was acting as Granny. She did an excellent job, so I can still vividly remember it now!
- All of the activities impressed me a lot. I think they were quite interesting.
- I learned better and deeper by using simple costumes and props to tell the stories.
- Finger puppet show. The host of the show did a rather good job.
- The use of the body to express is really cool; this is what we didn't try before.
- I like them all.
- Story circle. Because it's fun.
- Of course it's story circle.
- It helps all, I guess. The whole process of acting was too hilarious.
- Using costumes and props to tell stories impressed me the most.
- All of those activities you mentioned impressed me a lot.
- I like story circle because we can all act in it.
- Both the use of narration to tell stories and finger puppet show gave me a strong impression. They were fun and hilarious.
- Get-well Card. I'm so happy that my get-well card was presented in class as a good example.
- Finger puppet show was fun; I remember it the most.
- I'm so into the finger puppet show. It's not boring at all. Instead, it's so fun.

- Finger puppet show. The host made me laugh a lot.
- I like role play the most.
- Acting out the story. Because we don't need to sit all the time.
- I like story circle the best.

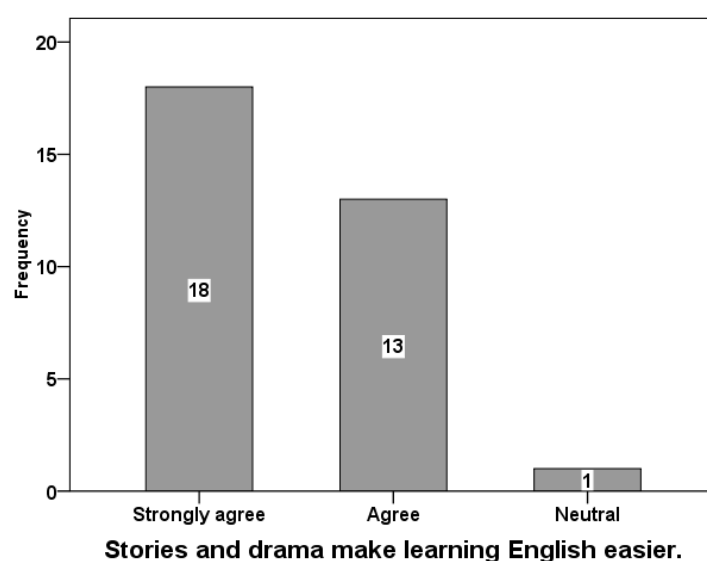
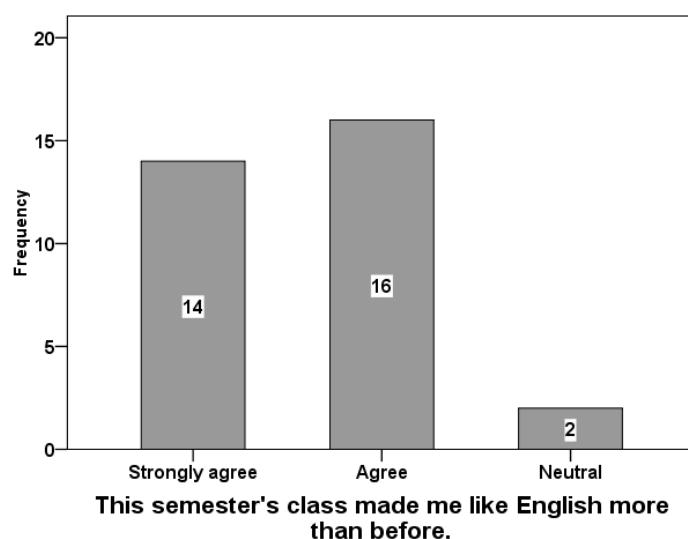
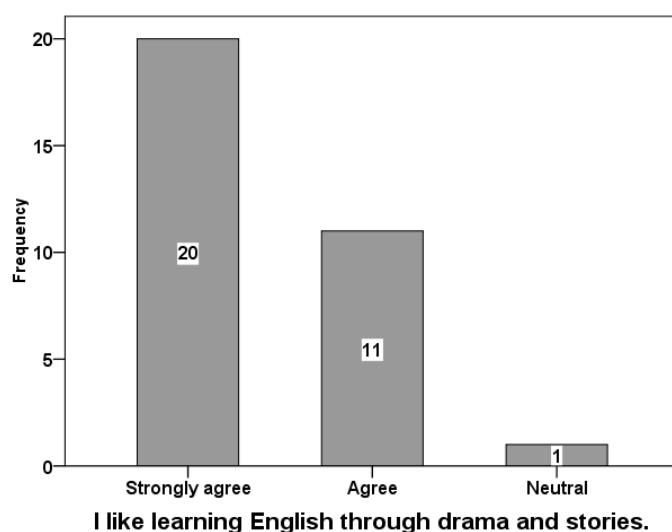
5. If you are required to mark yourself, based on your performance so far, how many points, on a scale ranging from 0 to 100, should you score? Please explain why you think you should get that score.

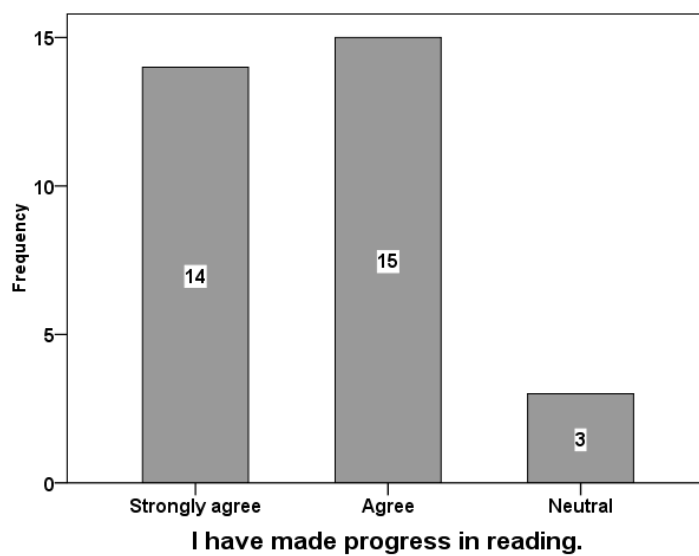
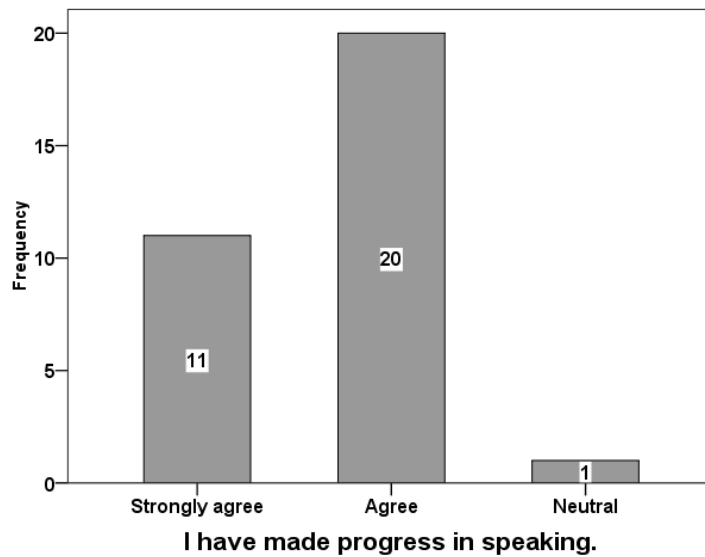
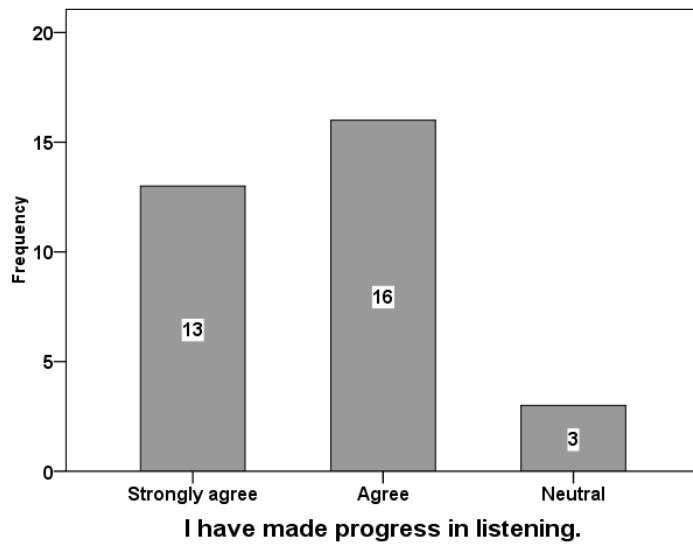
- 80. I need to keep pushing on, though I have made some progress.
- 99. I have to take away one point from the perfect score as I sometimes make mistakes.
- 85. I didn't work very hard. I hope I can get 100 points in the future.
- 80-90. I can work harder. Sometimes I can't help talking with my good friend in class.
- 60. I didn't study hard enough, and I didn't pay enough attention to what the teacher said in class.
- 99. I have to deduct one point for missing doing my homework once.
- 73. Sometimes I wasn't able to concentrate, and my classmates next to me just distracted me from what I was doing.
- 80. I study a lot harder than before.
- 95. I was able to concentrate most of the time, but once in a while, I was so naughty.
- 80. I think I'm doing it OK.
- 98. I learned completely everything you taught us, and I was so focused when in class.
- 85. I could work a lot harder, but I didn't
- 80. I didn't speak out loud every time I performed.
- 90. I didn't keep working hard all the time, so I gave myself 90 points.
- 99. I studied hard most of the time.
- 70. This reason for this score is because I didn't study hard enough.
- 95. I learned a lot during the whole process.
- 97. Generally, I had been working very hard, but I sometimes didn't do my homework well.
- 98. I had been working fairly hard. Sometimes I made a few blunders when performing.
- 100. This is because I so much enjoyed helping others in class.
- 95 for my performance. 90 for my speaking, specifically.
- 95 maybe. I didn't get the perfect score for I was being absent-minded sometimes.
- 80. I still need to work very hard.
- 95. Sometimes I didn't study hard.
- 95. I guess I did my best in class.
- 75. Just feel this way.
- 95. I like English more so I'm studying harder now.
- 65. I sometimes forgot to do my homework.
- 90. I did a great job at the finger puppet show.
- 80-90.
- 100. I'm the best.
- 88. I've made progress on spelling.

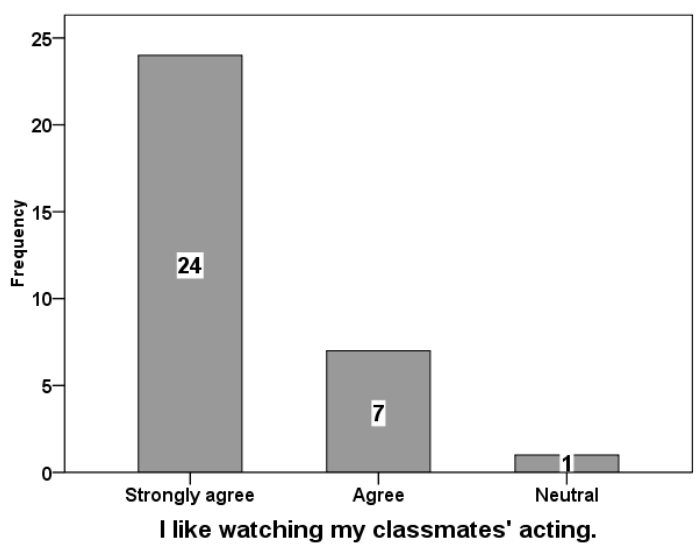
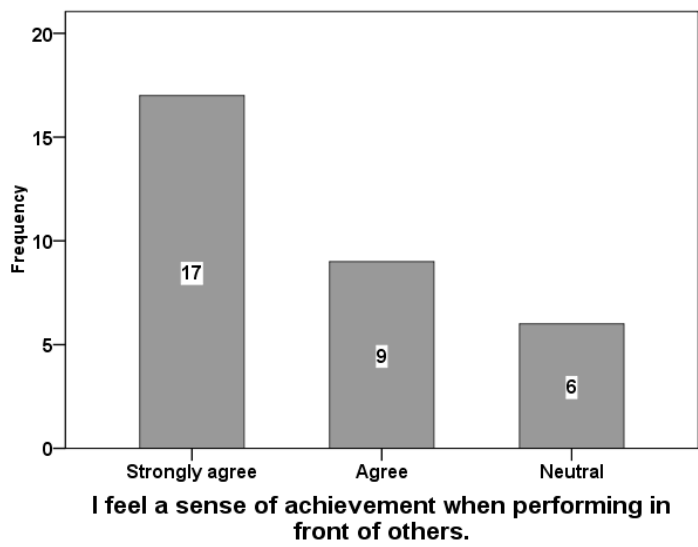
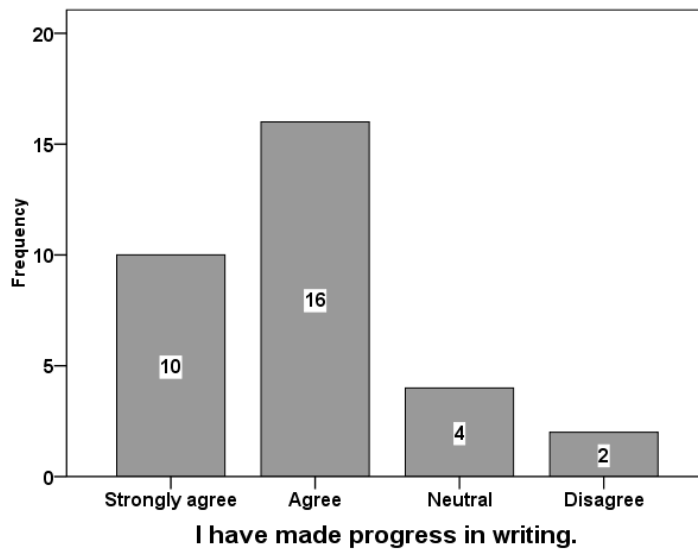
Appendix 5: End-of-term Interview Questions for the Teacher

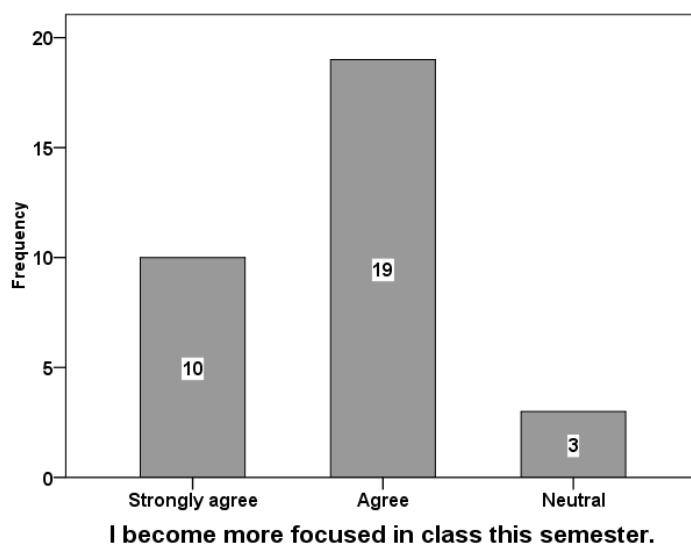
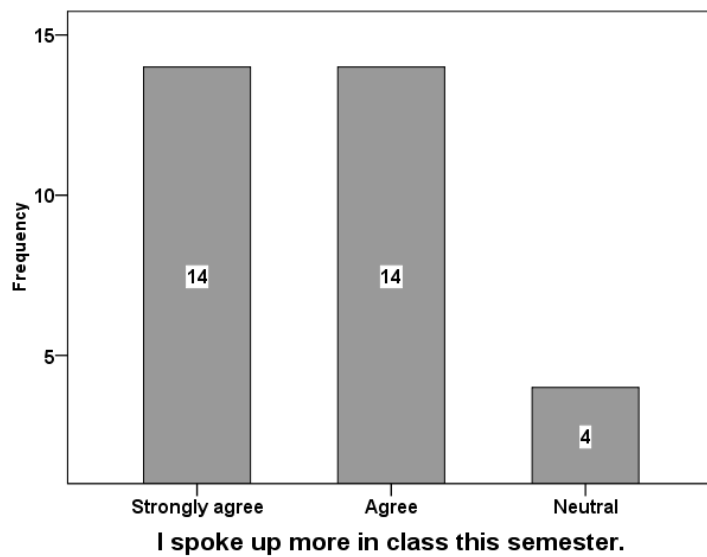
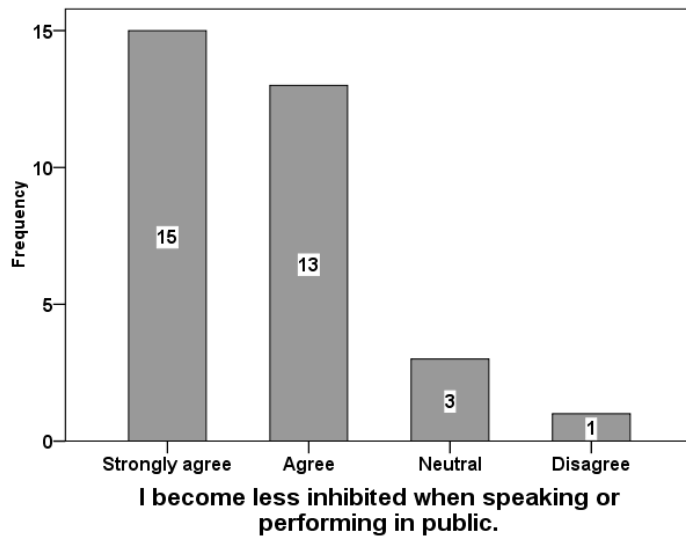
1. Please talk about the status quo of primary English teaching in Taiwan.
2. What is the most challenging aspect of teaching primary English nowadays?
3. What can teachers do to arouse children's interest in learning English?
4. What brings you a sense of achievement when teaching?
5. What pops into your mind when hearing the word 'drama'?
6. Have you heard about educational drama before? What do you think of it as a pedagogical medium?
7. What is your opinion about integrating drama and stories into teaching primary English instruction?
8. What changes, if any, did you notice in the pupils' performance in English learning or in any other aspects of their behaviour in class?
What do you think caused the changes?
9. Which activities do you like the most? Why?
10. Which activities do you think not suitable for teaching English? Why?

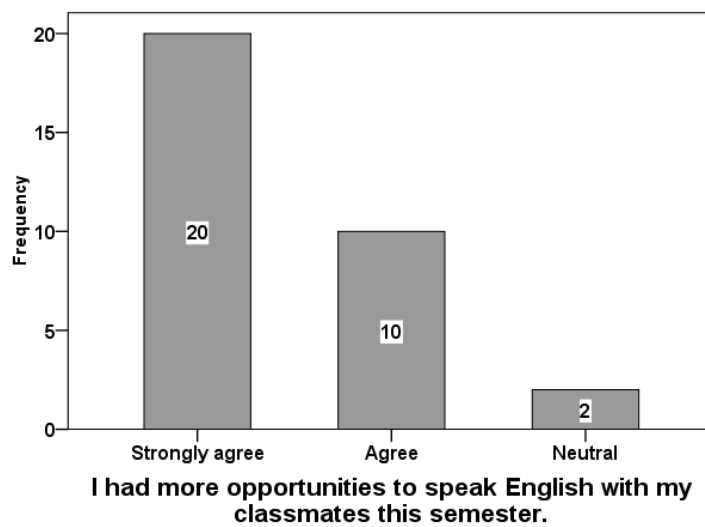
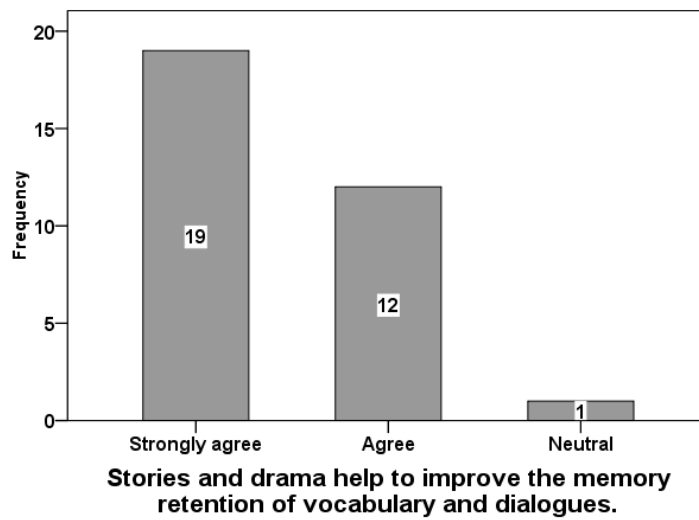
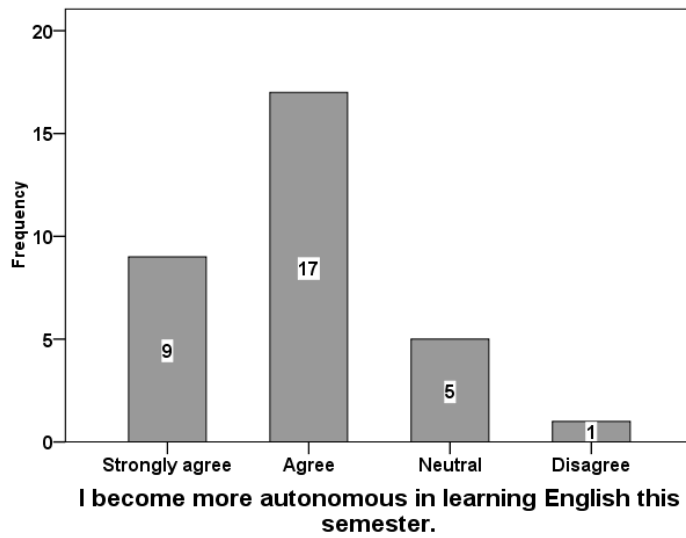
Appendix 6: Pupils' Responses to the End-of-term Questionnaire
Part A: Pupils' opinions regarding the following statements

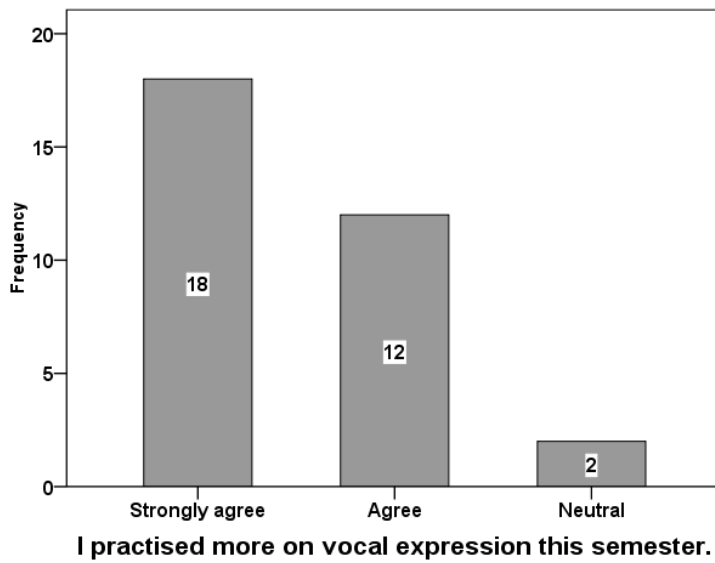
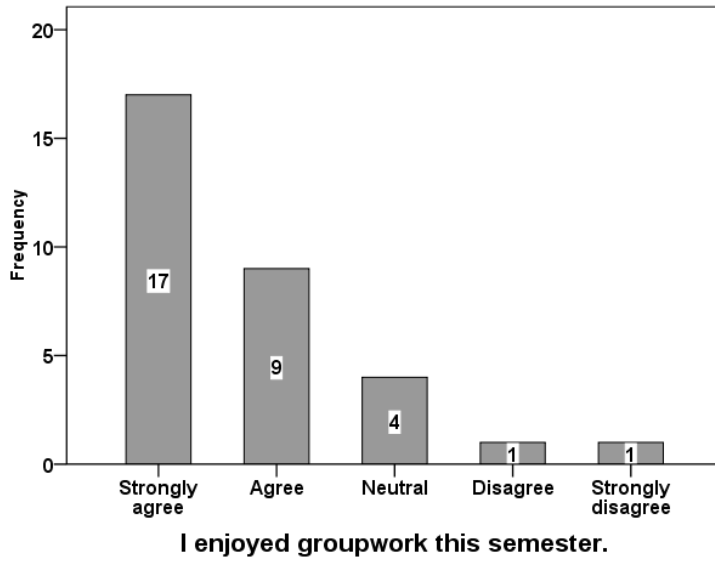
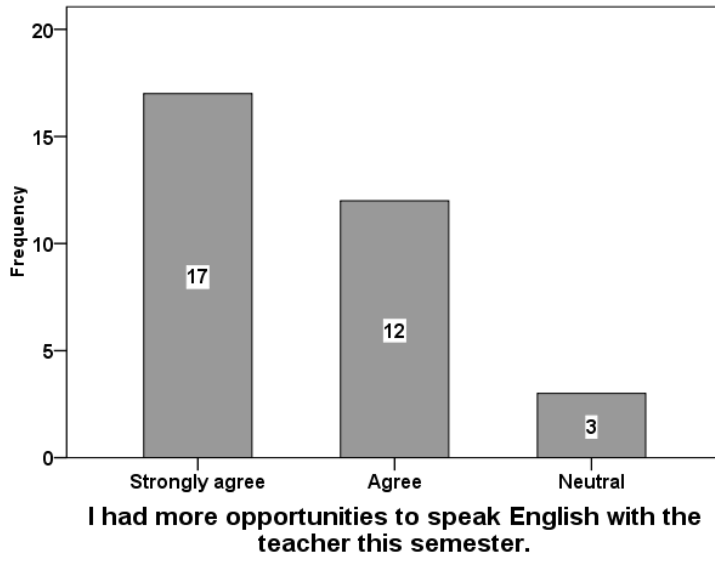


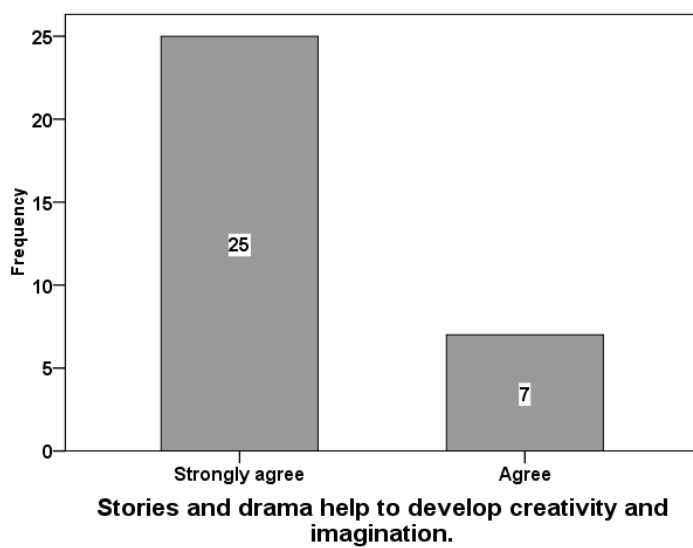
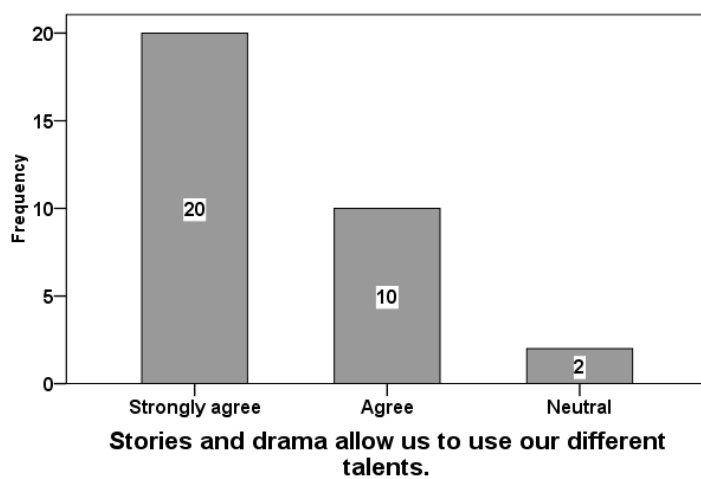
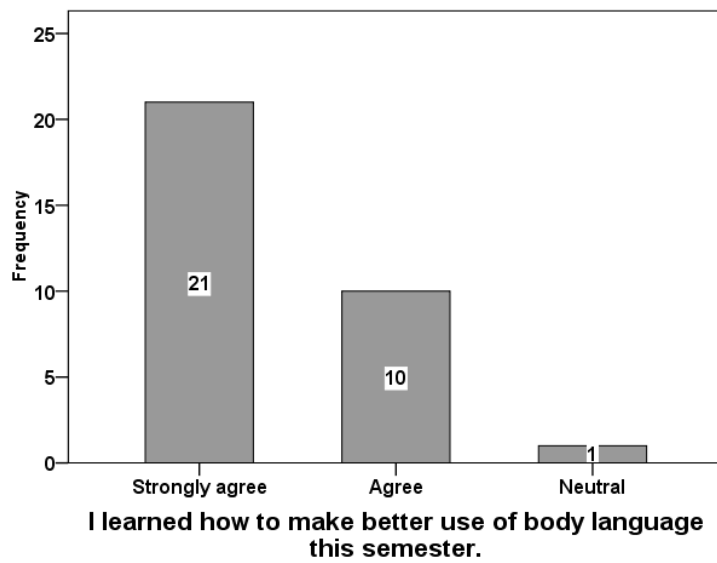












Part B: Pupils' opinions regarding the following activities

Activity	Frequency					Total
	Strongly Like	Like	Neutral	Dislike	Strongly Dislike	
Story Circle	18	12	2	0	0	32
Character Description	14	13	5	0	0	32
Get-well Card	8	11	12	1	0	32
Group Acting	15	13	2	1	1	32
Finger Puppet Show	10	18	4	0	0	32
Conscious Alley	17	8	7	0	0	32
Dialogue Recording	15	7	10	0	0	32
Picture Book Storytelling	18	8	6	0	0	32
Making Mini Books	15	12	3	1	1	32
Drawing	12	12	8	0	0	32
Still Image	13	13	6	0	0	32
Mime	17	8	7	0	0	32
Teacher in Role	17	12	3	0	0	32
Hot Seating	14	11	7	0	0	32
Songs	13	14	4	1	0	32
Chants	13	15	4	0	0	32
Wall Building	17	11	4	0	0	32
Vocal Expression	15	14	3	0	0	32
Letter Writing	9	16	7	0	0	32

Appendix 7: End-of-term Interview Questions for Pupils

1. What factors do you think contribute most to successful English learning?
2. Are there any differences between the English course you had this semester and other English classes you experienced before? If yes, what do you think about the differences?
3. Which drama activities do you like the most? Why? Which activities do you like the least? Why?
4. What do you think about group work? What have you learned from working in groups? What made it difficult to work in groups?
5. Which do you like better, dialogues in the textbook or in the story? Why?
6. Do you enjoy acting? Why or why not?
7. Do you enjoy watching others acting? Why or why not?
8. Do you think that drama activities help you to understand the story characters more? Why or why not?
9. What do you think of learning English through stories and drama?
10. What are your suggestions to improve the English course this semester?

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