Applying Drama in English teaching.

Madonna Stinson
National Institute of Education
Nanyang Technological University
Singapore
What is drama?

- A collective agreement to pretend.
- We ‘step into the shoes of someone else’ to explore an issue or a series of events.
- Drama engages our imagination as we try out ideas in different situations.
Learning in drama:

- Forming: the creating and structuring of drama work
- Presenting: the sharing and performing of drama work
- Responding: the reflecting in, analysis of, and response to drama work.
Drama and language learning

- Research shows results include improved:
  - Spontaneity
  - Fluency
  - Articulation
  - Vocabulary
  - Language registers
  - Imagination
  - Grammatical and narrative structures.
Example of Cinderella drama ideas

- I like to use traditional stories for drama. The familiarity of traditional tales provides security for the beginning drama student and teacher.
Narrative structure

- Teacher models
- Students retell
- Readers Theatre
- Timeline of events
Communicating information

- Guided tours of
  - Palace
  - Cinderella’s home
  - Palace kitchen
  - Rooms of state
Identifying key moments

- Still images
  - Photos from the family album
  - Tapping in
  - Spontaneous monologue (Stream of consciousness)
Exploring attitudes and points of view:

- Prince Charming – who reveals that he is not really interested in getting married except to produce an heir to the throne;
- Cinderella – who reveals she will do anything to escape from her unbearable family;
- The chief cook – who is angry at having to suddenly prepare the food for hundreds of guests for the Prince’s ball;
- The nervous pageboy – who has found the shoe Cinderella left behind but is too scared to tell the Prince, so he has come to ask the students for advice.
Participation in dialogue

- facilitates language learning. Drama allows students to use their language knowledge to create and to respond to dialogue in varying contexts and for varying purposes. The fact that Drama is a collaborative experience under the management of the entire group, not just the teacher, allows for the possibility of student ownership of the learning situation and assists students in becoming intrinsically involved in developing dialogue so that the social interaction of the drama may continue (Kao & O'Neil, 1998)
Two Projects

Project 1

- DOL: Drama and Oral Language 2004

  - 4 schools; Normal Technical Students (S4); 10 hours of drama externally planned and facilitated by trained teachers.
## Communication requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missing Girl</th>
<th>Lost civilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Info:</strong> relating events to lived experiences</td>
<td><strong>Info:</strong> mantle of expert roles as scientists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soc. Int:</strong> interviewing roles in hot-seats, planning sequence of events</td>
<td><strong>Soc. Int.:</strong> roleplay scientists and ‘others’; persuade release of Susan Lim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LR &amp; exp:</strong> discussion and interpretation of pre-text</td>
<td><strong>LR &amp; exp:</strong> create the roles and location of ‘other group’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spy Drama</th>
<th>Bukit Merah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Info: immigration at airport.</td>
<td>Info: investigate use and misuse of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soc. Int: plan ‘back story’ to roles; investigate events</td>
<td>Soc. Int: cooperate in meeting in role to plan approach to Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LR &amp; exp: participate in role in constructed sequence of events</td>
<td>LR &amp; exp: respond to story &amp; create village and roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-test total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comp</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Clarity</th>
<th>Vocab</th>
<th>Relev</th>
<th>Inter</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comp</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7.97</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher comments</td>
<td>Student comments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>Enjoyable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>You have to think and learn in a different way.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>More confident</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Know more words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualised</td>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Project 2: Speak Out

- Invited by the Principal to work as a consultancy with the school
- Wanted to investigate the teacher ‘capacity’ and needs for regular EL teachers to employ drama as pedagogy
- Provided PD January; assisted with planning; co-teaching; modelling – throughout the year.
The Speaking Out Project 2005

- Teacher preparation
- Teacher-researcher partnerships
  - Research briefings
  - Workshops
  - Drama camp
  - Readings
  - Consultation, co-planning and co-teaching
  - Video reflection
Shift in teaching style

A usual English lesson will be more teacher focused, and less on the student interaction. So I think [in a] drama lesson there’s more student interaction, more student communication. Yeah and there’s a lot of movement, so its not only just sit and do work but rather they’re always moving around [to] explore issues and everything. [This is] something that might not be done well if it’s just a normal English lesson you know where they sit down and have a discussion. Devi
(interview 281005)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moving from</th>
<th>Moving to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Extended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise-based</td>
<td>Context-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-controlled</td>
<td>Student input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed activities</td>
<td>Complex &amp; open</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **e.g.:**
  - script, scripted role-play, readers’ theatre, language games
  - unscripted role-play/improvisation, playbuilding, process drama
Seeing the benefit

Overall, I noticed a greater unity among the groups and they conversed in English to a greater extent this time round. They usually do not speak other languages in class, but they do not attempt to converse much in English. (Chan journal – 1005)
I can see a significant increase in the number of students who speak English during that one or two lessons rather than only a handful speaking out during one lesson. So I think, in a way, it has created an awareness or created a need to speak English to one another. (Chan 050505)
Why use drama with ESOL students?

- the contextualisation of language
- the motivation, confidence and enthusiasm that drama promotes;
- the encouraging and safe atmosphere of the drama classroom; and
- the shift in power from teachers to students.
DOL dramas

- every student had to have at least one significant dialogue in every lesson;
- students were required to react and respond to questions or situations without any prior preparation;
- every drama incorporated group work, and students worked in diverse groups. This ensured they were not always collaborating with members of the same race or their usual friendship group and gave them opportunities to work with classmates with whom they would not normally work;
(cont)

- an ‘English only’ rule was imposed for the period of the drama;

- a range of different language registers and purposes were required by the communication contexts within the dramas. Students had the opportunity to be persuasive and evasive; to create their own narratives; to build on the narratives of others; to be angry, happy, sad and scared; to create and solve mysteries; and, hopefully, to have the opportunity to have fun and enjoy speaking in English;

- reflection time was allocated at the end of each of the dramas. During this time the facilitators encouraged the students to vocalise how they felt about the work and what they had learned.
The Missing Girl Drama

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Listening
Thank you

- Please feel free to contact me if you would like more information about this research:
- madonna.stinson@nie.edu.sg