

Deakin Research Online

This is the published version:

Araki-Metcalf, Naoko 2008, Introducing creative language learning in Japan through educational drama, *N J Drama Australia journal*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 45-57.

Available from Deakin Research Online:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30036982>

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner.

Copyright : 2008, Drama Australia - The National Association for Drama Education

INTRODUCING CREATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING IN JAPAN THROUGH EDUCATIONAL DRAMA

Naoko Araki-Metcalf
Fukuoka Jo Gakuin University, Japan

Abstract

Educational Drama as a teaching and learning methodology is already widely in use and well accepted by Australian teachers and students. This paper reports on a study in which the author investigated Japanese primary school students' and teachers' responses to educational drama as a pedagogical tool in their English language classes. The participants had no prior experience of drama in education. Along with the participants' responses, the applicability of educational drama as a teaching method for the Japanese teachers is also discussed. The author, as a teacher-researcher, used action research methods for this study. It became evident that educational drama tended to motivate the Japanese students' foreign language learning of English, by providing them with an opportunity for a higher level of engagement and participation in learning. In the study, the students showed enhancement of the skills necessary for learning, including social, communication, linguistic, non-linguistic and problem-solving skills.



Naoko Araki-Metcalf, a native of Japan, lived and studied in Melbourne Australia for ten years. During that time, she taught in schools throughout Victoria and developed a curriculum for LOTE (Language Other Than English) Japanese using educational drama as a teaching method. This was documented in her Masters Thesis. She obtained her PhD at The University of Melbourne and now lectures at Fukuoka Jo Gakuin University. Dr. Araki-Metcalf is currently in the process of establishing an organisation called JADEA (Japan Drama/Theatre and Education Association), which will be dedicated to spreading Drama Education throughout Japan.

Keywords: JAPANESE EDUCATION; ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM; EDUCATIONAL DRAMA; ACTION RESEARCH; REFLECTIVE PRACTICE; TEACHER-RESEARCHER.

Introduction

In 2008, the Japanese Ministry of Education announced it will be increasing the weekly lessons for the English language curriculum in the primary schools from 2011. The aim of this is to make the English language curriculum compulsory for Year Five and Six students and, as a consequence, requiring classroom teachers to develop the necessary skills to be

NJ, 31:2, 2008

able to design the curriculum and teach the language, which they are not used to doing. The usual practice is to follow a set curriculum set down by the Ministry of Education nation-wide. There is the potential in the next ten years in Japan for opportunities for the introduction of educational drama as a pedagogical tool for teaching the English language in a more holistic and effective way.

This paper summarises a study conducted at a public primary school in Japan focusing on two central research questions. The first key question was to consider the Year Six students' responses to the introduction of educational drama in the English language curriculum at their school. The second question was to investigate the applicability of an educational drama approach to Japanese teachers and their responses.

Going back home with an innovative idea for education

Implementing educational drama in teaching the English language at a primary school in Japan revealed underlying complexities in the Japanese educational system, Japanese culture, the socio-economic situation of the modern Japanese society and the nature of the Japanese people. These elements were identified in the responses and attitudes of the students and teachers in Year Six during the Drama-English language project. My main research question was to investigate the responses of these participants in a unit of the English language curriculum as a foreign language using educational drama. In many ways, the project was not as easy and straightforward to organise because of these complexities.

Although I was born in Japan and studied within the Japanese education context until the end of my secondary schooling in the same city where I conducted this project, many things had changed. As I saw the students and teachers who participated in this project in more depth, I became more puzzled by their attitudes and responses. Spending ten years away from Japan caused a greater gap than I had thought in my ability to understand the students, teachers, schools and educational protocols in Japan. Japan had changed during the decade that I was away and so had the schools, students and teachers. The changes were very subtle and hidden, so much so that they could not be noticed from outside the Japanese educational context.

While I experienced difficulties adapting to the Japanese school culture in the beginning, it was evident from the collected data that the project of teaching the language using educational drama brought many benefits to all the participants, including myself. It took a while for the students and teachers to understand the concept of educational drama and their expectations in this different learning environment. However, this experience stayed in most of the participants' minds as enjoyable and memorable. Throughout this project, I learnt and re-discovered the subtleties of Japanese culture, education, school system, students and teachers.

Using action research for the project in Japan

I used action research as the methodology for my study of a group of Year Six Japanese students and teachers in a Japanese public primary school. The definition of action research seems to differ slightly according to the individual authors and their area of focus. Carr and Kemmis's (1986) definition, however, provides a general idea of my understanding of action research:

NJ, 31:2, 2008

Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out. (*ibid.*:162)

In action research, improvement within a certain area that participants are concerned with is the key element (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; McNiff *et al.*, 2003; Macintyre, 2000; Kember, 2000; Johnson, 2002; Arhar *et al.*, 2001). Three distinctive areas that action research aims to improve include: improving the practice, improving 'the understanding of the practice by its practitioners' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:165) and improving the situation.

Regarding 'improvement' through action research, Kember further explains that, '[t]he very essence of quality enhancement is improvement. . . Understanding a problem through interpretive work can be a useful step but solving the problem requires action' (2000:25). Thus, action research allows researchers to examine their concerns as well as allowing them to take action to change the current situation.

The duration of the project in Japan was twelve weeks and there was a long summer holiday, a period of six weeks, in the middle of the project. This divided the project into two segments — the first half included Lessons One to Seven and the second half comprised Lessons Eight to Twelve. In this period of twelve lessons, various educational drama activities were used — mime, class-in-role, teacher-in-role, thought tracking and role-play. I also used a picture book called *The Waterhole* by Graeme Base (2001) as a pre-text. Lessons were carried out every Tuesday morning with classes in the following order: 6-B, 6-A, and 6-C class. The allocated time for each lesson was fifty minutes and one of the classrooms in the school, the multi purpose room, was provided for the project.

Before the project, a short verbal explanation about educational drama was given to the students. It was vital to inform them that there was not one 'right' answer in educational drama and their ideas were highly valued in the process of developing the drama work. I told the students that they were expected to enjoy learning the English language with a different approach and asked them to try to enjoy the new experience of educational drama.

My choice of language (Japanese or English or both) in the project was one of the main concerns that I needed to consider carefully in planning. The teachers told me that these students were considered as beginners as far as the English language was concerned. Based on that information, I had decided to differentiate the use of these languages according to the situation — the explanation of activities was given in their native language, Japanese, while the activities were carried out only in English. This was because educational drama activities generally required verbal explanations from the teacher and discussions among students beforehand. I felt that it was more important for them to understand fully what their tasks were in each drama activity and how they should participate, rather than leaving them confused by explanations given only in English. If students were not aware of the nature of each drama task, I felt that it would have been very difficult for them to achieve any degree of success in creating any 'satisfactory' or 'successful' drama work.

Planning an action research project for the Drama-English curriculum seemed relatively easy in the beginning. However, as the project evolved, I found that the action research enquiry became more and more complex because of the emerging concerns. These concerns often appeared at unexpected moments and required me to make frequent amendments to the lessons, while also managing the classroom, giving instructions to the students and conducting the research project.

Expanding an Action Research Cycle

The project commenced with one main action research cycle as my guide before any action was implemented. The overall structure of the project can be described as one single loop of an action research cycle (see Figure 1). The first category was the investigative stage where I researched and examined the current situation of English language education in Japanese primary schools. Additionally, the process of searching for a primary school to host the project was part of this investigative stage.

The second stage was planning the two major discussions that took place — how to collect the data and how to plan twelve lessons. It was helpful to hold meetings with the teachers and the principal of the school to assist me in making plans for teaching the English language using educational drama. It was important to note that I did not plan all twelve lessons in detail at this time as I was aware that unexpected outcomes often emerged during action research projects, particularly using educational drama for primary school students.

In the third stage, the plans made previously were put into action with three Year Six classes and their teachers. The next stage was observing the events that emerged during the action. The final stage was reflection where I critically reviewed and examined the entire project.

From the single loop of action research shown in Figure 1, many more cyclical loops appeared as the project developed. At this stage of the research, the project became extremely messy and I needed a new clear structure to follow because many themes had unexpectedly appeared during Drama-English classes. This meant that various extra cycles of action research emerged. I developed a couple of new structures to organise this 'mess'. The diagram in Figure 2 shows the stage of 'acting' divided into four main phases according to emergent themes: Phase One, Two, Three, and Four.

Phase One represented the first theme and involved the participants getting to know each other. Each Year Six class's characteristics were identified, and each teacher's teaching style was also examined. In this phase, the action research cycle was used to develop a mutual comfort zone for everyone involved in the project, in order to start this project successfully and cooperatively.

In Phase Two, implementing educational drama activities became the main focus. The students' initial responses towards the educational drama approach were documented, given that this was their first experience of participating in any educational drama activity. Many new sub-themes emerged in this phase, as educational drama was the centre of the project. As a result, these sub-themes became slightly more intricate with mini action research cycles being added on to each phase to accommodate individual students' various responses.

To another possible action research project
based on reflecting upon and evaluating this project

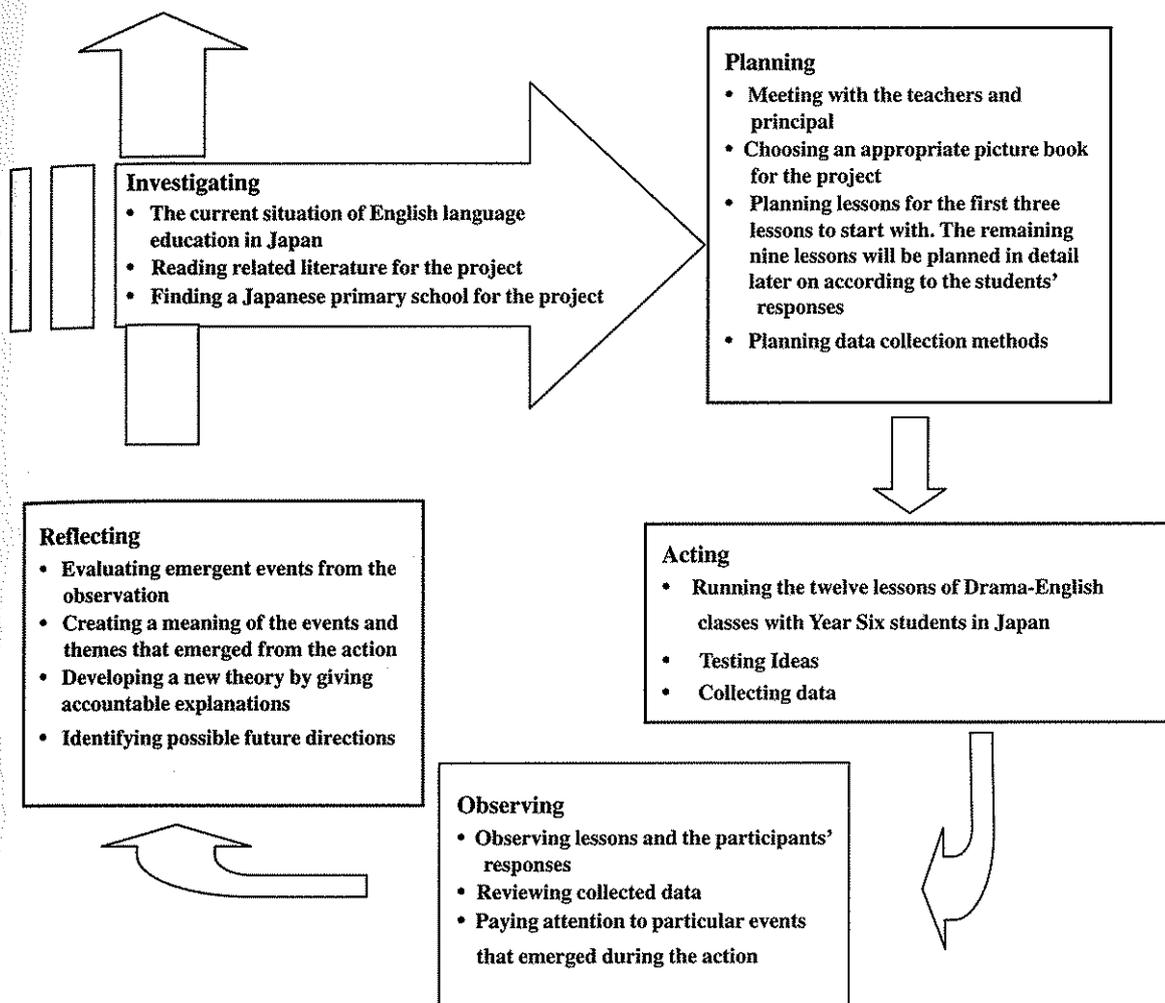


Figure 1. The single loop of the overall action research cycle for the project

Phase Three involved the implementation of further educational drama activities when the participants interacted with each other more fully.

In Phase Four, the students presented what they had learnt through the Drama-English classes and reflected on their learning.

Another way of conceptualising the structure was to identify each weekly lesson as a single loop of sub-action research. Twelve sub-action research cycles subsequently emerged. In the project, I found it was challenging to deal with three Year Six classes for

To another possible action research project based on reflecting upon and evaluating this project

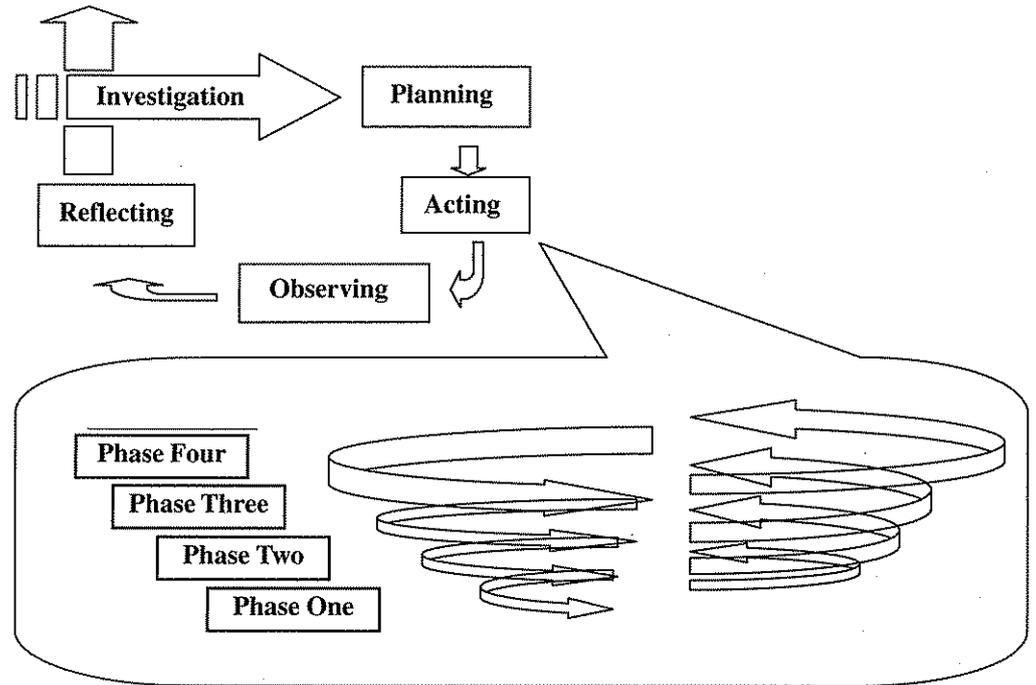


Figure 2. Action research cycles that occurred within the acting stage

twelve weeks with thirty-five students in each class. There were two distinct structures that I needed to consider — the unit of twelve teaching weeks and the structure of three different Year Six classes.

I basically used the same lesson plan for the three Year Six classes every week, and these classes were categorised as mini-action research cycles within each sub-action research cycle for the weekly lesson. The challenging task of dealing with such a large number of students in the project became relatively easy to manage once each weekly lesson and each Year Six class were organised and viewed as sub- and mini-action research cycles.

Developing a clear structure for these small cycles helped me organise the collating of data every week and reflect on each individual class. As the project was unfolding, many concerns emerged (class structure, class size, group and class dynamics, individual teachers' teaching style, Japanese cultural behaviour, individual personalities and learning styles) while I, as a teacher-researcher, was immersed in the process of acting, observing and reflecting. The project became messy as it progressed through many action research cycles. Therefore, it was important that I responded to any unexpected emergent concerns and created more structures of action research cycles accordingly.

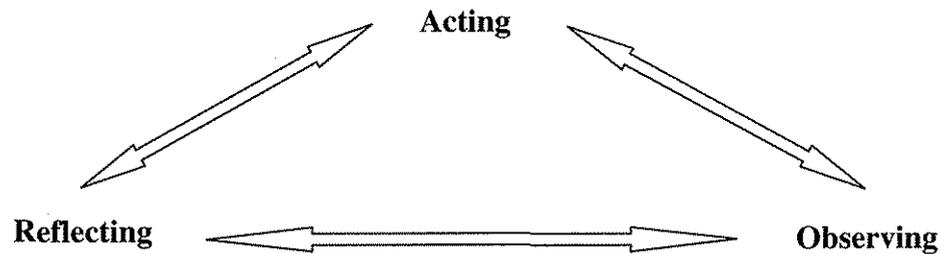


Figure 3. Cycle of reflective practice

In short, I found myself positioned in the middle of the process of the 'Cycle of reflective practice' in Figure 3 identified by Arhar *et al.* (2001:41) and in my reflective practice I was going back and forth within the three stages of acting, observing and reflecting as they suggested.

I was spontaneously applying reflective practices on many occasions during the project when I planned the next lesson, dealt with difficult classroom situations, managed students in class and searched for a possible solution to any problems which emerged during a lesson.

Action research has many benefits for teachers in conducting school-based research. It also has some limitations. This research method is known as a messy process (McNiff *et al.*, 2003; Arhar *et al.*, 2001; Cherry, 1999). I appear to have overcome this by implementing mini-action research cycles (representing each Year Six class) within each sub-action research cycle (representing each weekly lesson). I found by doing this I was able to keep a clear, concise record in spite of unexpected events and issues that constantly emerged.

This research methodology allows researchers to address problems on both a personal and social level from an insider's perspective. Thus, the most important aim of action research is not to achieve a successful closure in the social situation but to show the researcher's own process of learning and to 'explain how [their] new learning has helped [them] to develop [their] work within the situation' (McNiff *et al.*, 2003:13). Since Lewin introduced action research originally in the 1940s, the characteristics of action research have greatly changed. However, the main aim of the methodology still remains the way that action research provides a cyclical process of investigating and improving teaching and learning.

Implementing the Drama-English language project

The use of drama as a teaching and learning medium in second/foreign language classes has spread widely throughout the world. In particular, studies by Kao and O'Neill (1998) and Liu (2002) reflect on the process of language learning through drama in Asian students. Liu argues that learners at the beginning levels of language proficiency need to rely more on 'their body language to express their thoughts and ideas and also to allow other students opportunities for meaning interpretation' (Liu, 2002:61). The Drama-English language project in the Japanese public school investigated a particular group of Japanese students' and teachers' responses to the English language curriculum, using an educational drama approach. This was the first time that these participants had explored 'the boundaries

between what is real and what is not real' (Winston and Tandy, 1998:2) in their classroom. Winston and Tandy describe such experiences as 'a great source of delight'. Although educational drama provides another learning perspective for language students, 'there are many challenges that both teachers and students may face when these active, collaborative and essentially dialogic approaches are introduced in a previously traditional language classroom, (Liu, 2002:61).

Participating in the Drama-English project became a memorable event for these participants, particularly for the students. The responses from the teachers on the other hand were a little more complicated. They could see the positive influences that the educational drama approach had on their students' learning, at the same time they critically examined whether it was suitable and comfortable for them to use as a teaching method. Individual opinions from these teachers about educational drama as an alternative teaching method varied, however the project added a new perspective to their teaching methods. As these teachers witnessed various educational drama activities, they found new ways to interact with their students.

Reflecting on the students' responses

The first key research question was to consider the Year Six students' responses to educational drama in the English language curriculum at their school. The initial response was that they were simply confused with this different educational approach. The English language curriculum in their school was fairly new to these students, and educational drama was a completely unfamiliar area of study. Thus, not surprisingly, they were confused at the beginning and they did not fully understand the different expectations in drama-focused learning. O'Toole and Dunn believe that, 'children who have done drama at school do gain confidence and skills in managing the elements of drama. However, all children have a capacity to pretend, which they use deftly in their own play' (O'Toole and Dunn, 2002:4). It took a while for the Year Six students to become familiar with the concept and to gain confidence but they quickly adapted to it once they fully comprehended the different expectations and the purpose of the educational drama activities. Therefore, my lack of understanding of the students' expectations regarding the drama approach was the first issue.

The second issue relates to the concept of improvisation one of the main elements of educational drama:

The essence of improvisation is spontaneity . . . Students have to respond to 'offers' of action – statements with embedded suggestions of context or character that can be taken up or rejected. To do so successfully, they need to be able to pick up and elaborate on contextual cues, some of which can be very subtle. (Cusworth and Simons, 1997:18)

I felt that the students I worked with were not used to 'spontaneity' at all and I used the word 'surprise' in this project instead of spontaneity. It is possible that their confusion and hesitation was based on their lack of experience in understanding that many tasks required spontaneity and high levels of engagement. The typical Japanese way of educating students is the teacher at the front of the class in total control — there is usually no debating or discussions with the teacher. In this type of learning environment, students' spontaneity and their skills of self-discovery are neither required nor welcomed.

NJ, 31:2, 2008

In educational drama, students are constantly drawing on their prior experiences and understanding of the real world when they improvise (Cusworth and Simons, 1997). It was likely that these students were confused as to how and what experiences they needed to draw from in order to fully participate in the activities, especially at the beginning of the project. In other words, they were confused about the fact that they were allowed to draw from their own personal experiences and understandings so freely and openly in their classroom setting.

As Cusworth and Simons suggest, it is necessary for some students to have 'a class discussion and pooling of ideas before improvising' (1997:19). For the Year Six students in Japan, they definitely needed plenty of time to participate in class discussions and suggestions for ideas beforehand. Throughout the project, these students came to the realisation that they needed to draw on all the resources and knowledge that they had for any successful participation in the activities. Once they realised this and I had gained their confidence, their level of physical, emotional and cognitive engagement with the drama activities increased immensely. At the end of the project, their faces and excited voices showed clearly that they had just completed a rewarding and exciting phase in their school life. The case of some shy and quiet students in the 6-C class becoming more expressive in the Drama-English project was an example of this. To this day, many students from this project still come up to me in the street and express their enjoyment of that time. It was such a fulfilling and rewarding experience for me as a teacher to share in a phase of these students' personal growth.

Reflecting on the teachers' responses

The second key research question was to investigate the applicability of an educational drama approach to Japanese teachers. The involvement of the teachers in this study was as observers, due to the fact that they had no prior knowledge or experience in educational drama. They assisted in classroom management and some even participated, at times, in the process with their students. The teachers in this study witnessed improvement in their students in terms of their social, communication, non-linguistic, linguistic, and cognitive skills throughout the project. The study also revealed some resistance from these teachers towards this approach. This may have been because they were experienced teachers who had already established their own teaching styles and were quite reluctant to change. The educational drama approach was innovative and at times overwhelming for them. I occasionally observed them being caught in a dilemma between the new approach of educational drama and their own teaching approach, yet the educational drama approach was very tempting and attractive because the students were so interested in learning. However, the teachers were not ready to relinquish the authority and control that they had already established. The study indicated that this dilemma seemed far greater in one teacher's case compared to the others, as this teacher believed in strictly controlled classes and strongly disciplining the students. Winston and Tandy acknowledge classroom teachers' common concerns about taking on an educational drama approach in their teaching:

The reason why so many teachers feel that they do not understand drama, or feel that what understanding they do have is partial and confused, is because much of this understanding is tacit; that is to say, they have acquired it without learning how to articulate it. This state of affairs is not helped by much of the language used to explain educational drama. Words like performance, actor, scene, dialogues and audience are

often absent from its discourse, to be replaced by a set of concepts such as role play, improvisation, hot-seating, teacher-in-role and still imaging. (Winston and Tandy, 1998:2)

Winston and Tandy's studies focused on teachers in the United Kingdom. However, the attitudes of classroom teachers mentioned above could easily apply to the three Year Six Japanese teachers who participated in this project. Although they witnessed their students fully engaged in various educational drama activities and enjoying participating in the project, these teachers still expressed their hesitation about the use of the educational drama activities in their teaching. As Winston and Tandy suggest, until these Japanese teachers feel that they learnt 'how to articulate it', they would not feel comfortable with including educational drama in their classroom. Winston and Tandy further argue that 'there is no need simultaneously to reject the language and ideas we use to describe the drama we experience in our wider cultural surroundings; and that an appreciation of the connections between the two will help inexperienced teachers get started and gain the confidence to continue teaching drama as part of their curriculum' (*ibid.*, 1998:2).

If the Year Six students' faces beaming with excitement and amusement in the Drama-English classes were not sufficient reasons to convince these teachers to continue using or adding this approach to their teaching, it would be disappointing, and their participation could be regarded as 'lip-service'; just as the internationalisation of Japan can be seen as paying lip-service to the international community (McConnell, 2000). The responses of these teachers reflect their *tatamae* attitudes¹ needed to retain a harmonious relationship between the school and guest teachers from the community like myself, to retain harmony between students' and parents' interests towards the English language education and to meet their obligations to the principal and school in decisions about the implementation of the English language curriculum. Of course, these teachers' participation in the project was totally voluntarily. However, I feel that their *honno* side reflected their reluctant attitude towards an ongoing use of educational drama in the future.

There is a need to investigate more thoroughly Japanese teachers' responses to an educational drama approach. More teacher-friendly approaches may need to be used when drama is introduced as a teaching/learning method for the first time, as teachers in Japan are used to strictly following the Ministry of Education authorised textbooks, lesson plans and guidelines. Future investigations are required to understand other aspects of teachers and change, including personalities, preferred teaching styles, educational background, teacher-training courses that the teachers have attended, cultural and social background and educational beliefs. By investigating these elements as well as their responses to educational drama, it may be possible to identify key features influencing their decision and capacity to take on an educational drama approach in their teaching.

When I presented workshops to second/foreign language teachers in Australia to show how effective the educational drama approach can be for language learners, the response from those teachers was divided into two groups. Some teachers felt that they lacked confidence in using educational drama in their class and they requested me to

1. There are two faces in Japan: *tatamae* and *honno*. *Tatamae* translates as one that shows the general consciences of the Japanese people. The other (*honno*) is the hidden private personal thoughts of the individual. The look of the agreement and consciences you see in Japanese people may very well mean the opposite.

come to their schools to organise the curriculum for them. On the other hand, other teachers were keen to use this method in their teaching straight away and afterwards sent me emails to discuss these methods. The first group tended to be the Asian-oriented teachers who received their education outside of Australia in a more strictly structured learning environment, whereas the second group members were non-Asian teachers who received their education in Australia. I can see similar responses between those Asian-oriented teachers in Australia and these three Year Six teachers whom I worked with throughout the project in Japan. The attitudes among them was that they understood and experienced the benefits of educational drama for students, however they always kept a little distance and observed the method objectively — they tended not to jump straight in and were more passive participants. Thus, preferences in educational approaches and pedagogy are likely to relate to the cultural and educational backgrounds of the teachers. Perhaps these teachers might need a longer time to become more familiar with educational drama than non-Asian teachers just as the Japanese students in Year Six from the project needed a much longer time to tune into the concept of educational drama than the students in Australia whom I had taught before.

The three Year Six teachers in the project in Japan displayed their individual preferences towards the educational drama activities. If there was more time, I would have studied why each teacher decided whether s/he liked particular educational drama activities and why s/he felt more comfortable with applying specific activities and not others in their teaching. More research focusing on Japanese teachers' responses to educational drama needs to be carried out in the future. Further studies will help in developing a better curriculum that can be more readily accepted by a wider group of Japanese teachers and students.

Suggestions for further progress

The skills in educational drama that I learnt over the years in Australia were based on a Western educational approach taken from the model of educational drama in England, Australia and North America. When Western practices are implemented into the East, it is essential to make some adjustments and amendments according to the local culture and its people. There is a need for investigating how, and in what degree, teachers need to make these amendments according to their specific cultural context and background.

My first suggestion for further research is that it is crucial to have more school-based studies in Asian countries in order to find a more culturally appropriate approach to using educational drama. In particular, further research in the area of primary school education in Asian countries is greatly needed.

Another suggestion that arose from this study was the importance of sharing more alternative teaching methods, like educational drama, with teachers and teacher-trainees in Japan. Japanese universities need to take a more active role in supporting these teachers by providing venues and workshops. The new subject — Integrated Studies — including the English language curriculum was introduced in 2002 into the primary school program by the Japanese Ministry of Education and this educational reform was not welcomed by some teachers because it only added to their already full workloads. However, the reality is that 80% of the primary school teachers in Japan are now teaching the English language curriculum to their students and basically they do not have a choice (Kizuka, 2005)

because of the movement of internationalisation in Japan. I believe that teachers cannot keep teaching the English language just by using language games and songs as they are commonly seen in the language class. Students and parents might have been satisfied with these simple language activities in the first few years of learning — but what will happen next? The English language curriculum in Japanese primary schools needs to improve further, yet there are still a very limited number of conferences and workshops in Japan to support these teachers and to show examples of alternatives and more advanced teaching methods. The local educational authorities and local universities could perhaps join together to take responsibility in providing more practical support for the teachers and schools in their local areas.

Action research for monitoring the progress

For this Drama-English project, action research was used as a research methodology to closely monitor and thoroughly reflect on the lessons and on the participants' responses. Action research allowed me as a researcher to include all the participants' voices, collated through video, written responses, questionnaires, class discussions, informal interviews, students' work samples and my weekly journal, all of which became invaluable sources of data in examining the insights emerging from the study. This range of personal reflections helped me to understand emergent events and the participants' various responses.

In Japan, there is a lack of research in the area of teaching methodologies for the English language curriculum in the primary schools. Matsukawa (2004) stresses an urgent need for research in this area and recommends action research as one of the suitable research methodologies. This study could be used as an example showing how to document and evaluate an alternative teaching method, such as Educational Drama, into the English language curriculum for Japanese primary schools. Furthermore, school-based research is crucial for improvement of the educational curricula, yet the research culture in Japan tends to stay within academic domains and it is not shared with classroom teachers and local schools.

Conclusion

This paper is based on a study of Year Six students' and teachers' responses to incorporating educational drama into the English language curriculum in a Japanese public primary school setting. The positive responses from the students indicated their acceptance of the educational drama approach although the teachers' responses were mixed and somewhat passive. This study revealed that educational drama has great potential as an additional teaching and learning tool in the Japanese primary school setting. The timing of the study was appropriate as primary schools had recently opened their doors to new teaching and learning approaches with the introduction of the English language curriculum within the subject of Integrated Studies.

Another beneficial element was that the English language curriculum had not yet been introduced as an academic subject — authorised textbooks and teaching manuals were not supplied by the Japanese Ministry of Education for this curriculum. Therefore, designing the curriculum without meeting strict requirements and guidelines from both the school and the Ministry was possible. If this had been an official subject, it would have been very difficult for this study to be conducted in Japan. The project with the Year Six students and their three teachers was a reflective process, which was a very effective

way of understanding the data and the participants throughout the project. After analysis of the data, it indicated that the students and teachers also benefited from the process of reflection — they learnt about themselves and discovered hidden potential in themselves as well as in others. In my observation of their interactions throughout the project, it became clear that they have improved their communicating and negotiating skills to reach a common goal. This project offered an opportunity for me, as an insider-researcher, and all participants to reflect on our teaching and learning process.

‘I wish I could learn English with drama once more.’
(Year 6-C student, final comment)

Work Cited

- Arhar, J., Holly, M. and Kasten, W. (2001). *Action Research for Teachers: Travelling the Yellow Brick Road*. New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Base, G. (2001). *The Waterhole*. Richmond, Vic: Penguin Books Australia.
- Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*. Geelong: Deakin University.
- Cherry, N. (1999). *Action Research: A pathway to Action, Knowledge and Learning*. Melbourne: RMIT University Press.
- Cusworth, R. and Simons, J. (1997). *Beyond the Script: Drama in Classroom*. Sydney: Primary English Teaching Association.
- Johnson, A. (2002). *A Short Guide to Action Research*. Boston, Mass: Allyn and Bacon.
- Kao, S. and O’Neill, C. (1998). *Words into worlds: learning a second language through process drama*. USA: Ablex Publishing.
- Kember, D. (2000). *Action Learning and Action Research*. London: Kogan Page.
- Kizuka, M. (2005) A consideration of English language teaching in state primary schools from the point of view of teacher education and teacher’s licensing. *The Language Teacher*. 29:9, 3-6.
- Liu, J. (2002). Process Drama in Second- and Foreign- Language Classrooms. In G. Brauer (Ed.), *Body and Language: Intercultural Learning Through Drama* (51-70). USA: Ablex Publishing.
- McConnell, D. (2000). *Importing Diversity: Inside Japan’s JET Program*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Macintyre, C. (2000). *The Art of Action Research in the Classroom*. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- McNiff, J., Lomax, P. and Whitehead, J. (2003). *You and Your Action Research Project* (Second Edition). NY: Routledge Falmer.
- Matsukawa, R. (2004). *Asuno shougakkoueigokyouikuwo hiraku*. Tokyo: Apurikotto.
- O’Toole, J. and Dunn, J. (2002). *Pretending to learn: Helping children learn through Drama*. NSW: Longman.
- Winston, J. and Tandy, M. (1998). *Beginning Drama 4-11*. London: David Fulton Publishers.