An Action Research on a School Drama Community Service-Learning Project at Danhai Civic Theater in Taiwan

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Abstract
This action research explores an experienced drama teacher’s experiences and observations toward a school drama play at a community service-learning project from Aletheia University in Taiwan. The action research covers practices through a six month cyclical process which involve planning, acting, observing, evaluating, and reflecting at a school community project to arrive at better understanding of several issues including language improvement, immediacy behaviors, and school-community relationships. Results indicated that having a short-term drama play caused severe pressure and heavy work load on faculty teacher; therefore, it might be the short period of time is not sufficient for a thorough preparation. The budget for the drama play was limited and the professional field of educational arts was also neglected. The play performed off campus at Danhai Civic Center which is troublesome, such as the schedule, the absence and ignorance of the theater staffs, and the facilities are not sufficient. However, the experience of using drama activities in the community helps students to have incredible memories in their lives. These findings may help educators solve problems on how to close the gap between schools and communities and make room for smooth transitions for building up campus-community services in the future.

Keywords: Action research, Drama/theater in education, School community service-learning
1. Connections between drama education and students’ learning

Empirical studies that use drama performance in a theater context do so with different age groups, i.e., junior to university school students. Several studies done with different ages and subjects in drama/theater education show how these empirical studies can be set up and conducted. For example, drama can be a useful tool for teaching mathematics. Humphrey (2006) conducted an investigation on the impact of drama on the acquisition of geometry concepts. Participants were 26 at-risk fourth grade students randomly divided into two groups. The study used fifty minutes of creative drama activities per day for a one-week period of time, a multiple choice test to examine the academic achievement along with a Likert survey to investigate the students’ interest and attitude toward math. Drama activities were taught in class for the experimental students, while the control group was instructed by traditional methods involving lecture and in-class practice. The results showed that the experimental group performed better on the achievement test than the control group, lending support to the idea that drama activities are an effective teaching method for math because (Humphrey, 2006). A comparison study on 87 sixth graders (Saab, 1987) tested the effects of two methods: one using a drama-based mathematics instruction and the other using a textbook-oriented mathematics instruction. The results showed that drama based activities caused a significant increase in mathematics achievement test scores (Saab, 1987). Duatepe (2004) investigated the drama based instruction on seventh grade students’ attitudes toward mathematics and geometry compared to conventional teaching. Three seventh grade classes from a public school in the 2002–2003 academic years participated in this study and the study lasted thirty lesson hours. Drama based instruction had a significant effect on students’ angles and polygons achievement, circle and cylinder achievement, retention of these achievements, van Hiele geometric concepts, and attitudes toward mathematics and geometry as compared to the traditional teaching method. The significantly better performance by the experimental group students was attributable to the potential of the drama-based instruction. Within a group of 500 students surveyed by Ufuktepe and Ozel (2002), 90% of these students indicated that this novel way of teaching was fun compared to traditional instruction. The teacher used interactive music and drama activities to teach abstract mathematical concepts to help students gain knowledge of problem solving strategies and collective thinking. The data concluded that more varied approaches could increase students’ interests and facilitated better internalization of math concepts (Ufuktepe&Ozel, 2002). According to Sheinback (1996), “math education in particular should encompass instruction that combines visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities, use concrete representations of math concepts, and involve games and mnemonic devices to aid memory tasks for solving problems” (as quoted in Humphrey, 2006, p. 11).
Drama is an effective method for science and communication skills. For instance, Dorion (2009) also supported two strategies for drama activities in science class. First, in what he calls, “social stimulations”, the researcher uses role plays to convey topics with contexts of social, cultural, and intellectual discourse occurring in science contexts. Secondly, Dorion (2009) employs mime and role play to explain abstract phenomena. These drama strategies also have their potential to convey affective knowledge such as empathy and meta-cognitive awareness of morality and ethics to the science classroom. Most students, when it comes to drama in the classroom, instinctively respond to one another through their roles bringing about the nature of creative drama activities which can be considered to be an improvisation tool to imagine, perform, and reflect upon human experience. It is an effective strategy to help elementary students learn difficult science concepts (Hendrix, Eick, & Shannon, 2012).

Likewise, Ballou (2000) studied 24 vulnerable sixth grade students with respect to their attitudes toward drama learning. Students were randomly selected to participate in this twenty-week experiment (four hours per week) in-school drama experience. The results of this study indicated that creative drama had a significantly positive effect on experimental students’ communication skills and on their attitudes towards creative drama learning. Drama activities promoted older junior students’ motivation for drama course and aided students in knowing how to use body language and facial expression to reach their goals of communication (Chang & Su, 2002). Fitzgerald (2007) employed drama activities as a participatory research technique for working with 10 young students with disabilities to co-construct experiences of abstract physical education, sport, and free-time activities. The results showed that the students were cooperative with each other to express themselves in a meaningful way through their follow-up movements, gestures or verbal responses. The author also said that drama was a worthwhile and relevant strategy for engaging students with severe learning disabilities. Furthermore, Huang (2012) did a study on 20 fourth-year students in England and found out that children enjoyed physical involvement in the drama activities and their confidence, motivation, commitment, creativity, different thinking, empathy, and communication were all generated and stimulated. Those studies showed that drama can assist students with disabilities in PE education and increase students’ socialization skills and the development of self-growth. Huang (2012) also examined the effects of using drama in education into third-grade students’ character education curriculum through picture books. It was found that drama strategies had positive impacts on students’ interest of participation, learning, discussion, self-growth, self-examination, “self-recognition”, “care of peers”, “acceptance of others who are different from them” and “respect of the lives of animals.”
Akın (1993) studied third graders’ socialization skills through creative drama instruction. The experimental group received a ten-week drama course; the control group did not. The Moreno sociometry test was administered as pre- and post-test to both groups. At the end of the experiment, there was an increase in the socialization level of the experimental group. Yassa (1999) investigated high school students’ perception of drama enactment on their social interactions. Sample interviews were conducted at two high schools which consisted of 2 male and 4 female students and 3 teachers. Findings of the study showed that drama as performance enhanced students’ social interaction. Yassa (1999) also stated that drama as performance enhanced high school students’ self-confidence, self-image, and self-efficacy. Farris and Parke (1993) carried out a study on 5 sixth grade students who participated in a three-week session drama workshop to find out what students thought about drama and how it helped them in the classroom. The sample group composed of 19 gifted students and the drama instructor was individually interviewed at the end of the experiment. During the three-week session, students were asked several verbal questions related to their drama activities. According to the findings, students suggested that this approach created an atmosphere of acceptance, increased cooperation, self-confidence, self-actualization, and empathy. Students could freely take risks without negative peer pressure. After the researcher investigated and observed a fifth-grade class for eight months, it was clear that Wetterstrand’s (2002) conceptions of educational drama and critical thinking are significantly related. All students who participated in drama enriched classes and student interviews were video-recorded and served as the raw data for the researcher. The study confirmed students’ critical thinking skills emerged in drama activities. Fischer (1989) examined the effects of drama enactments on cognition. A total of 107 junior high students participated in the study. Both the test and control groups received instruction in the school district’s mythology studies classes. Analysis of the data resulted in significant correlation between drama and reasoning or logic and critical thinking. Students in the test group who experienced drama as performance scored significantly higher logic, reasoning, and abstract thinking scores compared to the control group.

The high school students’ learning motivation, creativity, and other skills such as fashion design closely associated with self-image issues were stimulated by drama performance activities (Su, 2006). Porteous (2003) investigated the value of drama in the development of the awareness of self as perceived by young people between sixteen and twenty-one years of age. She interviewed 5 participants in drama performances from urban settings to get their opinions.
Considering participant responses, she concluded drama as performance was helpful for young people’s understanding of themselves. They stated that they knew when they had done excellent work. Gorjian et al. (2010) conducted a study with 60 students to investigate whether drama rehearsals could reduce the psychological pressure of memorizing the content in isolation. Most of the teachers were trained to follow prescribed techniques and the study could find no values to students of teacher stories of practice due to the fact that the teacher’s content and personal practical knowledge was invalid for the younger students (as quoted in Spilchung, 2009).

2. Connections between drama education and teaching

The growth in using drama/theater education in schools had been incorporated drama-related learning activities into the school curriculum. Teachers became more aware of the potential of drama for motivating learning in teaching different subjects (Ward, 1930). Drama can also assist teachers in their teaching, for example, Downs, Javidi, and Nussbaum (1988) carried out a research on award-winning teachers who worked at secondary and college levels by using drama education, the results demonstrated that those award-winning teachers use drama activities often in their teaching. In another case, Özmen (2010) conducted a mixed-method experiment to measure the impact of a drama course on nonverbal immediacy behavior. Immediacy behavior in this educational context refers to behavior, either verbal or nonverbal, that brings about a feeling of physical or psychological closeness between teachers and students. This could include anything from facial gestures and expressions to clothing worn. A total of forty-four teachers at an English language teaching (ELT) department in Turkey served as the experimental group in Özmen’s experiment. There were twenty-three teachers who participated in the acting course for fourteen weeks; twenty-one teachers were in the control group. Both groups were administered the pre- and post-tests. Qualitative data was used to collect teachers’ reflections, observations for trainees, teacher trainers and administrator of the department. The results indicated that the nonverbal immediacy behavior of pre-service teacher trainees improved significantly via the drama course. Moreover, prospective teachers displayed a remarkable level of advancement in constructing their professional identities, such as:

…offering acting activities, leads teacher trainees to develop their nonverbal immediacy behavior; contributes to the development process of teacher identity in pre-service teacher trainees…acting activities and techniques can be adapted to pre-service teacher education and suggested for use by teacher trainers without a background in acting or performing arts; …considering teaching as a role to be rehearsed and [practiced] in the pre-service years; …contributes to the development process of teacher identity and to a
professional perspective towards the occupation in pre-service teacher trainees. Teacher identity can be studied, rehearsed, developed and supported in pre-service teacher education via a syllabus based on acting theories and practice, and offering acting activities. The process of the development of the teacher identity can be identified in certain hierarchical stages as awareness, control, autonomy, self-confidence and self-esteem. While awareness, control and autonomy were found to be hierarchical, self-confidence and self-esteem were observed as an increasing variable during these initial stages (p.12).

3. The unique trait of drama brings teachers and students together

Numerous researchers have used drama as a teaching method to increase students’ English proficiency. Research shows the effectiveness of drama in students’ development from different age groups. It is suggested that drama is especially useful and effective for teachers in teaching because of its unique traits which make learning enjoyable, fun, challenging, and relevant to real-life concerns. Participating in different role-play situations allows students to explore actions, issues, and relationships with others (Wagner, 1999). The circumstance that during the rehearsals and the performance of a play, the students gain long-term learning experiences in relative to language, literature and culture along with significant perceptions contributing to their personal development (Marini-Maio& Ryan-Scheutz, 2010). Dunn and Stinson (2011) conclude that: “When drama learning experiences are planned and implemented by teachers who are concerned with, and aware of, dramatic form and we are able effectively to manage the four roles of actor, director, playwright and teacher, across both the macro and micro levels of planning and implementation, the language outcomes for students are enhanced.” (p.630) The so-called ‘Process drama’ involved the interactions between students and teachers in challenging activities which the teachers directing the class and the students take on various roles, such as actor, director, as well as observer. Over the teaching units in the classroom, there is a continuous output in the tangible developments. This learning and teaching process require teachers and learners to act both verbally and non-verbally in the phrases of preparation, re-enactment and reflection. The learner will systematically improve the use of their linguistic and cultural abilities and knowledge in a variety of ways (Bowell & Heap, 2001).

4. Drama pedagogy in foreign language teaching and learning

“Over the course of the past two to three decades drama pedagogy has advanced to become an important reference discipline in Foreign Language” (Schewe, 2013, p.12) Huang (2012) conducted one study (examining 20 pupils from fourth grade) to combine process drama and
puppetry on children’s literacy learning. The results revealed that the quality of speaking, listening, reading, literacy, and poetic writing was improved. Therefore, this study demonstrated that the combination of these two teaching mediums might have significant contributions in language and literacy development. Drama-based activities have positive effects on language development, self-development, and communication skills according to several additional empirical researchers. Drama not only helps students’ on language and literacy development, but also makes difficult and unfamiliar texts such as the plays of Shakespeare easier for students as evidenced in a study by Chang and Su (2000) where they used a group of 37 daytime junior students in the elective drama class who participated in the drama activities for a Shakespeare class. The data therein showed that dramatized scenes assist students in overcoming the difficult text of Shakespeare. Through dramatic performance methods, students found that Shakespeare was not as difficult as they once thought, and it made the class more interesting to incorporate performance with the text-based teaching method. Even though students’ speaking skills did not progress in that particular study, according to the results of the students’ survey, through the performance approach to the course, students enjoyed Shakespeare and overcame their learning difficulties in this class. Students also believed that it was invaluable to ‘act out’ scenes from real dramas in a theater course. Dramatic performances increased the students’ interest in understanding the language, drama techniques, and role analysis in Shakespeare (Chang & Su, 2002).

Dowdy (1998) found that English drama enhances students’ speaking skills and also retrain their intonation. In addition, through drama performances students’ speaking and listening abilities can be supported and enhanced by the activity. Dunkel (1986) and Smith (1984) preceded Dowdy with the same basic results. Drama/theater in education is it is strongly recommended as a teaching methodology in the EFL field as an ideal way of bringing together the skills of foreign language learning, since acting skills include breathing, clear articulation of sounds, pace of the speech, tempo, intonation, and so on (Scott, 2007). Chen (2012) integrated educational drama strategies into English teaching and the results showed that educational drama strategies were “interesting”, “active” and “impressive” to participants which increased students’ motivation and abilities of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In sum, there are numerous empirical researches demonstrating that drama can be used in education as a teaching method on literacy, mathematics, science, communication skills, verbal creativity, socialization skills, and self-development and so on. As a result, teachers can integrate drama activities to make classes vivid and interesting to motivate students in class. From the studies stated above, drama education has been extensively used in different subjects with different student ages.
5. Drama education and school community-based research and practice

From the school’s standpoint, resource sharing, working partnership and common understanding on the basis of mutual service, these three elements should be able to promote the common development of the relationship between school and the community. The direction of education reform is to strengthen the relationship of the school and the community in order to increase student learning opportunities. The concept of “school community, community in the school” is the best portrayal of the direction of education reform because education and community are closely related. For this reason, schools should “make the best use of social resources” and motivate the community to provide more staff and funding to assist schools’ development and improve teaching environments. The school also needs to be opening up and actively participating in community activities, so that schools and communities have a good and close interaction on both the effective implementation of using of community resources to really combine school curriculum development and community life (Shan, 2002).

For way of comparison with overseas educational direction, according to Honig, Kahne and McLaughlin (2001) as well as McLaughlin & Talbert (2001) in the last 20 years, the United States has “to strengthen the relationship between the school and the community to enhance learning. In this approach the students’ learning opportunities can be summarized into four categories: The first category, called a “connection with the school's service plan” (school-linked services initiatives), for the various services provided by the school community, including service and health and personnel. The second category, as (community service or service learning programs) so that the community’s children and young people to have more opportunities to participate in community activities to enhance their chances of learning. The third category, school programs lead to employment (school to work initiatives), to allow local businesses to provide educational opportunities to youth. The fourth category was provided with community-based agencies and organizations (community-based organization) services, so that young people get the opportunity to grow and develop (as cited in Shan, 2002). It recognizes drama-based teaching and learning as Eisner’s (2008) artistic approach, that it an art and shares unique insights and learning opportunities to include the aesthetic field such as theatre, music, visual art, dance, film, performance art (as cited in Schewe, 2013). However, most of the studies investigated the elementary and high school levels and few research studies were conducted by using drama at the university level and even fewer studies used drama activities in a community-based learning service environment. In this study, drama could be a perfect match for a community-based action research project such as a service learning one where participants serve at the Civic Theater. In so doing, this action research provides an opportunity to link drama learning and community service at the Danhai Civic Theater to
contribute performance art to the community while providing the said benefits to the students who participate.

6. Drama education and service-learning

"Service Learning" is a "teaching" and "learning" approach, which can link together the experiences of community service, academic learning, and the development of personal growth and civic responsibility. The service is integrated into various academic disciplines, so that students learn more effectively and become good citizens. "Service learning" is a voluntary service and also a trend to solve social problems and meet social needs. In 2001 the United Nations designated that year as the "International Volunteer Year", and soon through our "Volunteer Service Act" bill; this concept has been involved in many service learning objects in terms of young people participating in volunteer activities and thus promoting service-learning as part of an important resource for our country (Chao, 2008). Lin (2006) considered service learning as an effective pedagogy method, which includes academic study; and by requiring some structural reflective operations linked to community service, mutually reinforcing for each other, the benefits are far beyond mere service or learning in itself (p. 171). The objectives for the service providers are for using the structured arrangements through a planned process of reflection and evaluation of social service activities to accomplish the needs of people who are be served, and to promote learning and development and community development service for the providers. “Reflection” and “reciprocity” are the two key concepts and elements for the central core value of “service learning” (Yang, 2002). In 1999 the Commission for National and Community Service provided the definition of "service learning" as one of the learning methods that learners, through active participation in complete and organized service experience, get learning, learn cooperation, reciprocity, diversity and grow as human beings (Haung, 2000 & 2002). Therefore, service-learning is a teaching method, a kind of "reciprocal" relationship, with an attention to the process of reflection, solution of social problems, and having a tendency to meet social needs. In addition, there are “many different universities [which] have incorporated service-learning into their curricula to address the contextual, motivational, and multidisciplinary team needs” (Chang, Wang, Chen and Liao, 2011, p. 238).

To fully understand the connection this paper makes, it is important to ask why drama education was used in this community-based action research. Drama, as an ‘embodied experience’, creates a deeper understanding of dramatic art which provides a platform for an intensive learning experience for the students. It is the intention of a drama education to benefit from the wealth of forms found in the arts for teaching and learning purposes, above and
beyond the procedures usually associated with foreign language teaching and learning such as general pedagogy, linguistics and literature.

According to Chang, Wang, Chen, and Liao (2011), “researchers should try out their theories with practitioners in real situations and real organizations.” (p. 237) In order to incorporate an expert’s professionalism with drama learning, the study began with a Senior Play titled: *The Dream of Queen Esther*, run by an Associate Professor and Play Director Dr. Scott at Aletheia University in 2013. It includes practices through a six-month cyclical process which involve planning, acting, observing, evaluating, and reflecting at a school community action research which provides students with service learning opportunities and benefits of the goals of this study. However, few studies were found by drama effectiveness with service learning in the university level. The findings may help to close the gap between school and community for building good interactive relationships as defined by Reason and Bradbury (2008), “as a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which is believed is emerging at the historical moment of the research. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities” (p. 4). Since the study naturally incorporates the investigation of the professional and practical knowledge displayed from the drama teacher’s perspectives and the researcher’s observations toward school community service and provide the insight to understand the difficulties, problems, and suggestions on building the campus-community partnerships that this study seeks to improve.

**Method**

**Research Design**

A qualitative research is seen as the best suited to provide the local grounding and detail required to understand the influence of short-term drama education used in a community-based action research from the students’, faculty teacher’s, and observer’s perspectives toward it (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). This study took place in a university settlement, Aletheia University, located in Taiwan. This study analyzes English major students’ behaviors at drama activities, the faculty director and the observer’s perspectives on performing a short-term senior drama play-*The Dream of Queen Esther*, a biblical drama in three acts written by American playwright Walter Ben Hare in 1920.

**Participants**

Nineteen English department students (6 male and 13 female students) from the senior
play class directed by Aletheia University faculty teacher, Dr. Scott, performed *The Dream of the Queen Esther*. Dr. Scott has taught drama class since year 1984 at Soong Sil University, Seoul, South Korea for 5 years, at Fu-Jen Catholic University from year 1989 to 2009, at Aletheia University from year 2009 to now and other schools. She has taught drama courses and directed drama plays more than 40 years and this person is surely an “experienced teacher” for sharing her experiences on drama education. The researcher and observer, Dr. Su, has taught English classes from 2008 to the present at Aletheia University.

**Theoretical Foundations**

“Action research is a family of practices of living inquiry that aims, in a great variety of ways, to link practice and ideas in the service of human flourishing. It is not so much a methodology as an orientation to inquiry that seeks to create participative communities of inquiry in which qualities of engagement, curiosity and question posing are brought to bear on significant practical issues.” (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p.1) The researcher/observer used an action research approach to seek deeper meaning or new understandings by interviewing Dr. Scott and the theater students, and observing during the preparation time and final performance at Danhai Civic Center. The transcripts, letters, reflections, journal entries and so on were collected to understand and represent Dr. Scott’s experiences. That is experience, discovery, interpretation, understanding and experience of the cycle to explore the core of the problems into the framework. In particular, her engagement in the drama pedagogy reflected not only her four decades of teaching drama courses, but also her involvement in all aspects including designing and making most of the costumes herself.

**Results and Discussion**

The community-based action research was conducted by Dr. Scott from planning, acting, observing, evaluating, and reflecting at a school community project. Action research in essence integrates practical problem-solving with theory building. Researchers “explore the experiences and difficulties the insiders had in their problems and confirm what researchers saw in their field work. It helps raise the real issues behind the scene and shed light on the possible solution.” (Chang, Wang, Chen, & Liao, 2011, p.239) These findings from Dr. Scott’s and the (observer) researcher’s action research for this campus-community project have provided insights into the drama play as a key for professional development and community service learning for university students.

**Setting (planning)**

This section provide a description through Dr. Scott’s stories when working with the
Danhai Civic Center Theater on the planning stage (six months ahead for the project begins) for the action research, the question was asked for Dr. Scott, “What are the difficulties or problems you encountered to work with the community at Danhai Civic Center Theater while using their location or doing the rehearsals?” Dr. Scott pointed out that:

The staff from the community (Danhai Civic Center Theater) was supportive; when the administrator there realized our limited budget, she told me about the Danhai Civic Center theater facility. We arranged the dates for the performance week. The chair Dr. Lee read the Chinese instructions carefully and she noted that in fact the theater would be free for our department production. The only charge would be for the air conditioning. The theater staffs at the Danhai Civic Center usually were not there during the day because they mainly worked in the evenings. I found out that the Danhai Theater did not have any color light filters for lighting design. The final time I could see the stage was on the night before the play performance when the theater staff helped me to put the color light filters on certain key lighting instruments. I was not able to borrow very many filters of the right colors, so I chose as many deep blue and amber as were available, and two magenta filters for special spotlights. The two Danhai theater staff members were very helpful and nice. Although they are working for the city government with time restrictions, they gave us much more time. The other offices and staff in charge of the rest of the building had nothing to do with the theater and were not very accommodating (T20131220Q1).

It is important to make sure if there is a rental fee or check on extra facilities needed at the planning stage initial usage. The difficulties for the teacher were not only the schedule of the Danhai Civic Center, but also the absence and inexperience of the theater staff at the Danhai Civic Center, and the facilities being somewhat insufficient. Therefore, a clear point for in planning is that extra expanses on transportation fees are needed when performing off campus at a community. The experience of the organizer in the planning stage allowed for better perceptions of performance and a reduction of anxiety at the time of the drama performance. As seen from the observations of the teacher and the researcher, planning incorporates details which are strongly aided by experience. These details allow for smoother, more focused work in all areas of the action research.

Identification of the Difficulties/Problems

There were several difficulties which Dr. Scott faced in the beginning of the rehearsals. These difficulties allowed for a development in identifying the problems which were present in the activities and therefore aided in defining the actual goals to be achieved. Some technical problems arose: Dr. Scott had less than an hour to learn the Danhai Civic Theater light control
board and then 15 minutes before the curtain, the theater assistant there introduced her to a new way to run the lights by groups. She had to learn this without any time to practice (T20131212O1). Another significant issue, from Dr. Scott’s observations, was that students seemed to feel they could do their parts without rehearsals and did not feel they needed to practice with the faculty director. Dr. Scott indicated specifically in her comments that: The group failed to achieve team spirit and consequently, the lines remained stiff and artificial, without adequate feelings and interactions in the performance. This students’ attitudes were completely opposite from last spring’s play group (Once upon a Deserted Island), who loved rehearsals and came twice as much as required. They also worked very hard on voice and diction and English pronunciation. Consequently, they could be clearly understood outdoors and without microphones. In this year’s cast, however, there were only two actors who could be understood, and even then their vocal quality was inadequate to convey the emotions properly (T20131212O1). The results spurred the researcher to question why the group failed to achieve a team spirit, while the group from the previous year was so much more motivated and successful.

It may be as Dr. Scott said that “Where this play became extremely challenging was students were in the lack of understanding about the purpose of rehearsals and high standards for a stage performance.” (T20131212Q1). A great number of researchers agree that drama-type activities generate skills that are less repetitive, more affective, and innovative to increase students’ critical thinking and cognitive reasoning (de la Roche, 1993; Harvard-Project-Zero, 2001; Knapp, Shields, & Turnbull, 1995). In addition, Chang and Su (2002) utilized drama in their listening and speaking class with 31 night-school freshmen in the experimental group and 30 students in the control group in Taiwan. The findings demonstrated that students’ oral expression skills improved significantly in the experimental group. In particular, their pronunciation, expression, confidence, and team-work were significantly increased. However, the results of this study differ greatly with Chang and Su’s (2002) study. As compared with the students last year, students this year displayed stiff and artificial acting with emotionless lines and a failure to achieve and maintain a team spirit. In addition, unhelpful situations occurred unexpectedly, such as with the light control at Danhai Civic Center. Those problems might make implementing a drama play at a community theater appear difficult; nevertheless, through the experience from this campus-community service, an insight can be gleamed into how such an encounter could happen when linking a school community project with a short-term drama play. Identifying problems in advance during the planning stage is crucial to a smoothly successful experience. Identifying the problem areas within the research pointed out one major point as stressed by Ballantyne, Packer & Bain (1997) in that the way to
improve language skills, team work, etc. comes from practice/rehearsals. However, as Dr. Scott points out, the students didn’t feel this was necessary. If the educational goals are to benefit from past research the lessons of that research should be heeded as best as possible. Here the motivational problem, students being uninterested, was a major detractor and therefore possibly the major reason for the difference from the results of Chang and Su's (2002) study.

**Initial Intervention**

The drama teaching method is currently a mainstream theory (drama in education) for university foreign language learning. The variety of learning styles of drama motivates students to learn; its principle is to encourage the students’ active participation rather than passive learning. In fact, creative drama is especially widely used in foreign language classes in many universities (Conard, 1998; McCaslin, 1990). However, the results of the teacher’s observations and feedbacks were negative. Dr. Scott mentioned that:

Students participated in the drama course for getting more credits with low motivation of performing on stage and low attendance from rehearsals. In this case, the play was chosen during the summer, and auditions for Dream of Queen Esther were held at the very beginning of classes in September (and this was the first time the play was performed at Danhai civic Center). Therefore, there were a three full months of preparation time of acting. Some points are different from previous years and examples (normally it will take a full year for an annual play on campus every year) (T20131227O2). According to Dr. Scott and the theater students, inadequacies in the performance were in large part caused by students who were merely seeking academic credits and lacked genuine motivation or proper attitudes to perform. This prevented the production from attaining the high standards reached in previous years. Additionally, some students who were initially cast in a role were subsequently dismissed from their parts due to absences from rehearsals and lack of progress in learning lines (R20140115O1).

**Acting**

Students indicated that three months of preparation for acting was not enough for a play. Practicing over a greater period of time would allow actors to integrate their parts better, creating a better outcome in the play. Students could also be trained to perform more complex tasks. Because student members were often required to utilize the technical, professional, and linguistic skills of acting, the drain on students’ time, energy and motivation could be considerably higher when performers served for very short terms.

There were several noteworthy observations about the acting performances which also provide insight into identifying problems with the overall activity. The student who initially
was appointed as the student director turned out to have a serious negative attitude toward the faculty director and attempted to be a divisive element to the very last. The student who was appointed to replace her lacked English skills, organization skills, and overall competence to be sufficiently helpful. He came from the Communication Skills class and performed very poorly onstage—about the worst performance by a student the teacher had ever directed (T20131223R1). The results showed that the poor outcome of the performance of having a short term drama play as campus-community service may clearly be seen as a challenge for both students and teachers as they absorb time and resources in this type of project (R20140115O2). Even though the Gorjian, Moosavinia and Jabripour (2010) study showed that drama can be effective for developing student’s understanding of English literature, the teacher, however, tried to simplify the play script to meet the students’ abilities and aided to her understanding in the classroom where she works with students. For a short-term play like this, it might be difficult and challenging for students to memorize long monologue speeches. Dr. Scott cut about one-third of the original play script- deleting all the long monologue speeches and several roles. She took some ideas from another, newer experimental scripts and added the short visual scenes of the captives, the Astrologer/fortune-teller, and the Scroll scenes. She also changed the music, sound effects, and dance of the original play to Jewish and Persian themes including the belly dance choreography and live guitarist. These changes were made to suit the students’ abilities and to make the play performance more visually and musically attractive for the audience(T20131220Q1). Dr. Scott’s long experience with different students indicates that she has knowledge and understanding of the abilities of students in familiar educational settings such as the university here in Taiwan. Her assessment in simplifying the script and adjusting it for players and audience was understandable and, in this case, necessary.

Follow-up Interventions

Evaluation and reflection in an action approach requires in-depth knowledge of perceptions; follow-up interviews were conducted to obtain the best possible information for these purposes. The implementing of a campus-community project at Danhai Civic Center gave rise to critical and somewhat overwhelming situations which needed to be overviewed and the observations of them discussed. Two critical situations had to be dealt with on the performance day. No student was capable or willing to handle the light cues; therefore, the teacher had to do this herself. That meant she had to be in the light control room on the third floor behind the balcony because they could only run through the play once before that evening. The teacher tried to learn the various dimmer control numbers and make a cue sheet during this time, but it was also necessary for her to do the set decoration onstage and the makeup for all the characters.
except the four female roles. Remarkably, after putting filters on the lights, she went back to her office to finish sewing costumes, which took her all night and she did not go home before meeting the students, truck, and taxis in the morning. The weather was very cold both in the theater and outside, but because we were listed to pay for the air conditioning, the a/c must have been on full blast. This is mentioned since it is relevant to perceptions and impressions. Environment has a powerful effect on performance and reaction to others (T2014116R1).

Dr. Scott identified some more interventions:

Even with their nice support with the lights and my efforts to protect the backstage from outside students, the performance was not up to the level of previous years. The student actor playing the role of Haggai never learned his lines and of course, stumbled through them onstage. Miley failed to do the PowerPoint (to show the Chinese caption of the scripts for the audiences) with the translation; however another student managed to produce a flier with a printout summary of the play in Chinese. The senior students also failed to do the program and both fliers and programs were distributed to the audience eventually because I appointed one of my sophomore students to give out programs, since the seniors failed to do this as well (T2014116R3).

Therefore, the results showed that an experienced drama teacher was a must for the drama course and production play, the teacher who directs a drama play needs to know about the holistic art including music, costumes, settings, make-up, literature, and so on. Another problem which appeared on her reflection was the limited budgets, suitable places on campus for a performance, lacking of awareness and appreciation for the professional field of educational arts from the system of high education. From the teacher’s reflection, we can see the MOE and schools in Taiwan did not support the drama activities in the first place and that was the reason why the teacher needed to find a place off campus to perform the play, even though it created an opportunity to link a school community project, however, these problems need to be taken as a consideration as an educational reform to identify and clarify the problems that existed. (T20131220Q2).

Reflections

The reflection from Dr. Scott as follows:

Most of the students this year had part-time jobs or they did not like to stay after school for the rehearsals, they were much less enthusiastic, hardworking, and responsible compared to other years, which were the reasons why Dr. Scott was forced to do most of the jobs and it is a pity that students did not benefit on “learning by doing” from the drama and service learning process. None of the students ever mastered the English language component of his/her role,
and all seemed unable or unwilling to remember from one practice to the next the authentic pronunciation and inflection of the lines. Attendance at rehearsals was very irregular (T2014116R4)

The results from Dr. Scott were also very different from Ryan-Scheutz and Colangelo (2004) who did an experimental study on 11 participants in a university level setting with different levels of foreign language proficiency to examine whether the experience of using theater is particularly effective for university students. The results showed that consistent tendencies toward improvement in oral proficiency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, listening, writing, knowledge of language structures, and recognition of idioms. The data demonstrated an overall positive influence on factors such as students’ oral and reading proficiency, self-confidence, and general enthusiasm for the language and culture; thereby confirming the benefits of using theater in L2 learning.

The reflection from the observer (researcher)

The results from the researcher were consonant with Ryan-Scheutz and Colangelo (2004) as follows: The mission can be accomplished only by someone like Dr. Scott who is very patient and passionate for drama education can do the work. She was a dedicated colleague (R20140215R2). My observations gave me the opinion that students did a great performance in a short time and the audience was entertained and satisfied with students’ performance. Although Dr. Scott has a very high standard in drama plays and I could tell she was not satisfied with the result of the performance, I see the entire drama activity in a positive way. That is, I see students’ tremendous progress and the fantastic job on acting and English pronunciation that they did. Students liked to show off and they had tried their best to perform on stage. It was obvious that they enjoyed themselves with citizens’ applauses for accomplishing a play in six months off campus. Performing at Danhai Civic Center generates goodwill in the community that benefits both students and citizens (R20140225O4).

The advantages students and the teacher see in having a drama community service

The opportunity to perform a drama play and gain acting experience also has important effects on students (20140111S1; 20140112 S8). The positive atmosphere within the learning process and the encouragement aroused between classmates is a form of cooperation that can bring relational values and intimacy to the students (20140111S4). Students who were shy, after the training they had, changed their acting skills, expression ability, English ability, the sense of teamwork, body language expression, and the performance on stage and in presenting their own acting styles. Especially, stage fright can be overcome from the repetitive drills as well as learning interest and performing experience being increased (20140315 T1). The experience of
the drama play especially will be a good method to acquire skills, enhance a personal record for a resume or even get a job more smoothly (20140112 S8).

The result can be incorporated with DiPietro (1987) in that drama activities are the best method to use for providing a service for a community because they are entertaining and fun. They also provide the opportunity for students’ proficiency of language learning because English “intonation” and “clarity” are two considerations in learning a language for Asian students. English drama performance provides chances, training opportunity, and practice in the interesting rehearsal environment for students to speak English more fluently. The observational opinion of the researcher is different from Dr. Scott because the standards of drama performance are different between the two. The researcher concludes that drama can bring students’ positive influences, improvements, enthusiasm, and development for language and service learning. The learning process was not a smooth progression and the students’ attitudes might not have been as active during the community service as desired by the teacher or researcher, but the result of final drama production at Danhai Civic Center was profound, meaningful and memorable for the students as observed by the researcher. In other words, the results have clear implications that drama as theater or performance should be adopted as a teaching method, especially as a semester-long course within the foreign language department curriculum.

Evaluation

There were some positive developments during the drama practices. Dr. Scott stated that even though there were stumbling blocks in the process of drama play, there were some nice surprises including: The actual core group of senior students was small from the beginning and very weak in English language proficiency and teamwork skills. In this situation, three of the sophomore students came to the rescue as stage crew; and the actor who played the King was recruited from the Communication Skills class. He successfully learned his role and made remarkable progress in his language and social skills as well. The student who handled the sound effects and music was another example of someone who made a lot of progress. Although the teacher had to research and downloaded all of the sound and music cues; the student was able to use his skills to burn the CDs and run the sound successfully at rehearsals and during the performance (T2014122R5). The results support Jacoby (1996) and Kendall (1990), who give their definition of service-learning as “an educational experience or program mode,” and it is an experience of education, where the students are involved in community service activities and also seeks to plan to create opportunities to promote students’ learning and development. The data of evaluation also incorporated with Duatepe’s study in 2004, reaffirms
that drama/theater encourages group practice and increases students’ self-confidence and self-actualization. This learning process led to more substantial learning of literary materials and helped students to experience a deeper sense of sympathy; consequently, their motivation to learn was heightened. The learners were fully engaged in learning and produced necessary content in action, while being liberated from stressful memorization conditions. Drama activities made learning easier and understanding better by supporting active involvement, creating a collaborative study environment, giving chances to improvise daily life examples, giving opportunity to communicate, providing meaningful learning, supporting long-lasting learning, and improving self-awareness for students.

The results, as same as Su’s (2006) study, showed the students like this kind of experimental teaching of drama as performance, in particular by rehearsing, and public performance. Such courses may be a “fusion language teaching” as well as “multiple intelligences” and “collaborative learning” teaching methods to enhance students’ learning motivation and language abilities, and may inspire students in English language proficiency and creativity through drama as performance (Su, 2006). In conclusion, the result coincide with Wessels and Maley (1987), drama could be used in language teaching because it applies to in-depth communication skills making it one of the important language learning theories. The concept of “school community, community in the school” is the best picture of the direction of education reform because education and community are closely related. The Danhai Civic Center Theater is a professional performance venue with a beautiful, mobile sound shell which is especially arranged for concerts and which worked well for the “walls” for the Esther setting. It also has a screen and projector; however the faculty director believed the projector was still out of order. If she had known that the seniors would not be able to make the translation PowerPoint, she would have tried to use the screen for projected scenery. This would have enhanced the visual setting much more. They were located not very far from Aletheia University, and she had already told the Music Department about their facility. Since the charges are very small, this could be an ideal place for future performances. The one drawback was that space still needed to be more suitable for rehearsals for department plays. Two dress rehearsals needed to be scheduled in the Danhai Theater to allow for adequate time to prepare the lighting and other production needs. Our production of Esther was the first play to be performed at Danhai; and no other university had ever used their facility before. Ideally, Aletheia University administration will see the need for a suitable theater and concert auditorium on campus in the future.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The results in the paper make it evident that starting a campus-community project with
short-term drama play is not easy for both teachers and students. At the end, students did not want to leave the theater after the drama performance at Danhai Civic Center, which strongly suggests that the experience of using drama in the community service was meaningful and memorable to them. According to the reflection from Dr. Scott, an experienced teacher of art performance is a must, and problem solving skills were also required. Extra expenses needed to be taken as a consideration, when performing off campus the budget would be higher compared to a performance in your own school. The experience of using drama activities in the community helps students to have incredible memories in their lives. Dr. Scott and the researcher’s action research, observations and reflections gave educators’ insights and important details into drama education in a community-service learning activity. Some pedagogical implications for EFL teachers are as follows: there are a great variety of ways to link school professionalism with different community services; however, it is strongly recommended that using drama education at different communities such as historical sites, charity institutions and so on. However, the findings also showed that a three- month acting period for students is not enough for a profound performance. It might be better to extend the preparation time to a year as an annual play on campus.

While academic achievement is important for students, it is a teachers’ responsibility to emphasize the additional benefits of service-learning, including fostering civic responsibility, commitment to service, and development of key personal values. The institution of an annual play as a tradition at Aletheia University is recommended in order to keep a high standard of performance at a community location and to allow enough time for the extensive preparation that the project requires. This would permit organizers to deal more smoothly with student problems, avoid last-minute uncertainties, and allow a strong focus on research goals such as language skill gains and other benefits that come with campus-community activities. The descriptive results presented here raise a variety of issues that are ripe for further investigation, not only for the program at Aletheia University, but also for all the universities in Taiwan or elsewhere. The study has revealed indicative relationships among factors from students’ status, teachers’ experiences and drama education for a campus-community service; however, this study was unable to examine the interrelationships among these factors. Future multivariate analyses will allow a more distinctive understanding of these relationships. In addition, future research will explore what can be learned from using more sophisticated definitions of drama education and campus-community service available for future study.
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