

Participatory drama as a pedagogy for Chinese second language teachers: theory and practice, challenges and rewards

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ABSTRACT

This paper begins with a rationale for using participatory drama to support second language learning. Participatory drama differs from drama for performance in its concentration on process rather than product, the inclusive nature of its pedagogy and the malleability of its structure. It also differs from role play in its concentration on a developing story, the strength of its contextual frameworks and the emotional depth it can offer to pupil engagement. Like all forms of drama, however, it is artful, playful and encourages learners to adopt different identities, all of which can add to what is commonly perceived to be the potential of drama to motivate students to learn and use language. Crucially, however, the teacher has an important part to play in this pedagogy, and also must be prepared to switch and play with identities in order to encourage types of talk and ranges of emotion that are usually absent from the second language classroom. After providing some theoretical grounding, I will concentrate on practical issues, in particular on the challenges Chinese second language teachers face in adopting drama, with particular reference to the work of the research project “*Supporting the Learning and Teaching of Chinese Language for Learners of Chinese as a Second Language in Secondary Schools (2016 - 2018)*”. We will look at examples of curriculum planning, lesson structure, teacher questioning and pupil engagement as illustrated in this work. Rather than simply describing these examples, however, I will examine them from a dramatic perspective in order better to appreciate them as artistic as well as learning experiences; and to discuss the potential rewards such an appreciation can bring to teaching and learning Chinese as a second language in Hong Kong.