ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNING THROUGH DRAMA IN TEACHING CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

by I-Chun Wen

This study explores process drama or drama in education (DIE) to teach a second language, Chinese, in U.S. classrooms. Chinese as a second language is a growing field in the United States. In recent years, the focus of teaching a second language in the classroom has transitioned from grammatical teaching to communicative teaching. Drama-oriented teaching can facilitate interpersonal interactions and communication. This study aims to investigate the approaches of teaching a second language through drama by case studies and analyze the effectiveness of students’ learning of Chinese through drama. This study is a qualitative research exploring the attitudes of an instructor and students of a Chinese learning class. A semi-structured interview was conducted with the participants to discuss the effectiveness of language learning, the challenges, the learning enthusiasm with rehearsed drama, and the assistance that students need.
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNING THROUGH DRAMA IN TEACHING CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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Initial Thoughts

I have taught acting to junior high school students in Taiwan for years. My teaching is based on Drama in Education (DIE), a teaching technique that inspires students’ creativity by integrating their thoughts, self-awareness, and enthusiasm. Since I receive students’ feedback every year and found that my class has inspired and changed lives, I decided to start the journey of exploring the application of DIE to teaching in class.

DIE is an enjoyable learning process that uses theatrical games and activities to help students gain insights, and it can be applied to any thematic teaching. Chinese, my first language, is considered very difficult to learn as a second language in the United States. Thus, I want to explore how to teach an arduous language in an enjoyable way. Dorothy Heathcote, a pioneer of DIE, indicates that “the function of drama in the curriculum is drama as a process for change… in drama, there must be interaction of people and forces… these people, or these forces, must be given a framework within which they negotiate their change, their interaction” (Heathcote, Johnson and O’Neill 114). I want to change learners’ view of learning Chinese and adopt drama skills to make learning more vivid and interesting. I propose that drama education could assist students in learning the Chinese language. Through drama education, students can participate and engage in Chinese language deeply. Therefore, I conduct an interdisciplinary study that utilizes DIE techniques as the structure and teaching language acquisition as the theme to explore the strategies for teaching practices and students’ learning effectiveness. I believe the research findings not only benefit my teaching techniques, but also contribute to the academic community.

The value of this research

Chinese as a second language is a growing field in the United States. Second language learning is crucial for U.S. students not only for communication, but also to gain broader perspectives of different cultures. To help students learn this second language more comprehensively, this study explores process drama or drama in education (DIE) to teach a second language, Chinese, in U.S. classrooms. In recent years, the focus of teaching a second language in the classroom has transitioned from grammatical teaching to communicative teaching. Drama-oriented teaching can facilitate interpersonal interactions and communication. Research which I will discuss in chapter two has discussed the teaching of second language using drama; however, there has been very little research exploring teaching Chinese as second language by using drama. Therefore, the goals of my research are:

1. To investigate the approaches of teaching a second language through drama by case studies.
2. To analyze the effectiveness of students’ learning of Chinese through drama.

I use Kao and O’Neill’s “Words into Worlds-Learning a Second Language through Process Drama” and Shrum and Glisan’s “Teacher’s Handbook-Contextualized Language
Instruction” as the reference of theoretical structures and use these theoretical structures as the basis of data analysis.
Chapter One

The Introduction of Drama in Education

This chapter explores Drama in Education (DIE): its definition, approaches, and applications in teaching. The term “Drama in Education” (DIE) was first utilized in 1921. However, in the 1960’s and 1970’s, DIE was first applied to the use of “teacher-in-role”—the act of taking on the role of different characters (e.g., a teacher becomes a tour guide to teach geography) and a teacher leading students to experience dramatic activities in a whole class (Bolton 164). Thus, DIE is a learning mode regarded as a socially interactive and aesthetic process to explore the world. In the beginning, DIE was used for children; however, DIE can be adjusted to accommodate adult learners’ cognition and experience (Kao and O’Neill 127).

As for the theoretical basis of DIE, the definition is given in Drama Structures, written by O’Neill and Lambert: “Drama in education is a mode of learning. Through the pupils’ active identification with imagined roles and situations in drama, they can learn to explore issues, events and relationships” (11). According to Cecily O’Neill’s Drama Worlds, the concept of DIE is similar to the term process drama; the main components are “creative dramatics and improvisation” (O’Neill xv). In contrast to performance drama, which is a professional performance on stage, process drama has a certain educational purpose. It focuses on “process rather than on product” (O’Neill xv). In this mode, students adapt a role and make-believe and communicate in certain fictional circumstances. The teacher plays a role as well and participates in the setting to facilitate students’ learning. Therefore, drama education is a program proceeding through learners and educators’ collaboration with pluralistic activities. It can be applied to a variety of teaching disciplines.

The modes of dramatic activity

Dramatic activities are mostly conducted in classrooms. In these activities, students are divided into groups, and the teacher gives some tasks to the groups. Depending on the circumstances, teachers sometimes play a role and, at other times, guide students to do the role playing. The purpose of the role playing is to explore specific topics or to solve problems. Students’ performance can be theatrical rehearsals or improvisations. These activities can ignite students’ imagination, allow students to gain insights and self-consciousness, and increase expression opportunities and social skills. Therefore, the performance of DIE is seldom presented to an external audience; however, it can be presented to students from other groups in the classroom or to teachers. The performance process might lack formal props or costumes. Students may depend on practical items and improvise with what is found in classrooms. For example, a jacket can be tied to the waist and become an apron. Desks and chairs can be assembled as stairs. Thus, the development of students’ performances is the main purpose of learning. DIE emphasizes the interaction among learners, teachers, and peers.

Gavin Bolton illuminated dramatic activity deeply in his book Drama as Education:
Dramatic activity does not supersede direct experience nor is it a second-best to direct experience. Its potency lies in “metaxis”, a heightened state of consciousness that holds two worlds in the mind at the same time. The fictitious world is not “given”, to be merely suffered. It is actively \textit{construed}, so that submitting to its experience is tempered by the treatment of it as an \textit{object}. (142)

Therefore, dramatic activities lie not only in our direct experiences but also in the active construction of reality. The activities help participants to realize more deeply as they make-believe and live through their fictional circumstances. The learners utilize their own experiences to process drama through group work; they not only build confidence but also achieve cognitive learning created naturally. Thus, the dramatic purpose is to enable students to experience the learning process rather than rehearse an event. Gavin Bolton classifies dramatic activities into three major types in \textit{Towards a Theory of Drama in Education}: A) Exercise, B) Dramatic Playing, C) Theatre (Bolton 2). This idea is also applied by O’Neill and Lambert’s \textit{Drama Structures}, which provides supplementary explanations for the types and adds two formats, Small-Group Work and Whole-Group Work, to illustrate the approach to the activities. The types of dramatic activities are described as follows:

\textbf{Type A: Exercise}
Activities categorized as Exercise often have specific tasks or purposes, and the duration is always short. The teacher may interrupt or halt the activity if there is no progress, or if the participants have achieved the expected goals. Hence, it facilitates teachers’ flexibility in the classroom. The instructions and rules must be defined clearly by teachers. Teachers can use one of are five types of exercises in teaching:
1. \textbf{Directly experiential}: This requires students to experience a real situation, for example: to observe elders in a nursing home or to interact in pairs by teachers’ instructions.
2. \textbf{Dramatic skill practice}: This requires students to present their sensitive memories, for example: to recall the smell of your hometown or to practice walking for the role of a blind person.
3. \textbf{“Drama” exercise}: This is similar to role-playing by teachers’ instruction or narration, for example: A and B practice, as a pair, the conversation of a customer and a waiter, or to present a tableau while listening to bad news.
4. \textbf{Games}: These are devised for students to play while training their concentration and sensitivity, for example: to speak a line while catching a ball in a ball game or a competition between groups.
5. \textbf{Other art forms}: These include storytelling, writing or designing a stage of a scene, or taking a picture of a special moment.

Through these activities, students can not only enhance their drama skills but also perceive
how to utilize the medium of drama by participating in devised activities (Bolton 3; O’Neill and Lambert 26).

**Type B: Dramatic playing**

The form of Dramatic Playing is usually open-ended and improvised. Students are usually divided into small groups to accomplish a task by developing a short play. In this drama-oriented activity, students have to “make-believe” and “live through” the play. There are three elements to mention for this experience: plot (what happens in the play?), context (who makes it happen and where?), and hidden theme (what are the central thoughts or motivations in the play?). For example, students practice playing the roles of celebrities’ stories to explore a popular person's thoughts (Bolton 8). For students, this activity is also a practicing level before they are exposed to dramatic difficulties (O’Neill and Lambert 24).

**Type C: Theatre**

The Theatre activity is a performance in front of audience and might be adapted from a story, students’ improvisation of a theme, or a play script. The audience may come from other group members or students from other classrooms. Students may use props, settings, and costumes to help them make-believe. This activity emphasizes that students can communicate and cooperate with each other, and teachers can cultivate students’ social skills and drama skills. Teachers need to guide students with appropriate dramatic themes and foster engagement to enhance students’ motivation. In order to deepen the meaning of the play, teachers and students need sufficient discussion about their inner thoughts on the play and give reflections after the performance (O’Neill and Lambert 25).

In addition, O’Neill and Lambert introduced the ideas of Small-Group Work and Whole-Group Work (26). In Small-Group Work, students are divided into small groups and follow the teachers’ instructions. The peers can give reflections to other groups, since they work on the same theme. However, it is difficult for the teacher to supervise each group in Small-Group Work simultaneously; the control of time is also a challenge for the teacher because it takes time for students to develop and present their work. Besides setting specific themes, teachers have to help students explore works more deeply and provide students with advanced knowledge. Although DIE does not focus on developing dramatic skills, teachers can assist students in building creativity and performing skills. In Small-Group Work, it is difficult for teachers to participate in each group; however, in Whole-Group Work, teachers can actively participate in the process, in which the whole class collaborates together. The teachers’ job is to guide students through the deep and structural process. This process helps participants ask questions and actively discuss. The students will be glad to take challenges, realize the contents of stories, and enrich their viewpoints (O’Neill and Lambert 28).

To sum up, if teachers can make the class work collaboratively as a team, students
can change even their understanding with their creativity, and this understanding is very crucial to drama education. The teaching examples of process drama are discussed in the following studies.

**Evidence for process drama in three effective studies**

“The teacher’s role in education surely is to provide learning situations” (Heathcote 81). The teacher uses drama as a learning medium, guiding students to “make-believe” and “live-through” by being a “teacher-in-role.” Drama in education encourages participants to have dialogues between their inner and outer thoughts and raise self-awareness. Since it can be applied to many themes and subjects, the following research reports comprise a review of studies on process drama in the classroom in last six years. These studies demonstrate the educational purposes, teaching approaches, and effects on learning.

**Case study one: "Becoming the Pioneers: A Process Drama to Encourage Writing"**

(Staples vol.4: 1)

The teacher used process drama by adopting a historical event to teach writing skills, which aims to promote students' motivations and competence in writing. Staples quotes Schneider and Sylvia’s article, “Process Drama: A Special Space and Place for Writing” to interpret process drama:

Process drama is a method of teaching and learning that involves students in imaginary, unscripted, and spontaneous scenes. It exists through the interactions of students and teachers, and it is framed by curricular topics, teacher objectives, and students' personal experiences (Schneider and Sylvia 38).

This concept is derived from O’Neill’s *Drama Worlds* and adopted by Staples to conduct a series of nine-day process drama lesson plans and a one-day writing class. Staples used process drama to guide a class of nine- to eleven-year-old students of different writing abilities. These students had not been taught with process drama before. The material she chose was a unit, “The New Zealand Pioneers,” which describes the history of immigration. Staples was the teacher in the class, and she gave the students daily writing assignments, recorded teaching activities, and observed the students’ progress each day. She wanted to examine whether drama education can enhance students’ writing skills.

It is worthy to mention how Staples led students to enter the imaginative in drama. As the first step, the teacher prepared many artefacts in 1850’s, such as a lace handkerchief, a Jamaican-looking doll, and a newspaper advertisement encouraging immigration. The class was informed that the items belong to a character named Elsie. The students can observe these items and ask Elsie (played by the teacher) their questions. The teaching strategy successfully ignited students’ desires for knowledge, and it is a strong pre-text. The drama strategies she applied are:
1. ‘**Teacher-in-role**: She used a simple ornament, such as a scarf, to play Elsie coming to the class to talk with students. This exercise allowed students to learn the content of the story through dialogue with the character.

2. ‘**Decision alley**’ technique: The class was divided into two lines of students facing each other, with opposing views. As the teacher walked between the lines, members from both lines had to provide their advice as the teacher passed by. After the teacher reached the end of the alley, she had to make a decision. This activity allowed students to debate the dilemma of whether they should colonize New Zealand.

3. ‘**Freeze frames**’: The students-in-role froze at a certain moment to present their thoughts on the characters.

4. ‘**Hot-seating**’: A student-in-role sat in the center of the circle to be interviewed by other classmates.

Related writing assignments followed their dramatic activities, such as writing a newspaper article, making entries in a character’s diary, and creating an advertisement. The results presented the students’ high interest and participation in the process drama class. They improved their fluency in and enthusiasm for writing. This study provides a very detailed record of teaching; this is a convincing experiment to build a course structure by combining a subject and a theme in process drama classrooms.

**Case study two: “Reading and acting in the world: conversations about empathy”** (Holland 529)

In addition to enhancing writing skills, process drama can also be applied to moral education, or ethics. Holland’s study provides an example to connect process drama, school setting, and a social issue into practice. In this study, the author points out several social issues of family violence in New Zealand. The high statistics showed that children suffered from abuse and deaths regularly, and the highest rate of child death was in 2003. The serious note has been taken that “children in many New Zealand classrooms are likely to have experienced violence directly, or to have witnessed it, or to know that one of their friends or family members has experienced it at school or at work” (Holland 531). In order to deal with these issues, during 2003 to 2009, the Child, Youth and Family (CYF), a department within the Ministry of Social Development, established a unit called Everyday Communities and commissioned the Everyday Theatre troupe to apply theatre to the topic of child abuse in schools.

The theatre troupe drew on the concepts of Boal’s theatre for social change theory, which asserts that “theatre should be used to promote and bring about social justice and social change” (Holland 533). Therefore, these teacher-actors were also facilitators in engaging the students to become spectators of theatre games. First, they presented a story in the school hall for all students. This fictional story had six characters (a mother, her boyfriend, her two
children, the children’s father and his girlfriend), and the central event in this story was that the mother beat her daughter. The audience was led to develop different possibilities to explain the cause of the event. This process engaged students to observe the problems within the story and think about the solutions.

After the presentation, the teacher-actors were divided into groups to work in classrooms and use some strategies, including “the donut, hot-seating, 10-second dramas, freeze frames (image theatre), writing-in-role, and enactment of the expert” (Holland 536). Through students’ physical engagement in games and exercises, these dramatic activities encouraged students to recall, reflect and understand the story of family violence. For example, they pretended to be a TV reporter describing the incident; this activity helped them believe this fictional family violence and feel safe to voice their sympathy for the child victim characters. As the story developed through the activities, students were requested to create 10-second dramas to present the solutions this family may have. This program enabled participants to become spectators and actors in order to build empathic imagination about their social issue.

The evaluation of this program is positive: the teacher-actors successfully enabled students to improve and cultivate their thoughts by asking skillful and receptive questions. The dramatic experiences enabled students to transform their self-perception and relate to their real lives. This program gave such a “life-changing impact” on those participants (Holland 542). Therefore, this study has provided me with a deep understanding of how the effectiveness of drama education can not only be extended to students’ concern for society, but also to students’ self-awareness.

Case study three: "In their own words: how do students relate drama pedagogy to their learning in curriculum subjects?" (Chan 191)

This study in Hong Kong presents the negative results of language learning by using process drama. In Chan’s study, the subjects are grades 1–4 pupils of a local boy’s primary school in Hong Kong. Their mother tongue is Cantonese. The study selected two curriculum subjects— Chinese Language and General Studies—and adopted some units in the textbook to use drama activities. The lesson plans were devised by school teachers in collaboration with five artists-in-residence from the Hong Kong Art School. The researcher observed students’ reactions and interviewed some target students (high, middle and low achievers) to record their opinions, perceptions and evaluated learning outcomes. The researcher noted that process drama is more applicable to the General Studies subjects than learning Chinese language. The pupils evaluated that drama cannot help them to learn new vocabulary, reading, and writing, although they enjoyed participating in drama activities rather than language learning.

Chan explains two factors affecting the outcome of the study: the first factor pointed
out by the author is that the students’ conceptions about language learning are relatively narrow. They thought that to learn Chinese is to learn new vocabulary, reading, and writing; they overlooked speaking skills that they may strengthen in the class, though they felt they gained more confidence when speaking. The second factor is that their lesson plans for process drama were focused on dramatic activities that entailed establishing context for the stories and asking students to put themselves in others’ viewpoints. The students felt it was easier to gain knowledge in General Subjects using this method because Chinese language is “more serious and rigid in the students’ eyes” (Chan 200). However, the positive finding is that in drama contexts, students felt more motivated to grasp new knowledge. Their drama teachers guided them to find their own answers by asking questions. The students’ reflections showed that drama facilitated their understanding of real lives and allowed them to embrace a topic from multiple perspectives.

Drama education provides students with comprehensive learning. The findings of these case studies trigger my research motivation and inspiration to teach. I summarize four components of the process drama-oriented teaching perspective:

1. **Thematic teaching:** Whether the core is the unit of lessons or the stories, the teacher should choose a topic that students care about and with which they have related experiences. This strategy helps students make connections between the topic and their interests. And then, teachers should go into deep discussion and lead students to learn effectively, step by step. In addition, teachers have to keep flexibility when designing activities and amend the teaching content according to students’ needs and responses.

2. **Collaborative learning:** Typically, a dramatic situation needs to be created by teamwork. Process drama requires teacher—student interactions and student group works, which is very different from lectured teaching methods. Teachers need to provide much time for students to find answers or solve problems and offer proper feedback. Students obtain knowledge and new perspectives from other learners or groups. This learning process also enables students to learn social skills from interpersonal interactions.

3. **Physical involvement:** Students use body movements or positions to create images or physically step into a fictional setting with characters. This physical involvement has strong inner power that can produce motivations contributing to understanding. Thus, drama-oriented teaching provides a playground for combining cognition and action.

4. **Skillful questioning techniques facilitating communication:** Process drama requires students to create physical and interpersonal activities. The teacher needs to guide students to extend knowledge by using skillful questioning techniques as students develop their activities. In order to control the atmosphere, teachers need to master the dramatic tension and grasp the most impressive elements of drama, such as conflicts, dilemmas, suspicions, or surprises. By doing so, teachers can help students concentrate in class and complete their work cooperatively.
Process drama is worthy to be introduced in the classroom because drama is an effective media to transform the learning into meanings for participants. Thus, in Chapter Two, I explore the approaches to applied drama in learning second languages: second language acquisition, the national standards for foreign language teaching in the U.S., second language teaching theories, and a survey of process drama in second language teaching discussed in the context of the second language teaching theories in the following chapter.
Chapter Two

A Survey of Process Drama in Second Language Teaching

Chapter one reviewed the historical background and definition of drama in education and introduced related theories. This chapter surveys the use of process drama strategies to teach second language and engages with related language teaching theories: The 5C standards, Krashen’s input theory, Long’s interaction hypothesis, and Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory are applied to support second language learning through process drama. Furthermore, three case studies using drama strategies to teach a second language are reviewed to examine the effectiveness of the teaching processes and the learning outcomes.

Second language teaching standards

The “National Standards for Foreign Language Education” on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) website lists the 5C standards: “Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.” The 5C standards can be considered the guidelines of language proficiency; they provide language teachers with flexibility to develop their thematic teaching—teachers should interweave the 5C concepts and integrate them into their lesson plans and assessments.

Among the 5Cs, the communication standard is the core competency, and I am going to focus on communicational learning modes in this study. There are three main modes in communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. The interpersonal mode requires students to engage in conversation and communicate spontaneously; the interpretive mode facilitates students’ comprehension through writing and speaking; the presentational mode has students present their ideas and information to the audience. Hence, teachers have to choose teaching materials and activities that provide opportunities for communication; language learners need to engage in real communicative situations and apply the target language in a more sophisticated way.

Second language teaching theories support process drama

In accordance with the language learning trends of the 21st century, the ACTFL states that language learners and educators should use more than 90% of the target language in teaching settings (“Use of the Target Language in the Classroom”). The linguist Dr. Stephen Krashen proposed the comprehensible input hypothesis. The Teacher’s Handbook—Contextualized Language Instruction summarizes Krashen’s viewpoints on language teaching:

The acquisition occurs only when learners receive an optimal quantity of comprehensible input that is interesting, a little beyond their current level of competence, and not grammatically sequenced, but understandable using background knowledge, context, and other extralinguistic cues such as gestures and intonation.
Therefore, to make input comprehensible and maintain 90% target language instruction in the classroom, teachers can use pictures, videos, gestures, and meaningful context to reach optimal input. Process drama allows teachers and students to use multiple tools and provides environments beyond the classroom setting to facilitate students’ language acquisition.

In addition, Long’s negotiation of meanings (Shrum and Glisan 20) can be used to support this teaching strategy. His interaction hypothesis points out that “Through negotiation of meaning, interactions are changed and redirected, leading to greater comprehensibility. Further, these negotiations can lead to language development by the learner” (Shrum and Glisan 21). As for the negotiation of meanings, Kao and O’Neill indicate that “drama cannot happen without negotiation between teacher and class and among students” (29). Through process drama, the teacher and peers’ reflections and questions can boost the opportunities for negotiating meanings. Students will not just absorb knowledge by input but more actively confirm their learning.

**Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory in second language learning**

Vygotsky’s human development theory emphasizes interaction among teachers, learners, and peers. According to Vygotsky, human beings are cultivated into human society once they are born. When people grow up, passing through every stage of life, they keep interacting within human society. The elements in society, such as customs, religions, life styles, history, or laws, comprise the cultural world of human lives. The cultural world influences human behaviors and influences the growing children.

Vygotsky proposed the idea of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This concept is crucial to teaching students in a sociocultural framework. ZPD is the potential development level, and it is the distance between a person’s potential and actual ability, as determined through problem-solving under knowledgeable others’ guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. Therefore, educators have to develop their courses for the learners through a contextualized practice and the process of learning to assist students in the development of their ZPD to reach their potential skill level. Figure 1 is an icon to present ZPD theory. Educators help learners by assessing their abilities and scaffolding. Scaffolding is the assistance given by others to gradually help learners to develop ZPD. As a result, many educators process his theory into language teaching classes.
Two articles apply Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory to second language teaching. The first focuses on the story-based teaching approach. In the article, “The PACE Model: A Story-Based Approach to Meaning and Form for Standards-Based Language Learning,” Bonnie Adair-Hauck and Richard Donato stress that communicative competence is the core of language education. In the traditional second language classroom, students are taught using grammatical forms and language rules, which are considered explicit knowledge, but hardly provide multiple means of expression for students to speak in new language. However, the new language pedagogy provides more opportunities for students to communicate. Thus, based on Vygotsky’s language learning concept that “effective learning precedes development” (Adair-Hauck and Donato 268), the authors promote “a story-based and guided participatory approach.”

The concept of story-based teaching is that students will comprehend the whole meaning from a story. The linguistic elements are immersed in the context. That is, when students gain comprehensive knowledge, they are more effective in analyzing the parts. Thus, the learners are able to know a new language in a natural way, rather than via “fragmented discourse and artificial mechanical exercises” (Adair-Hauck, Donato 270). Thus, storytelling invites students to participate in a story by using “pictures, mime and gestures” (Adair-Hauck and Donato 271). This concept also echoes Krashan’s input hypothesis (Shrum and Glisan 15), which also uses gestures, pictures, experiences, or other interesting activities to make input comprehensible. The teacher scaffolds the learners to use and understand language authentically. Thus, the teacher and learners collaborate to deepen comprehension. And then, the teacher can teach grammar or linguistic elements within the context.

“Since it is natural to tell stories orally, storytelling is particularly adaptable to second language instruction, stressing listening comprehension, followed by role playing and then reading and writing activities” (Adair-Hauck and Donato 271). The discourse also engages...
drama education into this teaching approach and combines elements of language learning. Furthermore, in this teaching principle, educators can extend this idea to devise activities using process drama.

Miguel Mantero’s article, “Evaluating Classroom Communication: In Support of Emergent and Authentic Frameworks in Second Language Assessment,” discusses ways to evaluate students’ learning outcomes. The author compares two kinds of grammar teaching: priori and emergent grammar. Priori grammar is traditional and prevalent teaching. For the instruction, students repeat and memorize what the teacher says; for the evaluation, students fill in the blank or circle a certain “right answer” in a test and take note of the part of speech. The critique of the prevailing priori grammar teaching assumes that it will cause insufficient dialogue and discourse in the second language classroom. On the contrary, emergent grammar is based on sociocultural theory. Within this concept, grammar is not a formula for students to follow; instead, the meanings of language emerge in the context and are dependent on dialogues. For example, students read an authentic document, and then the instructor will point out the grammar within the context.

There are two methods to assess student learning by emergent grammar: instructional conversation and authentic assessment. In the first method, the teacher helps students to perform tasks in order to evaluate students’ process of thinking and learning. Tharp and Gallimore define the scaffolding of students’ ZPD in this method by the following seven activities: “modeling, providing feedback, applying contingency management (rewards and punishments), directing, questioning, explaining, and structuring tasks” (Mantero n8). The second method is authentic assessment. It can be any type of assessment that asks students to present their competence to deal with the real world in a new language. Thus, students have to collaborate and interact with others to create dialogue and discourse. These new concepts of grammar teaching and student evaluation challenge the traditional language acquisition teaching in the United States. Depending on the ZPD, an instructor needs to assess students’ linguistic competence through multiple assessments.

The two articles are supportive research resources for integrating drama activities into foreign language teaching, especially because they illustrate the role of the teacher in assisting students, provide practical teaching, and recommend approaches to evaluation. Moreover, the teacher-student interaction takes the role of scaffolding and helps students to input new language comprehensibly. The following case studies demonstrate process drama strategies that engaged with language learning theories.

Case studies in teaching second language by process drama

Case study one: using stories and drama to teach English as a foreign language at primary level (Chen and Winston 104)
This study aims to solve the problem that commonly happens in teaching English as a second language in primary school in Taiwan. The problem is that students in the same class come with different English proficiencies. In order to solve this problem, the study applies the fairy tale, Little Red Riding Hood (LRRH), to engage each student in a learning model and improve each student’s language proficiency.

The story is chosen by the teacher for three reasons: 1) the story is popular and told to students in their native language. Thus, it provides background knowledge to help students' understanding. 2) The content of the story was adapted into a jazz chant, composed of many repetitions and rhythms to help students’ learning. 3) The story is revised into many versions, giving flexibility to both learners and the teacher to develop their imagination. Therefore, the values of the story form encourage students to engage in dramatic activities: the pupils live through the story events when they role-play to interact with others; the teacher and students participate by their mutual cooperation to create the content of the story; students learn the target language through negotiation of meaning, persuasion, and debate. The pupils are not only learning in a commutative way but also in a meaningful context.

The case study used an eight-week plan carried out in two forty-minute classes weekly. The teaching process was combined with progressive classroom activities:

1. **Get physical:** As a warm-up activity, students were asked to imagine that they were in a magic forest and use their body language to set up the scene. They were taught the vocabulary through the teacher’s directions, and they played and chased each other to enhance their interaction.

2. **Read the props:** Before the beginning of the story, the teacher chose three props—a basket, a wolf mask, and a red cloak with a hood—and requested students to describe the props in English. This activity raised students’ learning interests, and they actively participated in the story.

3. **Meet the roles:** The teacher placed two large paper outlines of Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf on the ground; the teacher then asked students questions to help them construct these two characters in their imagination. This activity was also accompanied by a writing homework that was devised for students with two different levels of English learning: students had to describe the characters’ appearance by writing complete sentences.

4. **Tell the story:** The teacher used finger puppets to present the story. She also placed a paragraph of the story on the board for students to read aloud, which can enhance students’ motivation to read. Then, she erased some words and utilized gestures to help students recall. At last, most students were able to speak up and remember the context by the teacher’s physical reminder.

5. **Act it out:** The students were divided into groups to act out the story. Each group had four members: the characters LRRH, her mother, and two narrators. They had to rehearse
and present to other groups.

6. **Sing and act:** Once students got the background knowledge, the teacher taught them a song, which used the well-known melody, Frère Jacques. She applied LRRH and the mother’s daily dialogue to this melody. Students performed this song in groups, which reduced their learning anxiety and helped students demonstrate their comprehension in multiple ways.

7. **Miming and finger puppet show:** The teacher showed students the portion of the dialogue between LRRH and her mother before LRRH left for her grandmother’s house, and then mimed the scene. The students then had to guess the mimed sentences. This activity raised children’s interests to do the miming themselves, even if the children had deficient English proficiency. The children were then instructed to make their own finger puppets as their homework, which they used in class to play the puppetry. Subsequently, students enjoyed acting out this dialogue by using different voices and tones to play LRRH and her mother.

8. **Story circle:** The children sat in a circle; the narrator told the story within the circle and waved the “story wand” to appoint volunteers into the circle to perform the noted roles. Gradually, they are immersed in the context of the drama to practice the dialogue.

9. **Picture book storytelling:** The last activity is for students to integrate visual and aural tasks into a writing text. The teacher retold the story by using a picture book, and then asked the students to make a mini storybook to illustrate their imaginations of their own Little Red Riding Hood story.

These teaching activities are supported by Bruner and Sylwester, who “have identified narrative or story form as one of the most significant cognitive tools available to us. The brain is wired for narrative, and as humans we use narrative as a means of organizing our own experience. The emotional component of narrative permeates experiences of all kinds and makes them more memorable” (Curtain and Dahlberg 158). The story form provides language educators a direct and effective framework for process drama. The participants’ feedback from questionnaires has shown positive perceptions and learning outcomes: the pupils felt delighted to join these activities, which makes learning easier; they also mentioned that they had improved their language proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening; they immersed in a meaningful context by their performance and watching other groups’ performances; they memorized the vocabulary and learned how to present to the audience by adopting a role. These activities also facilitated multiple ways to assess students’ comprehension. Therefore, this study models a successful drama-based unit plan and solves the problem of addressing students’ different learning levels.

Case study two: second language learning and culture empowerment—teaching Shakespeare in Taiwan (Cheng and Winston 15)
This study aims to explore the use of drama pedagogy to engage and enhance students’ language proficiency in multiple dimensions with dramatic activities. The subjects were a class of seventeen-year-old female students at an advanced level of English in Taiwan. The teacher chose Shakespeare’s play, *Macbeth*, as a literary text, using drama strategies to engage students with tonality, metaphor and cultural context. This study applied the exercise of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s educational department, which the teacher designed as a unit plan. This practice was dominated by three themes: contextualizing the play, negotiating meanings, and plenary reflections.

1. **Contextualizing the play**: The teacher led the students to use desks and other materials at hand to build an altar in the classroom. Then, a student read out loud Lady Macbeth’s lines in Act 1, Scene 5, to depict her reaction when she received the letter about the prediction from her husband. This chunk of lines shows the extent of Lady Macbeth’s desire, ambition and the thirst for power. In the next step, the teacher and students discussed the vocabulary and meaning within the context. The teacher kept providing new text and then used the same approaches to help students comprehend the literary language. In addition, the teacher used a prop, a crystal-like ball, as a “desire ball” to inquire into students’ revelations of their “dark desire” by handing the ball around. Through this activity, students could gain insights regarding the character and the context of the play.

2. **Negotiating meanings**: After setting the scene and the text, students moved forward to this main session. The following are some examples of how this session was conducted:
   1) **Still image of key themes or characters**: Students moved around the space and listened to the teacher’s directives. They were required to make a tableau to imagine the situations of the characters.
   2) **Choreographing keywords**: Students worked on the lines within the text, and then selected one keyword from each line and designed a gesture to match its meaning. After students presented their choreography to other classmates, the audience was asked some guiding questions to give feedback about their perceptions.
   3) **Texture of vowels**: This activity focused on the phonetics from the text of Act 5, Scene 5—“Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow…That struts and frets his hour upon the stage.” The teacher asked the students to stress the vowel sounds to compare and contrast the differentiation of the actions.
   4) **Changing directions and running to different corners**: The teacher selected a chunk of monologue from Act 1, Scene 7, for students to read out loud with physical movements. The intention was to help students deal with the arduousness of understanding Shakespearean lines. These body movements allowed students to release their customary convention and find more instinctive ways to enact and interpret the lines.
5) Web of thoughts: The class was divided into two groups. While one group of the class stood around the classroom and pretended they were inside Macbeth’s head, there was a reader of the group reading his monologue. The other group was the audience. The reader had to pass around a dagger with a ball of thread around it to different persons in the group every time a punctuation mark was perceived during the monologue. The thread was completely intertwined among the group members by the end of the monologue. This activity embodied the inner conflicts of his mind and enhanced students’ comprehension of the complexity of the text.

3. Plenary reflections: This session assessed students’ individual learning progress and interpretive skills. The two activities, silent argument and stream of consciousness, were presented in writing. Silent argument requested students to write down their thoughts about Macbeth’s discovery of his wife’s death. They had to write on a long paper strip placed on the ground, and then examine the paper and find the most impressive thoughts and read them out loud. The second activity, stream of consciousness, required students to write their summative comments about the text. The intention of these activities was to allow students to organize their inner thoughts and transform them to written forms.

These learning processes reflect Curtain and Dahlberg’s viewpoint that “Meaningfulness—and real communication—always occurs within a context” in Languages and Children (32). Shakespeare’s play provides rich, meaningful context and helps students live through the dramatic events. Drama pedagogy helps to create real situations for students, engaging beyond the classroom setting. Students’ responses showed that the pedagogy not only caused them to understand the meaning and the symbol within the play, but also enhanced their ability to analyze the play. This unit plan included language learning, physical creation, and self-awareness. Students also could fully observe the views and opinions of others in the learning process. This echoes Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory that learners will improved by interacting with their peers. In the meantime, process drama helps language learners to comprehend the obscure and to experience the aesthetic text of the script.

Case study three: drama and languages education—authentic assessment through process drama (Rothwell 54)

This study investigates how drama pedagogy enriched students’ authentic assessments. Authentic assessment is an assessment different from standardized tests. It is aimed at measuring how students apply knowledge to the real world. Teachers use authentic assessment to evaluate students’ skills, knowledge, and abilities. In this study, the teacher used task-based instruction to engage with dramatic activities and then assessed students’ learning outcome. Task-based language learning provides students with authentic tasks that can be accomplished using the target language. These tasks reflect real life, such as job interview, booking flights, visiting a doctor, etc. (Bowen, “Teaching approaches: task-based
learning”). The subjects were twelve to thirteen year-old German language learners at the novice level in Australia. The following features of authenticity are defined by the author: 1) It is unrehearsed; students have to use their target language spontaneously. 2) The teacher assesses students’ language proficiency in a specific topic and communication mode. 3) Language use is affected by culture: cultural beliefs, behaviors, and histories (Rothwell 55).

The students were given background on their role as Australian children forced to migrate to Germany by taking the ship named Sophie in 1863. The summary, in sequence, of the tasks are as follows:

**Task 1: Cartoon speech bubble, photograph album and reading ship’s signs** (Rothwell 57): The students were divided into groups, and each group represented a family of immigrants. They started from the tableau (kinesthetic) to show the image of their arrival in the new land, and then the teacher asked each student-in-role about their feeling (oral) with a shoulder tap. In the next step, students were requested to write in a “speech bubble” on a family photograph. This task allowed students to use multiple ways to express their feeling by using the target language.

**Task 2: Hot seat, the captain after the storm; undertaking immigration interview** (Rothwell 59): The teacher was in the role of ship’s Captain. The ship had been struck by the storm, and the food shortage caused the immigrants to protest to the captain. The teacher (captain) used “hot seat” strategies—she sat in front of the students (protester) and interacted spontaneously using the target language (oral). In addition, the students were required to write the questions and slogans (written) they wanted to use to dispute with the captain. The other assessment used “immigration interviews” (Rothwell 61): the teacher divided the students into migrant family and immigration officers, and she used inside-outside circle Q and A for the interview questions asking the migrants to introduce themselves. This session increased interpersonal communication, and students felt more motivated to extend their oral presentation skills.

**Task 3: Written job application in Berlin** (Rothwell 62): The scene changes to Berlin in 1961, the year the Berlin wall was built. The students-in-role lived through the historical event, and they were required to write a job application on a form that the teacher had designed for them. The teacher designed dramatic activities for tableaux to present the features and skills for the jobs and match the names of the jobs in the target language. In the latter part, the teacher discussed and gave feedback to teach students how to manage sentences to convince the superior to hire them. This writing activity encouraged students to use their vocabulary to create more meaningful writing.

The teaching strategies reflect Dorothy Heathcote’s discourse: “the purpose in drama is to release students into a new awareness of what they already know but do not yet realize they know” (Kao and O’Neill 24). Students-in-role, working in a group, could reduce their learning anxiety and feel more motivated to broaden their oral and written skills by
immersing in the target language. In addition, Wells indicated that the teaching mode IRF (the teacher Initiates a question → students Response → the teacher gives Feedback) enhances students’ language interaction and extends thinking (Shrum and Glisan 82). In this study, the teacher provided many opportunities for IRF, and she gave feedback to every task and the rich discussion of students’ reflections. The dramatic activities were regarded as scaffolding and built an interesting environment for students’ assessment.

**Conclusion**

These three case studies provide concrete and creative teaching strategies to teach a second language through process drama: the first study adopts a story-telling format to construct a frame for developing dramatic activities; the second study selects Shakespeare’s Macbeth as a text to analyze the inner thoughts of a piece of literature; and finally, the third study demonstrates how to apply dramatic activities into authentic assessments. The strengths of the three studies are the meaningful contexts, kinesthetic activities, collaborative learning, and negotiation of meanings.

These dramatic activities within the case studies focus on the extension of meaning rather than on grammatical structures and forms. The meaningful context gives support to process drama as scaffolding and helps students engage in language learning. Kinesthetic activities such as freeze-frame or tableau are crucial in process drama; they supply appropriate transitions from adopting a role to language learning. With the physical movements of adopting a role, the creation related to the meaningful contexts allows language learners to immerse in the target language comprehensively. It supports Kershan’s input hypothesis and makes input comprehensible. Moreover, process drama provides a rich platform for teachers to engage the 5C standards and concepts into their lesson plans. Through improvisation, imagination, and negotiation of meanings, students have to work collaboratively to fulfill the tasks. It reflects Vygotsky’s ZPD theory, which emphasizes the interactions between the teacher and peers, enhancing development.

The next chapter details my class observations of learning Chinese through performing drama. The instructor directs the students in the rehearsal of a Chinese skit and performance on stage. I compare the class observation to the three case studies discussed in this chapter, which used unrehearsed dramatic activities. This Chinese language class is characterized by “closed communication,” which focuses on “accuracy, practice, and confidence” (Kao, O’Neill 15). I attended and observed the class throughout the rehearsal process, and then interviewed the instructor and students to examine the learning effectiveness.
Chapter Three
Methodology of the Study:

Class Observations on Learning Chinese as a Second Language through Drama

In this chapter, I first introduce the unique characteristics of Chinese language, explaining some prominent difficulties in learning Chinese as a second language for learners in the United States. Secondly, I differentiate the characteristics of rehearsed and improvised dramatic activities. Focusing on methods of rehearsed drama, I will point out the pros and cons of this teaching method. The third part is a report of the class observation engaging with second-language pedagogical theories. I categorize the class content by teaching materials and teaching activities. The last part reports on the interview with the instructor and the students. I select representative interview content and quote participants’ words to discuss the effectiveness of language learning, the challenges of learning Chinese through drama, learning enthusiasm with rehearsed drama, and the assistance that students need.

The difficulties of learning Chinese for American students

For a long time, Chinese has been considered a difficult and rigid second language, especially for Western language learners (Makofsky, “Learning Chinese as a Second Language (CSL)”). The difficulties of learning Chinese language for non-native speakers include the following: different language systems (English is a phonetic-based system; Chinese is a character-based system), tones, homophonic words, the same character with two or more pronunciations and definitions, and the grammatical meanings. In the Western phonetic-based system, learners are able to pronounce syllables composed by letters. However, the character-based system of Chinese (Makofsky, “Learning Chinese as a Second language (CSL)”) means that language learners cannot get any hint of the pronunciation by reading the characters, which are used to convey the meanings, rather than phonics. Therefore, the beginning Chinese learners are requested to learn “pinyin,” which is associating sounds to the characters, to figure out the pronunciation. Then the learners are able to memorize, practice, and utilize this language continuously to gain competence. In addition, tones also frustrate Chinese language learners. Mandarin Chinese has four pitched tones. Different tones with the same pinyin will cause different meanings. For example, 睡覺 (shuì jiào) is a verb that means” to sleep”; 水餃 (shuǐ jiǎo) is a noun that means a kind of food called “dumplings”. Learners need to distinguish and pronounce tones correctly in order to get the real meanings. Homophonic words, on the other hand, challenge learners’ listening competence, because they have the same sound but different characters and definitions. Examples include the characters “導” and “倒,” which share the same sound, “dǎo.” But 导 means “to guide”; 倒 means “to fall”. Students need to list the homophonic words and put the correct words into a sentence to memorize the meaning.

The next hindrance for learners to overcome is two or more pronunciations of the same
character. For example, the character 長 can be pronounced to “zhǎng” and “cháng”:
“zhǎng” means “growth or elders”; “cháng” means “length”. Last, but not the least, is the
grammatical meaning. The lexical category of a term depends on the order of the words. For
example, 打開 (dǎ kāi) means “to open”; the verb is “開”; 開打 (kāi dǎ) means “to start a
fight”; the verb is “打”. Therefore, it is very essential and more effective to learn Chinese in a
meaningful context rather than through fragmented discourse. Learning Chinese through
drama is especially beneficial for learners to memorize and practice in an interactive and
contextual way.

Learning second language through rehearsed drama or process drama

As Kao and O’Neill assert, “The usefulness of every kind of drama in second language
teaching lies in the fact that it provides contexts for multiple language encounters and
encourages authentic dialogue between teachers and students” (1). The Chinese language
class I observed was an advanced Chinese language class, offered at a mid-eastern American
university and is based on the principles from Kao and O’Neill’s statement above. In this
class, the teacher led the students to rehearse a Chinese skit and preform it on stage. The
scripted-rehearse teaching process is a mode of dramatic activities that I described in Chapter
One. This activity emphasizes that teachers need to guide students with appropriate dramatic
themes and strengthen the learning purpose to enhance students’ motivation to overcome the
obstacles to speak target languages. However, this teaching approach is classified by Kao and
O’Neill as a “closed and controlled perspective on language learning” (1). It differs from
process drama approach, which emphasizes students’ improvisation and spontaneous
interactions rather than a rehearsed learning mode. In order to clarify these different teaching
modes, I drew a table comparing the perspectives of the two teaching modes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Perspective</th>
<th>Rehearsed drama</th>
<th>Process drama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Closed/Controlled</td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>Scripted/Instructional</td>
<td>Natural/Spontaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>Negotiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Teacher-oriented</td>
<td>Group-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Accuracy in performance</td>
<td>Fluency in communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Kao and O’Neill 6)

Although this rehearsed learning mode is not considered applicable to the real world,
students still have some improvisational moments to create their given characters on stage.
During the rehearsal, they need to speak their lines with attention to the character’s state of
mind. When students have become familiar with each other through the repetition during the practices, they will be more relaxed and produce more spontaneous reactions, which makes the situation more vivid and authentic. In addition, when students have insufficient language competence to deal with uncertainty, this closed communicative learning approach is effective for students to memorize the complete and appropriate sentence structures in a given setting. In *The Theatre Arts and the Teaching of Second Languages*, Smith states:

> A strength of the drama rehearsal as a pedagogical instrument is that it provides both the freedom and the motivation for learners to develop skill in spontaneous communication, and it is also a forum in which the teacher/director is able to intervene frequently as an instructor" (4).

The drawback of this mode is that students may be limited in their language use by the teacher’s selected materials. However, in completing the performance, this limitation provides students with the security and motivation to overcome their own obstacles by repetition and the teacher’s adjustment. When students successfully interpret their characters through the performance, they gain the confidence to speak the target language and experience the linguistic differences between their native and target languages.

**The teaching process of the Chinese language class**

In this advanced Chinese language class, the students are nine college-level advanced Chinese major or minor students. The class was mixed-gender, and three of them were of Chinese heritage, while the other six students had no Chinese background. They had different language proficiencies. According to ACTFL, which developed the proficiency guidelines, the Chinese heritage learners could describe and narrate a paragraph-length connected discourse, so they were approximately advanced-level learners. The other American students could only ask and answer simple questions on familiar topics, so they were approximately in the intermediate level. In the beginning, none of them could grasp the complexity of the script. I attended seventeen classes, and each class was eighty minutes. I had plentiful experiences of this course: I assisted the professor in rehearsing the Chinese skit; I led some class activities, and I helped during the performance. In the following, I describe the teaching and learning process in detail and discuss it according to two major categories: teaching materials and teaching activities.

**Teaching materials**

1. **A video clip:** In the first class, the professor used a video clip, which is a model of the Chinese skit they will play. Students might not know the whole content of the skit, but they could still tell what was going to happen by the setting, the gestures, and the interactions of the performers. The instructor used it as a hook, and told the students they can reach this level after the learning process. It was effective in enhancing students’ self-
expectation and understanding of the structure of the skit.

2. **The script:** The script was the professor’s adaptation from the video clip called, “誰說不差錢?” (Are they not short of money?)” The play describes two couples who meet in a fancy restaurant. They deceive each other for personal benefit. The first couple tries to collude with the waiters to cover the fact that they have little money, even though they pretend to be rich. The other couple pretends to be powerful in order to take advantage of them. When a detective shows up, he exposes them and discloses their lies. It was fun to watch the show because only the audience knows the truth. Within this structure, the professor adopted and replenished some language elements, such as jokes about Chinese tones, idioms and tongue twisters, and integrated particular linguistic structures to make it interesting, meaningful, and related to their previous learning.

3. **The vocabulary list:** The professor chose vocabulary from the script and listed the pinyin, lexical categories and English translation or meanings. He scheduled a quiz before each class to encourage students to familiarize themselves with the new words. It was more effective for students to understand the vocabulary within a meaningful context.

4. **Tongue twisters:** The professor provided them with three tongue twisters (小杜 xiǎo dù、九月九 jiǔ yuè jiǔ、啞巴和喇嘛 yǎ bā hé lǎ ma) to practice and memorize. Through this exercise, the students not only trained themselves to be fluent with Chinese pronunciations in certain rhythms, but also learned to understand Chinese culture through the contents of stanzas.

**The teaching activities:**

The expected outcomes of this Chinese language class were that students will interpret their lines in an appropriate way and present the dialogue fluently to perform on stage. To help the students’ learning, the professor taught his class routinely: he had a quiz in the beginning of each class—students had to memorize the vocabulary in the part of the script and take turns to read it out loud, and then write down the characters and the meanings. After the quiz, he had a warm-up—a short and free conversation in English with students; this session eased the students’ tension and boosted the learning atmosphere. In the latter part, he started to do the following activities in the classroom:

1. **Chinese tongue-twisters:** The professor chose three classic Chinese tongue twisters for students to practice. Each student had to take turn to practice, and he adjusted their pronunciations. Sometimes, he required students to try a different manner of speaking in order to identify with an individual’s characteristics. For the performance, he requested students to create gestures and body movements to emphasize the rhythm of language. This choreographing activity not only strengthens the memory, but also helps students adapt to Chinese pronunciation so that they could speak lines more fluently.

2. **Emotional expression:** The students did not have any previous theatrical training. The
professor selected many kinds of emotions for students to individually practice in the class: Students had to speak out some lines he assigned in different emotions, such as expectant, happy, excited, suspicious, jealous, sad, angry, and guilty. Although they tended to interpret emotions exaggeratedly and stereotypically, this exercise stimulated the students to distinguish the relationship between emotions and language change. They found out their strength and weakness while expressing a line. This activity helped students become more flexible in the use of language, accent changes or expressions to make the role more vivid and authentic.

3. **Interpretations and negotiating meanings:** The professor requested students to take turns reading lines out loud, and other students had to figure out the meanings of lines. Students had to understand every line, and sometimes they discussed in order to decide on the most appropriate explanation. The students not only improved their listening abilities by others’ speaking, but they also provided their thoughts and discussed the meaning of the lines. They took almost two weeks to comprehend the script. In this process, I observed Long’s “Negotiation of Meaning” (Shrum and Glisan 20) happening in the classroom. Students did not just absorb knowledge by input, but more actively confirmed their learning. These negotiating interactions help students redirect to more accurate Chinese usage.

4. **The rehearsal:** The teacher started his rehearsal when the students had already comprehended the script. Then, the teacher announced the characters he assigned to each student. I divided the script into six units of action according to the progression of the plot to help students understand the inner purpose of each session. Our rehearsal schedule followed the six sessions, with each class period focusing on one session. The teacher kept asking about their “states of mind” when they were in role, and I assisted him with the blocking to enhance the tensions and the change of power between the characters. The students were encouraged to bring props and wear costumes to help them create their own characters. Their characters became more convincing when they dressed up and used props. When they felt comfortable enough to perform, they developed more spontaneous reactions, which made the acting more natural.

5. **The performance:** The Chinese skit was performed during the Chinese Singing Competition, which was held on campus. Most of the audience members were contestants and Chinese learners living near the campus. The instructor’s intention was to stimulate students' learning motivation and increase opportunities for students to express in front of an audience.

    Through the teaching process, the professor provided meaningful context (Curtain and Dahlberg 32) and a low-anxiety environment for students to learn. This echoes Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis (Krashen 29). When students immersed themselves in the fictional circumstances, they comprehended the language by living through and
experiencing the scenarios. The teacher and students had many interpersonal interactions. Although this learning approach was “closed communication,” which focused on “accuracy, practice, and confidence” (Kao and O’Neill 15), the students still made significant progress during the learning process: collaboration, self-expression, pronunciations, and fluency. Especially when their performance won the audience’s wonderful responses, they felt that they gained more confidence in speaking Chinese and the comprehension of the emotional differences of a language.

Figure 2: “The performance of the Chinese skit” (shot by I-Chun Wen)

The interview

In this research, I applied a case study methodology, which is a type of qualitative research design. Case study is mostly defined as the “singular nature of a case, and the importance of context” (Duff 22). Case study also emphasizes the accessibility of varied sources of information, viewpoints, and the characteristics of in-depth research. In addition to direct observation, my research included interviews with the instructor and learners. After the performance, I interviewed the professor and eight students individually about their perceptions in language learning through rehearsing drama. There were nine students in the class; I interviewed only eight because one of the students was under eighteen years old. I asked seven open-ended questions, audio-recorded these interviews, and then transcribed them line-by-line. The quotes in the following narrative lists the interviewees according to designated numbers S1–S8. Two of the participants spoke in Chinese, and the other eight spoke in English. I translated the Chinese answers into English. Based on the recordings, I

1 IRB approval granted.
divide the themes into four categories: 1) The effectiveness of language learning, 2) the learning enthusiasm with rehearsed drama, 3) the challenges of learning Chinese through drama, and 4) the assistance students needed. I then discuss and conclude the learning effectiveness in Chapter Four.

**The effectiveness of language learning**

The “effectiveness” focused on what the students learned in the target language and their comments on this learning approach. Five of the eight students mentioned that they became more expressive in speaking and learned how to connect their feeling to their lines. Four of the students mentioned that they learned idioms and implications from the lines that they could not learn from a textbook because the script provided a complete context to help learning. Three of the students pointed out that effective for learning the intonation of speaking and listening to Chinese; they could speak more like a native speaker through the teacher’s adjustment. Three of the students, as well as the instructor, think this learning approach is very useful for advanced Chinese learners but can only be regarded as a supplemental activity. No one believes that this learning method could substitute traditional textbook teaching, which focuses on language functions and the applications of grammar.

“**From repeating something, I was able to internalize it**” (S4).

When students were asked about their learning process, they said that repetition of their lines through rehearsed drama increased their fluency and accuracy in using the Chinese language. Through repetition and rotational practice to explain the lines, students strengthened their memory and understanding. Moreover, the instructor pointed out that the purpose of these learning strategies was to help students comprehend the whole script rather than just their own lines, and he also was able to assign each student the most appropriate characters. Most of the students thought repetition is a very effective way to get the meanings and internalize the language. One of the students said, “It was definitely rely on repetition, which I think is very helpful. I use a lot of class repeating things over and over. Kind of stick in your mind” (S7). Furthermore, four of the students also referred to the improvement of their listening competence: “I had to deal with, like, be aware of when I gonna speak. So you listen to the play, know what is going on, understand how to play what was going so that I knew when I say my lines” (S4). They listened to others’ speech, figured out what they said, and also learned from others’ intonation. One student reflected, “I think it’s the biggest difference that can be made more hands-on. Like when the teacher corrected me on how to say something particularly, where to put emphasis, that is the biggest impact on the Chinese performance” (S5). Through rehearsing, students had more practice with the language and could immerse themselves into the situation. Therefore, they had progress using the intonation, expressions, and conclusions from the interactions with characters.
“I can also learn how to use terms, phrases, and idioms” (S1, translated from Chinese).

In the drama rehearsal, one can integrate many language elements, such as “grammar, language functions, culture, pronunciation and intonation, role-playing, appreciation of non-verbal communication, interpretation of subtext, etc.” (Smith 5). This is especially true for learning Chinese, which contains many phrases that could easily lead to confusion. For example, 去過 means “have been to,” and 過去 means “in the past.” Just using the words backwards could make totally different meanings. Some students’ reflections pointed out that learning through rehearsed drama could help differentiate those phrases. One of the student responded, “I not only learned many Chinese terms but also realized the meanings of these terms” (S1, translated from Chinese). In contrast to the traditional textbook teaching, which is more formal and grammatically driven, the script provided a context for students to understand and practice “real world” communication. It was easier to memorize and apply the sentence structures from the script and then use them in a real world.

“It definitely helps learn the language but definitely as a supplement not as a singular source” (S5).

When talking about using this pedagogy in language learning, the instructor and the students had the consensus that learning Chinese through rehearsed drama could be a very effective and interesting way to improve language proficiency, but students still need to use traditional pedagogies to learn language function. The traditional textbook provides the students a standard format for basic sentence structure, which is grammar-oriented and simpler to understand. Not until they learned certain sentence structures and vocabulary could they handle the complexity of a script. The traditional language teaching contains many units and subjects that are hardly all applied within a script, so this course was only for supplemental learning by advanced Chinese learners.

The Learning enthusiasm with rehearsed drama

This part focuses on how the students enjoyed this learning mode and why they felt drama could inspire their learning enthusiasm. Six of the students felt they got more interaction and support from their classmates; four of the students felt they were more motivated to learn; four of the students thought the atmosphere was comfortable and safe; three of the students mentioned that acting could make learning easier.

“This just kind of make me open up asking someone for help” (S3)

The students considered themselves as teammates rather than classmates. In the beginning of the course, they seldom talked to those whom they were not familiar with. However, when they began to leave their chairs to rehearse, they gradually felt they were in one group—most of them could memorize their lines by the second rehearsal, and they
prepared every time for the class. Although they were advanced Chinese learners, they had different language proficiencies: two of them required more time than others to memorize and internalize language; three of them could memorize their lines but felt it difficult to grasp the whole meaning. They utilized their spare time to ask their peers for help. Nobody wanted to become a burden to the group. Therefore, they improved progressively in every rehearsal. One of these students said, “I think a lot of it would be the ability to be comfortable with the people you are interacting with” (S2). The rehearsed drama provided them a framework to learn language collaboratively. They learned through frequent interaction and mutual assistance.

“It [class atmosphere] was relaxed, and I was able to absorb the language” (S4)

Four students mentioned that the instructor provided a less stressful learning environment: The class routine always got students to talk before the instruction and rehearsal. Although they spoke in English rather than the target language, they shared their opinions, made jokes, and discussed the news. This is a kind of warm-up for speaking. They were gradually getting comfortable talking to each other and getting familiar with each other. In addition, the instructor was open-minded and gave students flexibility to create their characters. Most of the time, he only corrected their pronunciation and asked about their state of mind while they spoke their lines. He did not criticize students’ performance even if they messed up during the rehearsal, and he trusted students could do it well. The students felt they were motivated to learn because they felt comfortable and relaxed. A student reflected, “This class is sometimes more fun; I think it helps something I more wanting to do” (S6). This statement, which shows the student felt motivated to learn, reflects Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis, which states that language acquisition only occurs in a low-anxiety class (Krashen 29).

“We were trying to do all at once. I like the process” (S4).

Some students mentioned that the rehearsal reduced the difficulties of Chinese learning. One of the students said, “I think it make it a little bit easier just because… by adding actions to it, it is kind of as memory device that just help you remember everything better” (S3). They did not just passively absorb knowledge; moreover, they actively played roles and lived through the fictional situations. In the book, “The Theatre Arts and the Teaching of Second Languages,” Smith suggests the concept of the relationship between rehearsing a play and language learning:

The language and images of the play are like a noise inside their heads even when they are not in the theatre. This suggests that learning to use language and learning to perform a play share some sort of “psychological reality” for the learners… they had not only “learned” the language of the play script, but had learned that occurs
in real life (32).

Therefore, learning Chinese through rehearsed drama became a vivid and practical learning mode. The students were interested in acting and gained multiple experiences. They enjoyed the process and had confidence to overcome the obstacles.

The challenges of learning Chinese through drama

In this part, the instructor and the students identified different challenges. For the instructor, the biggest challenge was how to modify the script to match the students’ Chinese proficiency. He could not finish the adaptation of the script until he grasped the number and the language level of the students. The instructor had to find the appropriate resource to adapt: the resource should be interesting and also “a little beyond their current level of competence” in order to initiate the acquisition (Krashen 22). He had to assign each student to a certain character so that every student in the class could learn from the scripted drama and perform on stage. Through the classroom activities, he wants all of the students to understand every line in the script: they have to speak, listen, and comprehend the play. Because he could not predict the characteristics of the students who would be taking his course, he had to adjust the script every time. Those are the challenges that are different from traditional textbook teaching.

“The challenge is to know the culture to catch the subtlety of it” (S2).

As for the students’ challenges, all of the interviewees had similar hindrances: The learners struggled with telling the tones and the intonation that Chinese speakers used due to language and cultural barriers. They had to learn how to sense subtlety and adjust accordingly. The typical response was “I think I struggle learning how to express my emotions that I learn in English or American society through a Chinese outlet” (S4). What concerned the students most was whether the audience can understand their performance, so they had to note the correctness of their expression. These challenges echoed Kao and O’Neill’s comment on rehearsed drama, “The challenge for the students in this method lies in the demands of presentation rather than in any struggle for communication” (7). I expected that this learning mode would develop their interpersonal communication skills in Chinese, but this did not happen. However, the rehearsed drama facilitated their proficiency in presentation. Interpersonal skills require unrehearsed and spontaneous interactions versus the presentational mode, which requires rehearsed and prepared interactions.

The assistance students need

The “assistance” refers to what the students looked for but was not provided through the learning process. Among the eight students, four mentioned that they wanted a very clear framework of the story to follow; three of the students thought it was better if the instructor
provided a complete translation for each line; three of the students preferred feedback from the instructor in every rehearsal; three of the students indicated a desire to do some improvisation during the rehearsal.

“I think the framework is helpful” (S6).

The instructor confirmed the students’ understanding and speaking of each line before starting to rehearse. He started the rehearsal without introducing the whole story. However, the students did not ask any questions about the plot or the context, so the instructor and I presumed they had already comprehended the story line. I did not know they required a more detailed description until I interviewed them. One of the students said, “I feel like it would click on better if we understand the plot first and we did the start again instead of trying to decipher it, and piece it together” (S2). These students were not theatre majors, and it is reasonable that they found it difficult to catch the whole story context from the scripted form, which was assembled by characters’ lines. Based on most students’ reflections, the introduction of the context of the story should be provided.

“Feedback on how I am acting” (S4).

The instructor gave them space to develop their characters, so he did not provide many suggestions while they were acting. During the interview, the instructor told me he focused on the accuracy and intonation, which were already challenging for American students, so he tried not to be demanding when it came to students’ acting. However, the students still wanted his comments on their acting. This feedback was needed to bring constructive criticism and contribute to language learning and performance. It was also a challenge for a non-theatre major instructor to give feedback about students’ dramatic acts.

“Provide more translation each sentence” (S5).

Three of the students requested the teacher to provide translations for each line, so that they did not need to spend time figuring out and negotiating the meanings of each line. This was also a dilemma for a teacher: If he provided the translation, the students might rely too much on the English translation and overlook the connotations of Chinese; if he worked with the students about the meanings in each sentence, the student might not capture the meanings of each word. They just deduced the general meaning of the sentences. One of the students reflected, “because a lot of time we didn’t fully understand what our lines meant, even if you understood the words and lines like a lot of hidden meanings” (S6). This script included many words that had hidden meanings. For example, the line “門兒都沒有” means “no way,” but when translated literally, it means “there is no door”. In Chinese, metaphors and hidden meanings are often used in dialogue, and this makes Chinese learners feel lost. Therefore, the instructor and the students held different points of view, and this became an unresolved
conflict.

“I think it is interesting to do improvisation” (S7).

Three of the students mentioned that improvisation could be used in the course. One of them suggested, “That will also help your Chinese, maybe do a couple of lines, and say a couple more by yourself, and see what happens” (S7). This suggestion triggered the idea of process drama. Students also wanted to see if they could apply what they had learned to extend the scenario and create a part of the script. In Chapter Four, I try to apply some process drama techniques to integrate into rehearsed drama.

To sum up, through rehearsed drama, the students engaged in context and internalized the target language by repetition. Drama served as an interesting and interactive learning process. However, this mode still has its limitation: students learned more skills in the presentation of the target language, rather than in communicating interpersonally or interpretively. Thus, rehearsed drama is less likely to apply to the real world. In the next chapter, I discuss my findings and make suggestions for potential improvements.
Chapter Four
Discussion of the Study—Effectiveness, Recommendations, and Further Research on Learning Chinese through Drama

Chapter Three reports on my observations of the ‘Chinese Verbal Theatre Performance’ class and my interview with the instructor and students. The students recognized the teacher’s teaching style, learning Chinese through rehearsing a play—which is different from the traditional textbook teaching strategy. The students learned language, especially idioms and puns, in a meaningful context. Most students thought this teaching mode helped them gain confidence to speak. In addition, they enjoyed attending this class; they were motivated to memorize their lines and tried hard to express the language in a more appropriate way because the teacher is open-minded and willing to share his stories to help students know more about Chinese history and culture.

In this Chapter, I further analyze my class observation record and interviews to draw conclusions about 1) the different opinions between instructor and students, 2) the improvement of intonation, and 3) the use of improvisation for target language practice. I then suggest how this pedagogical technique can inspire students and language educators to collaborate more effectively. The final part includes suggestions for further research and the conclusion.

The different opinions between instructor and students

* Serving translations of each line

Unlike any other textbook, which provides translations for each sentence, the script did not have any translation. The instructor requested the students to take turns reading lines out loud, and other students had to figure out the meanings of the lines. This process challenged the students’ learning habits. Some of the students felt it was time-consuming to slowly find meaning together, so they requested translation. This suggestion was soon rejected by the instructor. He would rather spend a longer time to make sure students comprehend every line, rather than just their own lines. As a result, this conflict was not solved during that time.

In this case, I support the instructor’s insistence. Although students complained the process was too long and too boring, we could condense the time through group discussion—students could be divided into small groups, each comprised by students with varying levels of language proficiency. An instructor could set up the schedule in sequence for every class. Each group just deals with a small section of whole script: in a set period time, they read it aloud and adjust their tones and intonations with their peers, and then negotiate meanings. An instructor can monitor their learning by walking around each group to ask and answer their questions. This idea is derived from Vygotsky’s ZPD, which applies peer collaboration and more knowledgeable others’ guidance to achieve competence. Thus, the students gain more opportunities to engage the language and figure out their specific problems, and the instructor
can be aware of student's individual needs and differences.

Providing explicit explanation

The students indicated that they felt confused in the beginning of rehearsal, because even if they knew the meaning of each line, they were still mixed up by the unfinished script. The script was being modified by the instructor while rehearsing. Some students requested more lines to present; some students wanted to take more challenges by speaking complex and longer sentences. The main concern for the instructor was to adjust subplots and lines in order to accommodate individuals’ characteristics and requirements.

To deal with this situation, I found that the instructor may not have to provide translation, but instead give the outline of the story—the sequence, the process, and the turning points of events in the script. Some process drama strategies can be applied to assess students’ comprehension and language proficiency about the storyline: freeze frames (tableaux) can be used to depict the storyline. In these tableaux, the students can create images about the story in sequence. For language proficiency, the instructor can assess students by tapping their shoulders to let them speak a line of their character’s thoughts in the target language. This activity can assess students’ understanding of the play and also supply a very appropriate transition from adopting a role to language learning.

Using more target language communication

The instructor used mostly English to communicate during the class. The reasons why he taught in English were that he wanted the students to understand his words directly, and he thought students could not fully comprehend his instruction in Chinese. However, this teaching manner contradicts the ‘Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century.’ The ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) claims that to help develop language and cultural proficiency, “language educators and their students should use the target language as exclusively as possible (90% plus) at all levels of instruction during instructional time” (“Use of the Target Language in the Classroom”). Although this is an ideal, some students responded that they were insufficiently fluent to follow their instructor’s switching to the Chinese-only channel. However, they still expected more Chinese input from the instructor during the teacher-student interaction.

To help students immerse in the target language as much as possible, an instructor could communicate using sentence structures that students recognize. In the meaning of words, he or she could use gestures and pictures to assist explanations. In the execution of the instruction, such as 排戲 (to rehearse), 走位 (to do the blocking), 上場 (to go on stage), 下場 (to leave the stage), etc., an instructor could execute by way of repetition to deepen the students’ impression and enable them to memorize and utilize these words. Therefore, the more an instructor uses understandable target language, the greater the gain of the students.
The improvement of intonation

Some of the participants stated that the biggest hindrances to speaking Chinese are the tones and intonations. There are four different tones in Chinese: if the words have the same pin-yin but belong to different tones, the meanings change. For example, one of the students played the narrator, and there was an interrogative sentence between his lines. He raised his tone for a word at the end of the sentence, in the way that English speakers are accustomed to. Suddenly, this sentence was transformed into one with a totally different meaning. I remembered adjusting his pronunciation at least three times, until finally I told him this transformed meaning was a dirty word—then he corrected the tone. Through rehearsed drama, especially in Chinese, students have plenty of time and opportunity to grasp the subtleties of the language. In addition, this learning process also helps students to notice the importance of the accuracy of Chinese.

If someone would like to express the intonation in the target language very well, he or she actually needs to first figure out the meaning of the lines and emotion of the situation. It might be useful and effective for language learners to learn intonation through rehearsed drama, because when they perform, they are in a context with interactions and interpretations. Therefore, a rehearsed drama moves from the written and read to the spoken, and it provides more tools for expressing a language. As for language learning, students will remember small chunks they memorized for that context; as for enjoyment, students will have fun role playing and gain the confidence to speak and express themselves in Chinese. Therefore confidence, accuracy, and subtlety are three major benefits that students mentioned from their rehearsed drama experience.

The use of improvisation for target language learning

Why is improvisation important for students’ learning?

In the interview, one of the students mentioned the possibilities for improvisation. This suggestion motivated me to explore some approaches to get the students to improvise. In language learning mode, based on the description from Kao and O’Neill, “Moving from the closed end of the continuum toward increasingly open communication, more innovative drama approaches include improvised role-plays and scenario, reflecting a semi-controlled teaching perspective” (9). Semi-controlled teaching perspective, compared to closed/controlled communication and open communication, emphasizes that teachers, as the initiators, should set part of the scenario and guide students to develop subsequent stories (Kao and O’Neill 12). Therefore, to facilitate the improvement of students’ language proficiency, improvisation could be used in certain parts of the script. This unrehearsed mode helps students to create authentic communication and can be applied into the real world, so
that students could engage themselves more into language acquisition.

**Suggestions for improvisation**

In this scenario, an instructor could build up the students’ improvisational skills by these scaffolding activities:

1. **Warm-up activity:** An instructor could utilize his class routine to get students talking in Chinese by setting up a topic in every class. This topic could be very simple, such as daily activities, school life, foods, news, etc., to help students organize their learning from the previous textbook discussion and apply it in spontaneous interaction. This get-to-talk activity is not only useful in real world communication but is also an essential transition to work on more complex scripted dialogues.

2. **Setting up an audition:** An instructor could offer choices for students to select the roles they want to play. While they comprehend the script, each of them can choose a role and study its context, and then they can select a length of the role’s lines to perform on stage. An instructor could assign a situation that is not in the script for the student-in-role to do a brief improvisation exercise. For example, in the script were two frauds who pretended to be celebrities to get a free meal; the instructor could let the two students-in-role discuss how they would get this free meal. This activity may challenge students’ spontaneous responses, however, it encourages students to attempt to extend beyond the limitation of language, and the instructor can be aware of each students’ characteristics and assign them the most suitable characters.

3. **Adapted ending:** An instructor could release an open ending for the students to expand and finish the story. For example, the scenario is developed until the detective goes on the stage, and then students have to do a brief improvisation to show the process of how the detective exposes the characters’ lies. In order to help students fill in the gap of the play, the instructor can provide students related vocabulary, and the students can use this vocabulary to build up the process and reach the requirement. After students develop different possibilities, the instructor and students can discuss the most suitable improvisation performance, add it to the script, and make it a fixed plot. Thus, this approach makes students become actors and also playwrights. Students can be more involved in and understand the plots, and this semi-controlled teaching mode can combine the rehearsed drama and open communication for students to take every advantage to improve their language proficiency.

**Further research suggestions**

1. **Measurable assessment:** While conducting this study, I found that the rubric to assess students’ learning in the classroom was lacking. The students thought that they could reach the standards by just rehearsing, memorizing the script, and performing on stage.
However, some students reflected that they hoped for more feedback from the instructor. To help the instructor and the students meet the same goal, the students need more specific criteria for the assessment so that they can monitor their learning outcomes. In addition, the criteria can help students grasp the detail of different dimensions of their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, in second language learning, it is essential to provide the assessment rubric for each dramatic activity, because it enhances students’ effectiveness by the teacher’s evaluation and comments.

In further research, the specific rubric for performance assessments and teachers’ evaluation in each scaffolding activity should be set up and provided. Measurable assessments can facilitate more objective and detailed data analyses, giving a study both qualitative and quantitative values of reference.

An example of process drama rubric is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Completion</th>
<th>4.0 Exceeds level</th>
<th>3.0 Achieved level</th>
<th>2.0 Elementary</th>
<th>1.0 Needs improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superior completion of the task; responses appropriate and with elaboration</td>
<td>Completion of the task; responses appropriate and adequately developed</td>
<td>Partial completion of the task; responses mostly appropriate yet undeveloped</td>
<td>Minimal completion of the task and/or responses frequently inappropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of interaction</td>
<td>Consistent engagement in the interaction; ability to sustain and advance the conversation</td>
<td>Consistent engagement in the interaction; ability to sustain the conversation</td>
<td>Some engagement in the interaction; some ability to sustain the conversation</td>
<td>Minimal engagement in the interaction; little ability to sustain the conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language control</td>
<td>Control, ease, and comfort using a variety of language structures required for task (i.e., past tense, future, etc.)</td>
<td>Control of a variety of language structures (i.e., past tense, future, etc.)</td>
<td>Emerging control of variety of language structures</td>
<td>Emerging use of a variety of language structures required for task (i.e., past tense, future, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content of message</td>
<td>Content rich; ideas developed with elaboration and detail</td>
<td>Content adequate and appropriate; ideas developed with some elaboration and detail</td>
<td>Content somewhat adequate and mostly appropriate; ideas expressed with very little elaboration or detail</td>
<td>Content minimal and/or frequently inappropriate; ideas repetitive and/or irrelevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>Speech shows few pauses or false starts</td>
<td>Speech shows some hesitation, but speaker manages to continue and complete thoughts</td>
<td>Speech is choppy and/or slow with frequent pauses; few or no incomplete thoughts</td>
<td>Speech halting and uneven with long pauses or incomplete thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This rubric can be used for formative assessments, which assess students’ improvisational dramatic activities during class. This assessment can provide beneficial feedbacks to both teachers and learners (Clementi and Terrill 63).

An example of a rehearsed drama rubric is presented as follows. This rubric can assess students’ final performance on stage and examine if students reach the teaching goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall performance</th>
<th>4.0 Exceeds level</th>
<th>3.0 Achieved level</th>
<th>2.0 Elementary</th>
<th>1.0 Needs improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensemble Teamwork</td>
<td>Student’s awareness and empathy towards other cast members is very apparent. Student’s attainment of teamwork and of the goal to work effectively together is superlative.</td>
<td>Student’s awareness and empathy towards other cast members is acceptable. Student’s attainment of teamwork and fruition of the goal to work effectively together is acceptable.</td>
<td>Student’s awareness and empathy towards other cast members is weak. Student seems to have little concept of how to work as a team.</td>
<td>Awareness and empathy towards other cast members is nonexistent. Student has no concept of how to work as a group member.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Effort | Voice fits character.  
Words pronounced correctly. | Words pronounced correctly | Having practiced dialogue somewhat.  
Listening to and responding to others on stage, but concentration is incomplete. | Not having practiced dialogue. Stumbles and gets lost easily.  
Not listening and responding to others on stage.  
Performance is not believable. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accuracy | Knows dialogue well, but remains dependent on script.  
Listens to and responds to other characters on stage.  
Concentration complete. Remains in character. Believable. | Knows dialogue and only messes up a little bit. Listening to and responding to other characters on stage. Concentration complete. Believable. | Mistsakes in usage are frequent and may distort the meaning or inhibit communication. | Mistakes in usage are pervasive, distort meaning and prevent effective communication. |
| Overall Score | Structures and vocabulary are used correctly | Any mistakes in usage are without pattern and do not distort the meaning or inhibit communication. | Mistakes in usage are | |

Sources: *iRubric: A.C.E. Dramatic Performance Rubric - PBL Study of Drama.*


Perez, Roxanna Correa. “Assessing Speaking.”

2. **Designing another research project:** In the previous section, I provide some suggestions to combine rehearsed drama and improvisation into language learning. Further research might create a semi-controlled drama approach to integrate scripted role-play and improvisation in teaching Chinese as a second language and compare the effectiveness between the rehearsed drama approach and semi-controlled drama approach. The curriculum design should contain a clear learning process: warm-up games, scaffolding activities, rehearsal schedule, improvisation sections, and rubrics for assessments. This project should include both qualitative research and quantitative research. The qualitative research collects the data by interviewing to examine the students’ perceptions about the learning process of rehearsed drama and process drama. Quantitative research assesses measurable rubrics that could examine the learning
effectiveness and serve as a reference for students.

**Conclusion**

*Drama is a medium to integrate different skills in language learning*

Drama contains various modes of depiction, with a literary genre, images, movements, and emotional expressions. Applied drama in language learning can provide a creative platform to enable students to integrate and transform their ability to listen, speak, read, and write into an art form. Within this art form, students use multiple language elements to apply themselves to a role and live through the fictional situation, which is fun and less stressful while struggling with the new language.

Moreover, drama also requires active and collaborative work, so that every student has to engage in this teamwork. Collaborative learning is an important strategy in making drama. Students are divided into small groups to fulfill the tasks. “The group role provides tremendous support for L2 [second language] students to overcome insecurities as well as their incompetence in using the target language at this initial stage of making drama” (Kao and O’Neill 25). In this teambuilding method, students have more opportunities to interact, which helps build an effective support system. This teambuilding reflects Vygotsky’s ZPD theory that through collaboration with more capable peers, learners can develop their competence to reach their potential levels. The mutual assistance not only helps them establish a sense of security, but also gain confidence in language learning.

*Rehearsed drama is beneficial for advanced Chinese learners to move forward to the next level*

This Chinese verbal performance course was designed for advanced level Chinese learners. Chinese is a character-based language system, so that students have to learn pin-yin first to pronounce words correctly. Because of the need to memorize characters in Chinese, it is difficult to retain what they learned if there is no practice in a Chinese environment. Moreover, the students must have background knowledge of sentence structure in order to deal with more complex structures of the script.

This rehearsed drama learning mode provides a fictional situation for the students to live through in the target language. Unlike teaching from a traditional textbook, rehearsed drama allows students to memorize and internalize language, and then, through the creation of the role in the form of art, express the language. This training can strengthen the successful experience of the learners and help them gain motivation to move forward to spontaneous communication.
Final Thoughts

Through this overall research process, I comprehended the different teaching perspectives of drama. I learned about the use of process drama in foreign language teaching from case studies and the use of rehearsed drama through class observation and interview. I examined how drama-oriented teaching alleviates students’ learning anxiety and how it helps students understand Chinese culture. Moreover, drama provides meaningful contexts for language learners to communicate and practice with authentic tasks in the classroom. However, I also found the limitations of this teaching pedagogy in practical teaching domains. These limitations include the control of teaching schedules; learning through drama needs a longer time for teachers and students to develop content and rehearse repeatedly. If the teaching schedule and textbook are rigidly set across an educational institution, it will be difficult to promote drama-oriented teaching. Therefore, it will be more feasible to implement it in special-topic classes for college-level students who already have advanced-level Chinese.

Through the case studies, I also learned to apply drama in education to develop courses in thematic teaching, such as in ethics, social issues, and other subjects. In addition, I learned how to create measurable rubrics to assess students’ learning. The rubrics not only avoid subjective and biased evaluation but also help students to understand their learning goals and progress. Through this research project, I had more opportunities to work on the theoretical background of DIE and explore it in a deeper level. I can thoroughly examine the potential meanings and concepts of each activity to help me more effectively use activities to strengthen thematic teaching.
Reference


iRubric: A.C.E. Dramatic Performance Rubric - PBL Study of Drama. Web. 7 May. 2015


Appendix

Interview Questions:

I. For the instructor
   1. What triggers you to start a language class learning through drama?
   2. What are the advantages and disadvantages for students to learn Chinese through drama? Why?
   3. What are the challenges for a teacher to teach language through process drama? How do you deal with these challenges?
   4. What are the differences of the effectiveness between learning new language through drama and grammatical teaching?

II. For the students
   1. What are your expectations to this class?
   2. What are your perceptions through the learning process?
   3. What are the challenges when you learn Chinese through drama?
   4. Do you think that learning language through drama is an effective way to learn?
   5. What kind of assistance you need when you rehearse or develop dramatic activities?
   6. Do you have opportunities to use Chinese in your daily lives? Does learning language through drama increase your Chinese communication ability?