

Infusion of Drama Elements in Malay Language Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACTS

This paper explains the use of several strategies in teaching and learning using drama to help pupils at lower primary on the suitable use of appropriate verbs in Malay language learning. As a pedagogical tool, this strategy is not only used to teach pupils to produce a drama presentation using language but rather the elements of drama were used as catalyst to attract pupils' interest and engaged them in learning. The infusion of drama elements in Malay Language teaching and learning is a Lesson Study project involving primary 2 Malay Language pupils with low academic achievement. Earlier study showed that pupils with low academic achievement were more likely to be active in class and had short attention span. Strategies that were adopted in this lesson studies include Teacher-in-Role, Still Image and Role Play. These strategies which have the elements of drama in them proved to facilitate learning and create a mental framework which enabled pupils to develop their own 'world of imagination' actively. Still Image helped pupils to focus their attention and supported the process of analyzing data in crucial moments in act of drama. In addition, Still Image enabled pupils to understand the whole or overall idea of their learning by making learning more meaningful and effective. Pupils were found to be able to appreciate and be immersive in their roles and characterization using the verbs learnt appropriate to the contexts.

Key Words

Drama, Lesson Study, Still image, Teacher-in-Role

INTRODUCTION

The objectives of teaching and learning of Malay Language (ML) in infusing the elements of drama is to enhance the application of the language among pupils in particular the use of verbs in ML learning. As one of pedagogical tools, this method or strategy is not just to train pupils to produce drama presentation using ML however, the elements of drama was appropriately used and applied to attract pupils' interests and to engage pupils in their learning. The infusion of elements of drama in ML teaching and learning is a Lesson Study project to enhance teachers' professional development. The target pupils of this project are primary 2 ML pupils who had low

academic achievement. This group of pupils was also found to be kinesthetic in nature who loves to be engaged in hands-on activities.

We also discovered that our pupils were not able to organize their stories or ideas chronologically or in sequence. Due to this factor, these pupils were not able to brainstorm ideas or expand their imagination. If this factor is not rectified, it will affect and hinder their ability to write as they progress to the next level of their education.

With the infusion of elements of drama in ML teaching and learning, we hope that these strategies could be used by ML teachers as teaching strategies towards Teach Less, Learn More (TLLM), where pupils become the focal of teaching and learning and teachers act more as facilitators of learning. With more focus given to pupils' process of learning, pupils will be able to recognize and apply the use of appropriate verbs in organization of their ideas or stories.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Neelands (2009), the infusion of elements of drama in a child learning will enhance the interests in the child to learn, open up the doors for creativities and improve pupils' level of confident in presenting their ideas or views.

Still Image is an effective strategy to help pupils to understand and appreciate the importance of other components or sections in stories they read. This strategy will help pupils to understand certain parts in stories that they were not too sure off especially for those who read and failed to understand certain parts of the contents that they read. By acting out certain part of the drama or create movements for some parts of the drama and then 'froze' them or put them on Still Image mode, pupils were able to think and reflect and then learn to appreciate why the characters behave or act is certain manners in the drama. Pupils deepen the ideas and concepts by looking at the issues or ideas from different perspectives. Pupils become more sensitive and enthusiastic to learn ideas or lesson contents better. According to Neelands (2009), Still Image will ensure pupils to act or create facial expressions to produce images that represent certain sections in the drama. This will further enable pupils to experience deep learning and understanding of characters in the drama they portrayed.

Snyman and De Kock (1991) believe that drama can sustain or prolong pupils' interactions with each other's. This strategy will transform pupils to become '*active participant*' in their own learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Subject/Samples

Generally, pupils who were involved in this research are kinesthetic in nature. Pupils preferred way of learning is to visualize meaning in their mind and transform their understanding into meaningful physical movements in their process to understand the concepts taught.

The subjects for this research were 14 ML pupils. These pupils obtained basically low marks for ML and can be considered weak in ML. Based on their Semestral Assessment 2 (SA2) results in 2009; these pupils obtained very low marks for ML, in particular the writing components especially in term of organization of ideas.

These pupils had difficulty in completing the exercises or activities in the MEKAR (2008) workbooks, the official textbooks and workbooks for the learning of ML for primary school levels in Singapore. These pupils obtained very low marks in their assignments, activities or even ML tests conducted by teachers.

Based on data and information gathered, we had decided to infuse elements of drama as main strategy for ML teaching and learning for the 14 ML pupils. At the same time, ML teachers work together among them as observers in ML lessons for the lesson study project.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

In addition to the lesson observations carried out by the members of the lesson study project, photo clips of lessons conducted were also taken or recorded. In addition, the data collated for the post-test for all pupils involved were recorded and gathered. Pupils' marks for the post-test were carefully examined and critically analyzed.

Pupils marks before they administration of post-test were also critically analyzed and checked. Based on the analysis of marks for pre and post-test, ML teachers were able to assess the effectiveness of the lesson study project and the strategies used for teaching and learning of ML. Finally, we also conducted focus group discussion or focus group dialogue where the responses given by pupils were gathered and the views given by other pupils were recorded.

From these responses also, we concluded that the lesson study were effective. The data collated from this lesson study project could help teachers to plan the next phase of lesson study project that could benefit and enhance pupils' learning and also enhance teachers' professional development.

Research Procedure

The strategies that were infused in this research were *Teacher-in-Role*, *Still Image* and *Imagine That*. These strategies contain the elements of drama and have been acknowledged by researchers as effective platforms that facilitate learning. These strategies enabled pupils to develop their 'own personal world of imagination' actively.

Still Image helped pupils to focus their attention. These strategies which have the elements of drama in them proved to facilitate learning and create a mental framework which enabled pupils to develop their own 'world of imagination' actively. Still Image helped pupils to focus their attention and supported the process of analyzing data in crucial moments in act of drama. In addition, Still Image enabled pupils to understand the whole or overall idea of their learning by making learning more meaningful and effective. Pupils were found to be able to

appreciate and be immersive in their roles and characterization using the verbs learnt appropriate to the contexts. However, before teachers could use and apply these strategies in ML lessons, teachers need to administer a test for ML pupils before drama sessions were implemented. This test was administered one week before the lesson study project was carried out.

After all these steps were taken, teachers developed the lesson plan framework that infuses the elements of drama which were determined by teachers in ML lessons to be conducted.

For the school preparation, teachers prepared all the teaching resources, ‘props’ or tools needed to carry out the lesson plan so as to ensure and create rich and meaningful learning experiences, interesting and appealing to pupils. Teachers were also equipped with the necessary knowledge of drama. Senior Teacher for drama, Ms Nazreen Osman was roped in to conduct training on drama for ML teachers embarking in the lesson study. Ms Nazreen was an English teacher who is actively promoting the infusing of drama in language learning. The drama room was used for the implementation of the lesson plan so as to provide an authentic learning experience in language learning infused with elements of drama. The classroom setting was non-threatening and the theme for the lesson was ‘Princess and the Frog’.

According to Dr Madonna Stinson (2008), teachers could only see the effectiveness of drama as learning process that promotes learning if pupils undergone at least 6 hours of exposure in the intended strategy. Therefore, pupils in this lesson study project were exposed to at least 6 hours of lessons that were infused with elements of drama in them.

In the beginning stage, pupils went through games in drama. Games like ‘Simon Says’ was employed where pupils were required to act out the verbs taught by teachers. Some of the verbs chose or introduced by teachers are throw (*melambung*), jump (*melompat*), crawl (*merangkak*) and walk (*berjalan*). This activity was a ‘warm-up’ session to facilitate infusion of elements of drama in ML teaching and learning before they were introduced to a more structured and planned lesson that infused element of drama in ML teaching and learning.

FINDINGS

Pupils went through 3 sessions of elements of drama in ML lessons. After that, teachers administered post-test. The followings are data analysis collated.

Figure 1: Pre-test (conducted before drama session)

Marks	Percentage	No of Pupils
16 – 20	36	5
10 – 15	50	7
0 - 9	14	2
	100	14

After going through these programmes, the percentage of results were as followed:

Figure 2: Post-Test

Marks	Percentage	No of Pupils
16 – 20	64	9
10 – 15	36	5
0 - 9	-	-
	100	14

Focus Group Dialogue Session

At the end of the program, pupils were requested to answer several questions in a focus group dialogue session with teachers. The followings are views of pupils:

Student Views:

- Drama made us understand what teacher taught.
- Drama is so interesting and I can remember what my teacher taught.
- I like to learn in drama lesson.
- I can talk to my other friends.
- I can organize my story or ideas better.
- I become more confident.

Teachers who observed the lesson had positive views of the lesson that infused the elements of drama in ML lessons. The following are their views.

Teachers' Views:

- The learning environment is so comfortable and interesting. The relationship between teachers and pupils is cordial and friendly. It was evident that this warm relationship between teachers and pupils enhance the level of interactions and engagement of pupils in learning.
- Pupils were able to learn and brainstorm ideas better.

The findings of the research or lesson study clearly shows that teaching strategies that infused drama in language lesson have positive impacts on pupils' learning and interest towards learning. Pupils can better understand the use and meaning of verbs learnt. Pupils also show overall understanding of the whole story or ideas as they explored alternative perspectives as they engaged in the lesson infused with elements of drama. Drama has enabled pupils who are kinesthetic to interact and move frequently during lessons and this has enhanced their level of engagement in the lesson.

CONCLUSION

Challenges

The first challenge is discipline problem. Due to the profile of learners who are kinesthetic in nature, these pupils were easily excited and aroused. Teachers need to employ various strategies to address this problem. Some of the strategies employed were the clapping of hand method and reward system.

Second challenge is for teachers to be able to think fast to address unintended situation. Teachers should be able to 'think on the feet' or adapt fast to the need of these pupils. For example, some pupils in this lesson study project seek teacher's affection and attention constantly. Such situation if not handle carefully can disturb the whole planning and implementation of the lesson. Due to that, teachers need think fast to resolve the problems so to ensure other pupils can remain focus and not affected by the incident and lesson can move on without much disruption.

In conclusion, the implementation of this lesson study project need careful and detail planning. It also required schedule and planned time for discussion among teachers involved to determine the appropriate teaching strategies, resources and tools to implement the lesson. Teachers must also have the patience and confident to infuse the elements of drama in ML teaching to enhance learning.

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