The Waterhole: Using Educational Drama as a pedagogical tool in a foreign language class at a public primary school in Japan

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Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements Of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2006

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I certify that this is my original work and that all sources have been acknowledged. This thesis has not been previously submitted for any other degree.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study required many return trips between Japan and Australia. It was certainly a long journey to complete the lengthy task, however it was a rewarding process to reflect on my own educational experiences in both Australia and Japan. In addition, there were many discoveries in regards to Japanese culture, the education system, educational protocols, the common pedagogical approaches, and the nature of the relationship between the Japanese students and teachers. Re-discovering my home country was an exciting process, and my sincere gratitude and appreciation go to the following people for their encouragement and continuous support throughout this lengthy process.

I would like to thank the Year Six students, the three teachers, the principal, the vice-principal, and the administrative staff in the Japanese primary school for their enthusiastic participation and commitment.

Dr. Lee Emery, Dr. Kate Donelan, and Professor John O’Toole. My mentors and guides, all experts in their fields. My deepest gratitude and respect.

To my family and friends for their encouragement, understanding, and total support, especially my husband, daughter, mother, brother, grandparents and last but not least, my dear friend, Melissa.

My greatest gratitude goes to my husband, Paul. His dedication, support, and belief in me was unwavering. His total commitment to my goal, to the point of moving from Australia to live in Japan, allowed me to complete my thesis.

In loving memory of my father who encouraged and supported my dreams.
ABSTRACT

This study investigates Japanese primary school students’ and teachers’ responses to educational drama as a pedagogical tool in their English language classes. Along with the participants’ responses, the applicability of educational drama as a teaching method for the Japanese teachers is also discussed. The study was conducted in Japan as a teacher-researcher using participatory action research methods. The participants of the study are three Year Six classes and their teachers in a public primary school in Japan. Educational drama is introduced as an alternative teaching and learning method to these participants who have had no experience of drama in education.

A review of related literature focuses on the current educational issues in Japan and educational drama as a pedagogical tool in second/foreign language classes. Current educational issues include cultural, social, historical, and psychological elements of Japan. The related literature for educational drama as a pedagogical tool presents both familiar and unfamiliar forms of drama in Japan, and it also provides discussions of significant elements in educational drama. Through incorporating participatory action research as a research methodology, action research cycles are implemented in the project. The main chapters depict how the Japanese students and teachers respond to educational drama as a pedagogical tool in the English language curriculum and how these responses evolve throughout the project. Research outcomes are examined and discussed in relation to relevant literature in the later part of the thesis.

It becomes evident that educational drama tends 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 show enhancement of the skills necessary for learning, including social, communication, linguistic, non-linguistic and problem-solving skills. The significance of the teacher’s role in providing various teaching styles to the primary school students in their English language classes emerges from the data. This study suggests that educational drama can
be implemented as a pedagogical tool in the English language curriculum in Japanese primary schools. The study shows the significant changes in the participants, particularly in the students.
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My journey of learning and teaching foreign languages: English and Japanese

1. Introduction

This thesis is concerned with curriculum development of English language education in a Japanese primary school. The study investigates the effect of implementing a teaching methodology—Educational Drama, in English language classes in Japan. This subject area became significant to the researcher as a result of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) both in Japan and Australia. The researcher’s experiences as a Drama and Japanese Language Other Than English (LOTE) teacher in Australian primary schools motivated this investigation.

Japanese Education is currently undergoing educational reform following the influence of internationalism in Japan (Hook and Weiner, 1992; Moore and Lamie, 1996; McConnell, 2000; and Hood, 2001). One of the changes following this reform is to promote foreign language teaching and learning (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2001; Hattori and Yoshizawa, 2002; and Tomita, 2004). The implementation of foreign language education, particularly English language, in Japanese primary schools from 2002 is a significant change. English has been taught as an academic subject in secondary schools throughout Japan, but this is the first attempt to introduce it into the primary school curriculum. Japanese primary schools that are discussed here are government-run-public schools. Most private schools have already established their own English language curriculum as an additional subject. In the case of Japanese public schools, the teaching of the English language is part of a subject called Integrated Studies, and it is taught under a category of Teaching International Understanding (Hattori and Yoshizawa, 2002). The subject, Integrated Studies, starts
from Year Three in primary schools. Consequently, the English language curriculum is introduced from the same grade.

Many Japanese people describe English language education in Japan as a boring experience (Moore and Lamie, 1996) because their common impression of learning English through the education system is to memorise it, not to use it for communication. Therefore, it can be said that Japanese people study English but cannot use it (Togo, 2001). The impression seems to be based upon the current teaching methodology used in Japan that is called the Grammar Translation method (Moore and Lamie, 1996). As a result of this methodology, some researchers in Japanese education including Moore and Lamie (1996) and Togo (2001) state that Japanese people in general lack communicative abilities in English, especially speaking and listening skills, even after six years of English language education in the Japanese schooling system. The new educational reform aims to change their negative experience to a more positive one by implementing a variety of teaching methodologies other than traditional methods such as the grammar translation method, so that Japanese students will hopefully experience English language education as more enjoyable.

In designing this study of the use of educational drama in a Japanese school English language curriculum, my hope was that the outcomes would benefit both the students and teachers in Japan. The focus of the research is primary school education in Japan. I investigated whether educational drama would enable students and teachers to participate in an innovative and enjoyable process of English language learning and teaching.

The research methodology used for this study is participatory action research within which action research cycles are implemented. The main subjects of the project are primary school students and teachers in a Japanese public school who experienced, for the first time, educational drama as a teaching and learning tool in their English language classes. The participation of these people provides the study with insights into the effectiveness of the educational drama approach to foreign language curriculum in Japan.
The action research methodology helps in monitoring the participants’ responses and reflecting their progress throughout the project.

1.1 Research questions and focus of this study

Internationalism and foreign language education, particularly English language education, are deeply linked in Japan. It is not an exaggeration to say that internationalisation in Japan cannot be achieved without foreign language education. Yet, teaching methodologies for foreign languages are limited, especially within the school setting. Issues regarding the Japanese people’s level of foreign language competence, particularly the English language, are often discussed. It is said that they tend to feel embarrassed with their English language levels being so low in comparison to international standards. The most common solution for them to improve their English language abilities is to go to Eikaiwa, English conversational schools, after school or after work hours and on weekends. Their main aim in going to these schools on a weekly base is to practice their conversational English with native English speakers. In these schools, the native English teachers use textbooks and games for adults. These schools are also popular for younger learners including babies and school age children, and the materials including songs, dance, games, workbooks, and drills are often combined in class. Drama activities are not so common but there are some drama-like-activities such as short role-plays, which are at times included in some schools. In short, Japanese people mainly have experienced two types of methods in learning the English language: the Grammar/Translation method in official schools and the game focused activities outside school in the Eikaiwa classes.

The use of educational drama techniques in second/foreign language classes became popular within the last few decades in countries such as Australia, Canada, England, and The United States. According to current research, educational drama can provide positive benefits and outcomes to language learners. Kao and O’Neill’s work is one of the significant research projects that found second/foreign language learners developed
“their social and linguistic competence as well as listening and speaking skills” (1998, p. 4). Hays (1984), Hawkins (1993), Schewe and Shaw (1993), Byram and Fleming (1998), Heathcote and Bolton (1998), Liu (2002), Wagner (2002), and Ewing and Simons (2004) present positive outcomes suggesting that drama can stimulate the language learners’ motivation. Similar outcomes are seen in my study of teaching Japanese language as a foreign language to Australian primary school students using the process drama approach (Araki-Metcalfe, 2001). This method is context-focused, therefore this is suitable for primary school students. As a result of her study with primary school students, Moore (1998) concluded that educational drama enhances primary school students’ social, cultural, and linguistic knowledge through being immersed in fictional stories and roles.

There are two key research questions guiding this study of implementing educational drama in the English language classes for a Japanese primary school. The first research question relates to Japanese primary school students: How do Japanese primary school students respond to the use of educational drama in their foreign language curriculum? This study explores the difficulties and issues that arise in introducing educational drama given that there has been no Drama Education, as such, introduced into the Japanese school curriculum. Through this project, that is the focus of this research, the group of Japanese primary students experiment with various educational drama activities in their English language classes. Since the teaching of the English language in primary schools began in 2002, this particular school has been struggling to establish a curriculum that is appropriate for their students’ level of understanding and interest. In addition, these students have not had much exposure to the variety of learning methods regarding the English language.

The second question is: How applicable is it to Japanese teachers to use educational drama in teaching English to their students? As mentioned before, the English language is not considered as a subject, which means these classroom teachers have to plan a curriculum and teach the language whether or not they feel confident with their levels or abilities in the English language. These teachers are not often qualified as English language teachers. Japanese educators have been willing to welcome ideas for teaching
methodologies and materials, given that the implementation of teaching English in primary schools is recent. Thus, the educational drama approach was also new to these teachers as a teaching methodology.

The following questions are also considered during the project: What impressions do the Japanese students and teachers have of Drama? What impressions of English learning and teaching do they have? How do these impressions change after they attend the Drama-English classes? How do they react in class when they face difficulties in the project? How does educational drama affect the students’ motivation in their English language learning?

1.2 Methodology

The choice of methodology for the study plays an important role in this thesis. As my aim is to examine the Japanese students’ and teachers’ responses in Drama-English classes, participatory action research was chosen for the research methodology.

1.2.1 Mythic identity of Japan

It seems that the stereotypical images of Japan in non-Japanese people are influenced by ‘mythical beliefs’. These beliefs seem to be based on reading materials, media, and personal experiences. According to Mouer and Sugimoto (1986), stereotypes of Japan are described in most literature on Japan in 1970s as though “all Japanese are uniform in size, shape, behavior, and thought. Much of the literature tends to deal with the Japanese personality as though it emerges from a single cultural mold; the popular image suggested that Japanese behavior arises out of a common mental frame without individual idiosyncrasies” (p. 10). Okano and Tsuchiya (1999) argue that images of Japanese people and society sometimes can be over exaggerated or misinterpreted and “are highly abstract constructs developed in line with Western traditional logic...[because the]
theories that people form about a particular event or situation are often based on assumptions of their own, which they may have taken for granted, or even be completely unaware of” (p. 2).

Such an understanding tends to give a “neat depiction” (Okano and Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 2) of a particular society however it is significant to interpret its function, structure, history, and philosophy from multi perspectives. The neat depiction seems to have resulted in a sense of cultural superiority towards other cultures. This cultural superiority occasionally invites unfair judgement when outsiders conduct research that “people often happily leave a situation without actively seeking to future test and refine them through a deliberate process of conjecture and refutation” (Okano and Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 2). Academics in recent years, such as Okano and Tsuchiya as well as Mouer and Sugimoto, have however started questioning stereotypical images of Japanese people and society described by previous literature. Most scholars who have raised the question seem to be native to Japan.

For the project of Drama-English classes in a Japanese primary school, I as a native Japanese person, investigate the Japanese participants’ responses. I hope to approach the study with different perspectives from non-Japanese people and to gain more insight of the primary school education in Japan as someone who is Japanese but who has lived, studied, and taught in Australia.

1.2.2 Participatory Action research as a research methodology

This project in a primary school gives an opportunity for a group of Japanese students and teachers to re-evaluate their mythical beliefs of the English language and its related cultures. The mythical beliefs here include educational approaches to foreign language learning and teaching. This project introduces a new teaching method of drama within the formal Japanese educational setting.
The implementation of participatory action research as a methodology was necessary in order to achieve this re-evaluation process. This methodology allowed me to closely monitor the participants, to build up an understanding of their beliefs and impressions of education, and to observe their responses over time to this new approach to drama and foreign language education. Another positive aspect of the participatory action research was to allow me as a researcher to be involved fully in this study both on a personal and professional level. From planning to evaluation stages, I took initiatives to guide these students and teachers in a unit of Drama-English classes. Through the process, I as a researcher occasionally needed to be reminded of the importance of keeping a sense of distance. In other words, shifting between involvement and detachment during the project was an important element.

1.3 Motivations for the research

The reasons for conducting research on this topic are closely related to my personal experiences as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learner. In addition, my teaching experiences as a Drama teacher and a Japanese Language Other Than English (LOTE) teacher greatly contributed to the decision to choose the topic of using educational drama as a teaching and learning methodology. My personal experiences in regards to foreign language learning and teaching will be discussed below.

1.3.1 Learning English as a foreign language in Japan

Experiences in my childhood regarding learning the English language gave me some insight into the positioning of the English language in Japanese people’s lives from early 1980 to late 1990. The following sections reflect my own learning of the English language from pre-school years in Japan to my tertiary education in Australia.
Pre-school years

My first experience in learning English goes back to my early childhood, even before my schooling. One of my mother’s friends was teaching English at home every Saturday to the local children. There were four or five children in the class including her own two children. She was a full-time housewife who was interested in teaching conversational English despite no qualification as a teacher, or experience in living in an English speaking country. Every Saturday, my brother and I went to her house and learnt simple English words such as colours and home objects. We played a matching game and other card games using picture cards on which English words were written. We also had a textbook each, and a few pages were covered in each class. The contents of the textbook were very simple, and often we had to colour in a section or trace lines with a stated colour. I still remember that I repeatedly said out loud the name of a colour in English with a Japanese accent as I traced or coloured in, such as “blue, blue, blue, blue” and “red, red, red, red”. The teacher sometimes came around to see each individual’s work progress and asked questions in Japanese: “How do you say this colour in English?” and “What colour are you using now? Can you say that colour in English?”

My mother believed that learning English from an early age was the key to becoming successful internationally when we grew up, as she was born and brought up in Nagasaki where she gained an insight into the importance of English internationally. Nagasaki is historically known as one of the old international cities in Japan. As claimed by Moore and Lamie (1996), Nagasaki also deeply relates to the history of foreign language education in Japan. Because of my mother’s strong belief in English language education, we often played English card games and repeated the textbook work at home.

One picture card, where I experienced a cultural difference for the first time between Japan and the non-Japanese countries, was the card for the word ‘gate’. The picture showed an arched steel gate with a large area of front yard in front of a house on a hill. The picture was very foreign to me as I lived in a tiny two bedroom flat in a heavily populated area of the largest city in Kyushu, Japan. I had trouble remembering the
English word ‘gate’ every time I played the game because such a huge gate in front of a house was not seen in my everyday life during my pre-school years.

My father’s preference for music was another influence, in that he was very fond of English music, in particular the 60s and 70s music. He often listened to that type of music in his car so that these songs became my lullaby before I fell asleep in the car. To me, the English language existed only in my English textbook, card games, and my father’s cassette tapes.

Primary school years

Another cultural difference that I experienced was when I first met *gaikokujin* (foreigners), my American uncle and cousins. I was in Year Three in a public primary school and until that moment I had never met any non-Japanese people before, therefore I could not imagine that English was spoken to communicate among other people just like I did with my native language, Japanese. My Japanese aunt married an American soldier after World War Two, and they moved back to America. My grandparents hardly talked about them as they were against the marriage. When I was introduced to them, I was stunned because a tall skinny blue-eyed American uncle spoke to me in a foreign language, English. My cousins also looked non-Japanese to me and they never spoke any Japanese words. While they stayed in my grandparents’ house, I often visited them to see how they coped with life in Japan, for example using chopsticks in a different way, eating Japanese food with forks and knives all the time, and dancing to popular American songs. During their visit, all I heard was the English word, “maybe” because my cousins repeated the word so often to their parents. I remember asking my aunt the meaning of the word.

A few years after I met my American relatives, I had my first opportunity to travel outside Japan. My uncle and aunt used to live in Hawaii, due to my uncle’s job in the army. My family stayed with them for a month during one school holiday in the summer.
I was more relaxed this time meeting my relatives. My impression of America was that people looked more free and relaxed. They did not seem to be so hectic as so many Japanese people seemed to be.

**Junior high school years**

My formal English language education started as I entered a local public junior high school, which is equivalent to Year Seven in Australia. My English language teacher at school was a female teacher near the age of her retirement. She was a native to Japan, as many English teachers are in Japanese schools. She spoke English with a strong Japanese accent and often made silly jokes with English sounds. In her English class, she followed the authorised textbook issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan.

The study focus was mainly to memorise the weekly vocabulary, learn targeted grammar patterns, and translate the English textbook sentence by sentence. The students were occasionally asked to listen to an English conversation tape. Thus, I never had to speak any English words in my English classes except when an American assistant teacher from the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) program came to my school for a short period of time. The assistant teacher just copied my old Japanese teacher all the time and demonstrated pronunciations, intonations, and pitches in English. To most of my classmates, this was the first time that they had met a ‘real’ foreigner. Tension in the class was at a peak when the JET teacher was present. All the students were to have short conversations with her in English although she just repeatedly asked a simple set of questions to the forty individual students in the class, “How are you?” or “What is your name?” We all replied to her in the same sentence patterns that are “I am fine. Thank you” and “My name is ~”.
This unique international experience only happened once a year. In the final year of my junior high school, all the English classes became boring grammar-translation focused classes in order to prepare the students for the high school entrance examinations.

High school years

After passing the entrance examination, I was accepted into a large private girls’ high school and spent another three years there completing my secondary education. This girls’ school belonged to one of the Japanese high school categories called “Non elite Academic High Schools: Mainstream High Schooling” (Okano and Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 67). Okano and Tsuchiya (1999) explain that this type of high school aims “to prepare students for less prestigious universities and junior colleges but which in reality sends a considerable proportion of their students to private specialist schools., which teach subjects such as book-keeping, languages and computer programming” (p. 65).

There were about one thousand girls in my grade in nineteen classes of fifty students per class. English language was a compulsory academic subject in the school, and the teaching methodology was exactly the same as my junior high school’s method. The content of the curriculum was more difficult and the English language classes were divided into two features: they were called ‘Reader’ and ‘Grammar’. The students memorised the new vocabulary and translated an English textbook in the ‘Reader’ classes. In the Grammar classes, my English teacher explained the function of English grammar in Japanese.

I had two different English teachers who were both native Japanese speakers. The teacher in the ‘Reader’ class was a female who spoke reasonable English compared with most of the English language teachers. She had been to English speaking countries before and even lived in those countries for a few months.
On the contrary, the teacher in the ‘Grammar’ class was a male who had never been to other countries as he was afraid of being on airplanes. He was also interested in theatre and ran a theatre club in the school. I was very enthusiastic about studying English and often asked him many questions about the English grammar, however my memory of his attitude was very negative. He disapproved of me asking many questions because he believed that it delayed his curriculum schedule and often he could not answer the questions. Once he even yelled at me in front of other classmates, “Shut up, you. You just listen and be quiet!!” Moore and Lamie (1996) reaffirm his attitudes: “it (is) entirely inappropriate to ask questions” in Japanese classrooms (p. 120). Due to this classroom ethos, many of my classmates hardly asked any questions in class. It seemed from my experience that the number of Japanese students asking questions to their teachers in class decreased as they went through the education system.

In terms of developing the students’ oral communication skills in English, there were no efforts made by these Japanese teachers of English, despite possessing a new and professional language laboratory at the school. In all my high school years, I never used this room and had never seen any other grades or classes using it. Moore and Lamie (1996, p. 121) agree that the language laboratories were not used much in Japanese schools. Moreover, many language teachers do not have any idea how to make use of them. To improve my oral communication skills in English, I joined in an English language club in the school but all the club members did was talk in Japanese, not practising English conversation as I had hoped.

Despite the boring English language classes and the negativity from the Japanese English teachers, I had developed a desire to be able to speak with native English speakers, hopefully to begin studying in English speaking countries. I was very interested in other cultures and their languages partially because I was against the expectations and duties of a woman in Japan. At that time, it seemed that there were many restrictions on women in Japan and that they were not allowed to choose their own paths very much; they were expected to follow in the traditional way including finishing their schooling, working in an office for a few years, and getting married to have children. As I observed people in
Hawaii in my youth, my images of the West as free, individual, and more relaxed were expanded throughout my teenage years.

Although my classmates in the girls’ school had decided to go to home economic courses in the two-year junior college operated by the same organization as the school, my aim was to receive my tertiary education in an English speaking country, Australia. This was a very unusual choice among these students. Some of the private girls’ high schools send “over 50 per cent of their graduates directly to two-year junior colleges” (Okano and Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 69). In reality, employers in Japan have a tendency to hire more women who graduated from high schools or junior colleges than a four-year course at universities “on the assumption that (less educated women) would quit upon marriage or childbirth…(On the other hand, university graduates) are more expensive and have fewer years to work for them” (Okano and Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 75~76). In short, many Japanese employers tend to believe that they can gain more benefit from less educated women because these women have more years of work in them than the more educated women.

My classmates from the girls’ high school were fully aware of the reality and expectations in Japan, therefore they chose their educational path accordingly. “Girls are aware, to varying degrees, that their academic excellence does not translate into rewards in post-school life in the same way that it does for boys; and that they are expected to perform ‘woman’s roles’ once married” (Okano and Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 78). Okano and Tsuchiya (1999) also claim that Japanese parents’ opinions tend to influence Japanese women’s educational and professional careers, as they are likely to depend financially upon their sons rather than their daughters in their older age. Therefore, they make “an economic calculation of financial return on the investment of family resources” (Brinton 1993, p. 209 cited by Okano and Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 76). Taking these perspectives and expectations for women in Japan into account, most of the people, including my homeroom teacher and classmates, were against my future choice of studying at a university in another country. My homeroom teacher was especially disagreeable, to the point that she despised my opinion. In her eyes, it was obvious that my ambitions were
extremely unrealistic. My parents were the only people who expressed their total support.

While most of my classmates were attending *Juku* (supplement schools after official school hours) to enhance their academic levels for their examinations to enter universities, junior colleges, or even employment, I focused on studying only English and attended *Eikaiwa* (an English conversation school) to improve my oral skills in English. Moore and Lamie (1996) claim that *Eikaiwa* is a billion dollar business in Japan; Japanese people from children to adults go there to learn conversational English from native English speakers. In the *Eikaiwa* that I attended, there were nine students in my class who were university students, high school students, business people, and housewives. We all had a textbook and followed page by page. Although the context of the textbook differed from the ones that I used in my junior and high schools, the classroom atmosphere was still similar to the one in my high school. Students passively listen to the native English teachers and followed their instructions faithfully.

My high school usually supported final year students in choosing their future schools or workplaces, however in my case I did not receive any support from the school or the homeroom teacher. I therefore gathered information on the universities in Australia and organised application forms and other legal documents as an overseas student all by myself. It was a very lonely and difficult task to tackle by myself but once I received an acceptance form for the Foundation Course at The University of Melbourne, Australia, all the hardship paid off. My homeroom teacher in Japan was very surprised with the acceptance offer, but she was still not pleased with my decision to study abroad.

1.3.2 Learning English as a second language in Australia

My experience studying and later becoming a teacher in Australia was an awakening that totally changed my perceptions of education. It was also very challenging to live and study in a foreign land all by myself.
Tertiary Education: The Foundation Course

Studying in the Foundation course, at The University of Melbourne in Australia, was a significant turning point in my life as I met so many overseas students who shared similar dreams and ambitions. Our first priority was to study hard in order to enter a university in Australia, in the hope of going back home with a degree. This foundation year was the first opportunity for me to use English as a survival tool. I experienced many hardships in relation to cultural differences in language, everyday life, and study methods. The difficulty that I faced in everyday life in Australia was the phonological problems between the Japanese and English languages. “There are sounds in English that do not exist in Japanese and Japanese learners continue to have great difficulty in mastering them” (Moore and Lamie, 1996, p. 49). Certain English pronunciations were very hard to pronounce for me because some English sounds do not exist in the Japanese language at all and “they are quite unable to hear it without dedicated practice and therefore find it very hard to produce” (Moore and Lamie, 1996, p. 50). Some examples of these sounds provided by Moore and Lamie (1996, p. 49~51) and Togo (2001) are ‘l’ and ‘r’, ‘f’ and ‘w’, and some vowel sounds. In particular, the difference between ‘l’ and ‘r’ was very awkward for me to pronounce so that sometimes my English version of the words ‘freeway’ became ‘fleeway’ or ‘rice’ became ‘lice’ and many Australians were confused with what I was trying to say. For the prevention of such mistakes, I often spelt the words in my mind before I vocalised the words.

Another issue for me in studying in Australia was the need to adapt to a different learning style. In the Japanese education system, students are more passive in the classroom than those in Australia. It was my impression that Japanese students are expected to learn ‘facts’ which are in accordance with the authorised textbooks by the Ministry of Education, and the students are usually examined on how much they can memorise the facts. Therefore, I was not used to writing an essay, especially expressing my own opinions and understanding. There were occasional essay writing classes in my secondary schools, but from my experience the essays were hardly assessed for the purpose of any academic record. In addition, Japanese students are required to write their
personal opinions indirectly rather than to support their argument with references. As Japanese students are familiar with an indirect way of writing and a fact cramming approach, their writing tends to become more descriptive than argumentative.

In essay writing in Australia, I had to start by searching for my own opinions. This was extremely challenging to me as a Japanese student, as I was only used to the idea of memorising the ‘right’ answers. It took a while for me to recognise that it is acceptable to have a variety of opinions and answers to essay questions, as long as I could argue my points and support them with references. Once I cleared the hurdle of complicated essay writing with the help of many Australian teachers, writing became a stimulating process for expressing myself. I stopped worrying about getting ‘the right answer’.

The foundation year also offered me the opportunity to experience Drama Education for the first time in my life. It also inspired me to continue studying the subject in both undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Although I never received any Drama Education in Japan, I immediately became interested in drama. The content of the drama curriculum started in the following order: mime including eye contact and body movement, solo performance with a set script, group improvisation, and stage performances. A variety of drama games and activities were also included in the weekly drama classes. Among other academic subjects, including English literature, History, Psychology, and Geography, that I had to study in the Foundation course with my limited English, Drama was the only course where I could understand what I was expected to do and I therefore fully enjoyed the classes. The major difference between drama and other academic subjects was that the drama activities provided visual stimulation through body movement and facial expressions, instead of only relying on verbal and written information. Even when I heard some unfamiliar English words used by other classmates and teachers, I often could guess the meaning through observing their actions. This process of guessing the possible meaning was a very enjoyable experience for me to the point that I became more observant of Australians, their body language, expressions, and the language that they used in various situations.
In my opinion, studying the translation of human behaviour, emotion, and language in the drama classes contributed greatly to the development of my English language skills, especially oral communication skills. As I became more observant, my confidence in speaking English increased, and I was able to manipulate appropriate verbal and non-verbal expressions. Thus, Drama classes offered me the confidence to speak out, and I started feeling more relaxed about making mistakes in class, where I had been so afraid of doing so in Japan. As Moore and Lamie (1996) explain, “making mistakes was regarded as an admission of ignorance” in Japan (p. 120). This relates to one of Okano and Tsuchiya’s (1999) four roles of Japanese education; that Japanese schools legitimate “particular sets of dispositions that are considered to be desirable (such as perseverance), a particular world view, and a system of value, as being universally virtuous, ‘correct’ and equally valuable for everyone” (p. 6).

From my personal experience, my interpretation of Japanese education is that there is always only one correct answer for everything and students are expected to study and memorise the correct answer. Therefore, making mistakes is considered as a lack of effort in memorising a particular subject. Until I experienced drama in Australia, my learning experience at Japanese schools created a limited image in me that learning is something that I had to do by cramming as much ‘correct’ information as possible into my brain, rather than something that I could enjoy. Drama provided an additional way of exploring the world and gaining multiple perspectives of people and their behaviours. The drama approaches that I experienced were very influential in terms of understanding Australian culture and the English language because drama creates context, roles, settings, and moods through my participation. Drama definitely provided a long-term influence on my learning.

Tertiary Education: Undergraduate and Postgraduate studies

Through my undergraduate studies in a Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree, I increased my interest in uniting second/foreign language education and drama. It seemed
to me that these two subjects were totally different curriculum areas in the beginning. However, I gradually developed an idea of implementing educational drama in teaching Japanese as a foreign language to Australian primary school students. This idea was inspired by the following experiences: participating in drama classes at the university; and reading Moore’s (1998) publication that shows the effectiveness of educational drama in teaching literacy to Australian primary schools students. Consequently, the idea was implemented in my Masters of Education thesis topic of teaching the Japanese language to Australian primary school students using process drama (Araki-Metcalfe, 2001). I had several major motivations in the study for my Masters thesis. The first one was that there was much literature available on teaching second/foreign language using the drama approaches for the primary school level. The second motivation was to investigate a more effective drama approach to classroom drama than the typical theatre focused activities that I had experienced in the Foundation Course.

A particular drama technique, ‘process drama’, in ESL (English as a Second Language) classes by Kao and O’Neill (1998) seemed to be successful in engaging Taiwanese university students’ involvement in effective second language learning. Many writers argue that process drama is context-focused and consequently is effective as an educational methodology (Booth, 1994; O’Neill, 1995; Taylor, 1995; Cusworth and Simons, 1997; Moore, 1998; Winston and Tandy, 1998; Liu, 2002; Wagner, 2002; and Ewing and Simons, 2004).

My previous study of the use of educational drama for Japanese Language Other Than English (LOTE) in an Australian primary school provided an account of students’ engagement and motivation in learning Japanese. This method has now been presented to LOTE teachers and drama specialists through several conferences in Australia. Many LOTE teachers that I met expressed their concerns that the methods in teaching a second/foreign language needed more variety and that in particular Australian students seem to require more active engagement in their second/foreign language learning. Therefore, educational drama as an alternative teaching method appeared to be very welcomed by these teachers and students.
1.4 Structure of The Thesis

Educational Drama as a teaching and learning methodology is well accepted by Australian teachers and students. For my PhD study, I became more interested in the trial of implementing the educational drama approach into the Japanese primary school setting. The related literatures are summarised in both Chapter Two and Three. In Chapter Two, Japan is analysed from various angles including sociological, political, and educational points of view. The main discussion here focuses on Japanese society and culture as well as the latest educational movement of internationalism. In education, the English language curriculum in Japan is the focus of attention. Since 2002, Japanese primary school students have been learning the English language at the primary school level, however there are many issues relating to the introduction of the English language curriculum. The following chapter, Chapter Three, presents a discussion of educational drama and drama as a teaching method in second/foreign language classes. Chapter Four discusses my research methodology. Participatory action research is discussed in detail and its application to this project of implementing Drama in the English language classes in Japan is outlined. This chapter also gives insights into the challenges and struggles I encountered, particularly at the preparation stages of the project after moving to Japan. I was away from Japan for almost ten years and I discovered that the Japanese educational environment had greatly changed.

Chapter Five and Six depict responses of the Japanese students and teachers to Drama-English classes at a public primary school in Japan. In these chapters, I record my observations of the students and teachers throughout the project. The classroom interactions between these participants and myself as a teacher-researcher are also included. Chapter Seven presents an analysis of the collected data from the Drama-English project. The final chapter of this thesis summarises the overall structure of the project. This chapter includes suggestions for future studies in the area of educational drama and the Japanese education system, in particular the English language curriculum in primary schools.
Internationalisation of Japan

2. Introduction

Japan is now one of the popular tourist destinations in the world, and other countries have shown their interest in Japan because of its history, culture, and society. Japanese people are often described as hard working, serious, robotic, poker-faced, and business orientated, yet they are also seen as polite, friendly, and law-abiding. Each society contains different and unique dimensions, which are intertwined. Individuals’ perceptions of one country vary according to their experience, knowledge, and/or the period of stay in that particular country. It seems a typical view of non-Japanese people that Japanese people tend to act in the same way and follow the same patterns. In other words, they are less individualistic. However, the more time outsiders spend and are immersed in the country, the more layers they can peel back and see that Japan is made up of individuals who, on the surface, appear to act and behave as one.

In this chapter, the current situation in Japan with regards to its people and education are analysed. A main characteristic of Japanese culture, Japanese double dimensions, will be the first focus of discussion to reveal a deeper side of Japanese culture. Then, the discussion will move on to primary school education in Japan; in particular how the recent social and political movement of internationalisation has influenced the Japanese educational curriculum. ‘Internationalisation’ to Japanese people means something quite different to non-Japanese people’s perception of internationalisation. Foreign language education is, for example, an important element in the spread of internationalisation in Japanese schools. In particular, the effect of implementing English language education in primary schools for the first time cannot be ignored.

This study of Drama-English classes in a Japanese public primary school setting involves educational drama as a teaching method. The definitions and characteristics of
educational drama will be presented in the next chapter, Chapter Three. The next chapter also presents a discussion of the relationship between educational drama and second/foreign language education. Second/foreign language education is concerned with that the motivation language learners, and this study focuses on the effect of educational drama on language learners’ motivation.

2.1 Cognition of Japanese people and primary school education

An educational system is embedded to its context and so in this discussion the characteristics of Japanese people and society are discussed. In the case of the Japanese education system, understanding the characteristics of ‘double dimensions’ helps to explain the nature of the educational structures and principles in Japan.

2.1.1 Legitimisation of double dimensions

As far as Japanese society and people are concerned, legitimisation of double dimensions is often discussed (Hendry, 1987; March, 1990; Rosemberger, 1992; Sugimoto, 1997; and McConnell, 2000). It is commonly perceived by non-Japanese people that Japanese people tend to hide their true feelings: it is difficult to understand what Japanese people are really thinking. March (1990) describes this as Japanese people putting a mask over their personal feelings. “Japanese, exceptionally skilful at nondisclosure at masking and restraint of emotions, are indeed hard people to read, especially for the inexperienced Westerner” (March, 1990, p. 142). Understanding the double dimensions in Japanese people enables non-Japanese people to perceive the behaviours and cognitive thinking of the Japanese people. “Double [dimensions] are legitimised in many spheres of Japanese life, thereby creating a world behind the surface”(Sugimoto, 1997, p. 26). This world behind the surface is a private side of Japanese people that reflects “one’s true feelings and thoughts” (March, 1990, p. 142). The world that appears on the surface can also be described by an English phrase, “dress[ed] for public consumption” (March, 1990, p.
Behaviour that Japanese people show on the surface can be called *tatema* and the opposite private side is called *honnne*. “*Tatemae* refers to a formally established principle which is not necessarily accepted or practiced by the parties involved” (Sugimoto, 1997, p. 26). Sugimoto (1997) additionally claims that *honnne* “cannot be expressed because of the strength of *tatemae*” (p. 26). Japanese people successfully manipulate these two separate behaviours depending upon the “degrees of distance or closeness, difference or fusion” among people (Rosenberger, 1992, p. 14).

### 2.1.2 Double dimensions of Tatema and Honne

The terms of *tatema* and *honnne* can be conveyed by other indigenous terms such as *soto/uchi* (outer/inner) and *omote/ura* (front/back) (Hendry, 1987; Rosenberger, 1992; and Sugimoto, 1997). Hendry (1987) argues that the notion of *soto/uchi* probably originates in separating the outside and inside of the house. The term, *uchi*, literally means a house in Japanese language. Sugimoto (1997) summarises a characteristic of Japanese people that they “cannot candidly discuss sensitive matters in [*soto*] but can straightforwardly break confidentiality in [*uchi*] situation” (p. 26). Moreover, Bachnik (1992) shows that another dimension of *omote/ura* can be seen in the use of space in Japanese house, especially in traditional Japanese houses. The following rooms are considered as *ura*; storeroom, bedroom, and kitchen. Other rooms are such as a guest room that faces onto a Japanese style garden is regarded as *omote*. This represents “the correct surface or front which is openly permissible” (Sugimoto, 1997, p. 26), as the opposite term, *ura*, refers to “the wrong, dark, concealed side which is publicly unacceptable” (Sugimoto, 1997, p. 26). Thus, when guests are invited to a Japanese household, only the *omote* side of rooms are shown.

The Japanese value the formal dimension, *omote* or *tatema* as well as the spontaneous dimension, *ura* or *honne*. Because the *omote/tatema* side often appears on the surface, it is likely to be misunderstood by non-Japanese people when Japanese people switch to the *ura/honne* side. Hendry (1995) says that in Japanese culture “there is a clear distinction
between the public face and the private self behind it, between formal behaviour appropriate for particular situations and the informal behaviour allowed in more intimate circles, between *uchii* and *soto*, or the *tatamae* of role playing and the *honne* of the thoughts behind it” (p. 63). This double standard exists in other cultures to various degrees; “in any society,…there are constraints, and areas of freedom and choice, whichever of these is presented as the ideal” (Hendry, 1995, p. 56). However, understanding the Japanese way of double dimensions requires a certain amount of time and a variety of experiences.

### 2.1.3 Double dimensions in self

These two sets of meanings: *tatamae/honne* (obligation/true feelings), *soto/uchii* (outer/inner), and *omote/ura* (front/back) can also relate to the sense of self in Japanese people. These double sets of terminology are in other words understood as the disciplined self and spontaneous self (Bachnik, 1992). In order to live comfortably and to be accepted as a responsible adult in Japanese society, it is necessary to develop skills to manipulate the double dimensions at a personal level. Bachnik (1992) stresses the importance of this manipulation: “the ability to shift successfully from spontaneous to disciplined behavior, through identification of a particular situation along an “inner” or “outer” axis, is a crucial social skill for the Japanese, which must be learnt in order for one to function as an adult” (p. 155). This ability is often called *kejime*, which is “a meta-level concept” (Bachnik, 1992, p. 157). Bachnik (1992) stresses the importance of teaching *kejime* in Japanese society, especially in its education system because this emerges “as a crucial kind of native knowledge about how moment is initiated and defined along the double set of coordinates” (p. 156). Thus, Japanese people who have *kejime* are considered as adults who have a mature sense of self.

Findings by Tobin (1992) concluded that the aim of Japanese kindergartens is for children to become aware of the cultural and social double dimensions such as: home (*uchii*, inside) and kindergarten (*soto*, outside); behaving properly in a temple (*tatamae*,
obligation) and playing with friends in a muddy field (honne, true feelings); and “formal ceremonial, highly structured (omote) group activities...[and] informal, unstructured, spontaneous (ura) group activities” (Tobin, 1992, p. 32). Tobin (1992) argues that “Japanese preschool prepares children for the group life they will encounter in elementary school, junior high school, and beyond by giving children many opportunities to participate in both [dimensions]” (p. 32). Hendry (2003) also explains children gradually become familiar with group structure through joining a new social group like preschool. These children soon learn that “there is little choice about cooperating with the group, that the way to gain attention and benefit personally is to be an active participant” (p. 59). Thus, “they subject their individual needs to those of the group as a whole” (Hendrey, 2003, p. 59). Tobin (1992) believes that the integration of the two dimensions is also a vital skill to be established. Influenced by Doi and Yoshizawa, Tobin (1992) says that “children who behave too well, like children who behave too badly, are one-dimensional, lacking a sense of ura in one case, a sense of omote in the other” (p. 32). As Gardner (1983) suggests, preschool periods are the most appropriate time to introduce cultural and social dimensions because “the culture makes available to [them] an entire system interpretation on which [they] can draw as [they attempt] to make sense of the experiences [they themselves undergo] as well as of those involving others” (p. 246).

2.1.4 Japanese primary school education

Primary school education also greatly influences Japanese children’s learning. Between the ages of six to twelve years, all Japanese students attend neighbourhood co-educational public schools for six years. These schools are “socially fairly heterogeneous” (Hood, 2001). Hendry (2003) summarises that the main principle for primary school education in Japan is to provide individual students with an equal opportunity to share the benefit of the system as a social group. This group refers to an individual class and small groups within the class that are called han groups.
Primary school education in Japan aims to develop individual students’ social and academic skills within the harmony of the class and han group systems. However, this original aim of behaving harmoniously as a member of a social group does not seem to match changes in the recent structure of society and the life-style of the students (Kawamura, 1999). The structure of society has become more individualistically oriented. For example, there are more Japanese families with fewer family members in the household, and neighbours do not know about each other as much. The life-style of the students has also changed so that they prefer to play individually (such as with TV games and computers) at home rather than playing outside with a group of friends. Kawamura (1999) feels that students nowadays have less opportunity to participate in group activities outside of school and to experience self-growth in a harmonious grouping system as promoted by the Japanese government in its educational policy.

The effective use of small group structures in the classroom is an appealing characteristic of the Japanese primary school education system (Cummings, 1980; Lewis, 1995; Stevenson, 1998; White, 1998; and Hendry, 2003). This small group, han, is often constructed with five or six students in each group. Members of the han group work together throughout most daily school activities: they participate in learning together, eat school lunch together, and clean the classroom and school. These members change every month or term depending on the schools and teachers, and “the percentage of time the class is broken down into these subgroups is variable” (Stevenson, 1998, p. 109). Stevenson (1998) argues the benefits of this han system; mixed ability groups enable slow learners to receive help from other members of the han and all members work together towards achieving a common goal as a han. On the other hand, one negative aspect of the han structure is that this can de-motivate students with special skills and abilities. “The possibility that this classroom organization may impede the progress of those who are capable of moving more rapidly through the material is… disregarded or discounted” (Stevenson, 1998, p. 109). In Japan, primary school students with academically advanced skills are not permitted to skip a grade or follow a special curriculum that differs from that of the mainstream class. This supports the theory that
all students are presented with the same opportunities within the Japanese primary school system.

An option for these students with advanced academic skills to fulfil their extra needs is to go to supplementary private schools (juku) after the normal school hours and weekends. These schools cater for students of all ages with a range of academic abilities, not just those students with high ability. It is typical for Japanese parents to have ambitions for their children’s academic success “to have their children attend two schools, a public school during the normal working school day and term, and a private school during the evenings, weekends and school holidays” (Hood, 2001, p. 25). These supplementary private schools, juku, are not officially recognised by the government which means that they do not receive any benefits or funding: they are commercial enterprises “engaged in selling education to consumers like any other service sold by commercial business” (Hood, 2001, p. 25).

Another negative aspect of the han structure is that a group can create negativity among the group members when some people in the group become unfriendly and unhelpful. This at times leads to incidents of bullying in the classroom. Recent issues of bullying in Japanese schools depict the group’s psychological power (Lewis, 1995). Morita and Kiyonaga (1997) and Maejima (2003) discuss at length the serious educational issues of bullying in Japanese schools including discussions about how some of these victims have chosen to commit suicide. Maejima (2003) reports that school bullying often starts from a minor incident in the classroom, however the motives behind the bullying vary according to individual cases. School bullying can, at times, lead to ‘collapsing of the classroom’ (Gakkyu Hokai) so that teachers and students are no longer able to study in a positive and stable learning environment because of bullying and social problems in the class (Kawamura, 1999; and Asahishinbun Shakaibu, 2001). Kawamura (1999) identifies the five distinctive factors that present students show: a lack of communication skills; a lack of social skills; a lack of patience; a lack of willingness towards being a participant of a social group; and a lack of various experiences although some also have too much
knowledge and information. As stated by Kawamura (1999), these factors tend to result in increasing incidents of bullying and ‘the collapsed classroom’ (*Gakkyu Hokai*).

Usui, Ito, and Morita (2004) report on a comparative study on the characteristics of bullying among three countries: Japan, Holland, and England. The participants in the study were between Year Five and Year Nine. In the study, students who were involved in bullying were divided into four categories including bullies, victims, mediators, and silent observers. One of the noteworthy findings was that the number of silent observers in bullying incidences in both Holland and England declined as they reached higher grades, however in the case of Japan, the number increased. Additionally, the number of mediators dramatically decreased in Japan. Thus, Usui, Ito, and Morita (2004) conclude that bullying in Japan does not become a problem for a small group of students, instead it easily becomes a problem of the whole class because many students tend to observe incidents and not to mediate them.

It seems that Japanese students’ needs are changing and they are seeking more individual attention while the government is still focusing on the development of harmony and equality in primary school education. However, considering these increasing social issues, the recent educational reform shows the government changing its attitudes, albeit slightly, towards the curriculum; they have reduced school hours, cut down some curriculum from major academic subjects, and increased the additional subject called ‘Integrated Studies’ that focus more on student centred learning.

### 2.1.5 A recent reform of the primary school education

The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (The Ministry of Education) strictly guides the curriculum and academic syllabus in public schools that have to be covered by each age group during the school year. The Ministry of Education also controls the number of hours in the year that each subject has to be taught (Hood, 2001). The main alteration of a recent educational reform in April 2002 is
the reduction of the timetable and school curriculum. Consequently, all the Saturday morning classes disappeared and the students now only attend school five days a week. The curriculum content and hours were also reviewed, and as a result annual hours for many subjects were reduced. Wada (2002) presents a comparative table showing the differences in time allocations before and after the reform (refer to Figure 2.1 for Year Six’s annual time allocations for each subject as an example). Wada (2002) criticises the fact that mainstream academic subjects like Japanese and Mathematics suffered the most and suggests that in the future, this may result in the decline of Japanese students’ basic academic skills. According to the table below, only the hours for moral education remains the same. Other subject hours have reduced considerably. Wada (2002) further points out that the content of curriculum has changed in that it has became much easier and simpler.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Six</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
<th>Maths</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Home economics</th>
<th>P.E.</th>
<th>Moral education</th>
<th>Special activity</th>
<th>Integrated Studies</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>945</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(These numbers show hours per year.)

(Figure 2.1 sourced from Wada’s table of changed annual time allocations for Year Six in Japanese primary schools, 2002, p. 23)

The significant change is the addition of a new subject called Integrated Studies. This subject starts from Year Three. The table in Figure 2.1 shows that the allocation time for this subject is 110 hours a year which can be considered as a major subject along with Japanese, Social Studies, and Mathematics that all have over 100 hours a year. In the subject of Integrated Studies, five main areas of study are included: International Understanding, Information Technology, Environment, Welfare, and Health. Unlike other traditional subjects, this new subject aims to assist students to become independent learners through student-centred learning. One such example is that the students
participate in class and individual research projects to find out about a topic and solve problems in these areas of study. Because the subject respects students’ interests and allows teachers to develop a curriculum, authorised textbooks and teaching materials are not provided.

It is understandable that primary school teachers experienced great confusion in the beginning as they were used to following the textbooks and teachers’ manuals, and they had never experienced being curriculum designers. Thus, there have been workshops for these teachers. In particular, a major international forum in Tokyo for Integrated Studies, which was reported by Kitazumi (2004), had academic guests from America, Britain, and Australia. They were invited to discuss the positive and negative aspects of Integrated Studies by sharing examples of situations in these countries. There were a few cases of successful curriculum models for Integrated Studies in Japanese schools presented in the forum, however it gave the impression that Japanese participants were learning from non-Japanese educators’ experiences rather than equally sharing their experiences in this new area of studies.

There are two opposite opinions regarding the implementation of Integrated Studies. Wada (2002), a psychologist, strongly disagrees with the introduction of Integrated Studies highlighting the fact that it is not worth cutting down the hours of other subjects to cater for the new subject. On the other hand, Saito (2003 and 2004), a Professor in Education, supports the implementation of Integrated Studies because he has witnessed, on many occasions, teachers trying to change their teaching approaches and create a motivating curriculum through the new subject. Saito (2003 and 2004) reports these teachers’ experiences as positive and enthusiastic.

One of the five curriculum components in Integrated Studies is the teaching of international understanding. The following sections discuss internationalisation of Japan and its influence on the teaching of the English language as part of the Integrated Studies.
2.2 Japanese society in the age of internationalisation

Japanese people’s concept of internationalisation seems to fascinate Japanese researchers (Ogata, 1992; Sugiyama, 1992; and Tanaka, 1992) as well as many non-Japanese researchers (Hook and Weiner, 1992; Gerbert, 1993; Lincicom, 1993; Moore and Lamie, 1996; McConnell, 2000; and Hood, 2001). Most publications in this area were published between late the 1980s and early 1990s, and the theories in these publications have gradually been put into practice from the late 1990s to after 2000. Thus, most of the references used in the following sections on internationalisation of Japan were published one or two decades ago. When internationalisation is discussed, the following Japanese phrases are frequently used: kokusaika (internationalisation), kokusaika suru (internationalise), kokusai kankaku (international sense), kokusai-sei (international minded-ness), kokisai-jin (internationalist), kokusai kooryu (international exchange), and kokusai kyooiku (international education) (Hook and Weiner, 1992; Sugiyama, 1992; and Lincicom, 1993). These words are used in the media, political summits, and educational settings. One of these words, kokusaijin, was originally used with a negative connotation in the Meiji period (1867-1912) and referred to “either to an idealistic person hopelessly out of touch with reality or to one way in which the upper crust goes around putting on airs” (Mouer and Sugimoto, 1986, p. 380). According to Mouer and Sugimoto (1986), however, it is important to note that the word nowadays has a positive connotation to many modern Japanese people.

2.2.1 The definition of Japanese internationalisation

There is no agreed definition of internationalisation. It is a rather vague and ambiguous term (Hook and Weiner, 1992; Sugiyama, 1992; Yamazawa, 1992; Lincicome, 1993; and Hood, 2001). Mouer and Sugimoto (1986) claim in other languages “internationalisation is an ambiguous term which generates vague notions of something good” (p. 380). Most authors failed to explain why there is not a common definition. However, the following quote suggests a possible reason. “The process Japanese call internationalization
(kokusaika) is in fact not one but numerous and varied...Since it is a popular term rather than a technical one, it never was properly ‘introduced’ with anything like a definition” (Befu’s words, 1981, cited by Lincicom, 1993, p. 125).

A different nature of internationalisation between non-Japanese countries and Japan is described by Yamazawa (1992): “The former perceive[s] internationalisation as doing to others, while the latter perceive[s] it as adjusting to others” (p. 199). Here, ‘non-Japanese countries’ refer to Britain and America. This statement indicates that Japan feels the need to meet the demands of these countries, and Japan sets its goals to meet the standard set by these countries. The difference in the understanding of ‘internationalisation’ can be seen in its use in the English and Japanese languages. Ehara (1992) compares both dictionary definitions and its grammatical distribution in these languages. In English dictionaries, the word ‘internationalise’ is used as a transitive verb: this implies that “the English-speaking [people] of the West tend to see themselves as active subjects and other people outside of their countries more as objects” (p. 272). On the other hand, the Japanese term of internationalise, kokusaika suru, is an intransitive verb. Ehara (1992) interprets the Japanese version as indicating the process of becoming international as defined by the rest of the world. Like Yamazawa (1992), the rest of the world in Ehara (1992) seems to mainly include, Britain and America.

The political and economic relationship between Japan and America also influences Japanese internationalisation. While Falk (1992) appreciates America’s openness and influences on others, especially in Japan, he criticises Japan’s narrow-minded and hostile attitudes. Ogata (1992) analyses the internationalisation of Japan from more amicable perspectives. Ogata’s opinion (1992) is that Japan is committed to “an international environment that is becoming increasingly interdependent” (p. 63). The current situation in the world is considered as one interdependent society that involves transactions of goods, money, people, and information (Ogata, 1992). Thus, Japan does not have any choice but to adjust to others if Japan wants to belong to the international community.
2.2.2 Various interpretations of internationalism

The meaning of internationalisation varies according to individuals in Japan (Sugiyama, 1992). This might relate to the fact that an agreed definition has not emerged; Japanese people may conveniently interpret the meaning of internationalisation according to their individual experiences and knowledge. Although international trade and tourism have dramatically expanded in recent years, Japanese society and people seem to maintain “a high degree of exclusiveness” (Ogata, 1992, p. 64). Ogata (1992) claims two forces have changed the traditional exclusiveness of Japan. One is outside pressure for liberalising the market and opening the society to others. The other force is the movement of interdependence in the world “which has necessitated changes in social attitudes and practices” (Ogata, 1992, p. 64). In other words, Japanese people “understandably find the expectation that [they] must change both perplexing and threatening” (McConnell, 2000, p. 30). Mouer and Sugimoto (1986) accurately describe Japan’s location in the international context by quoting the famous phrase: When in Rome do as the Romans do:

The full implications, however, are difficult to discern. If the guest travels to Rome and tries to accommodate himself to local customs, he is said to be cosmopolitan; on the other hand, if the host demands that visitors adhere strictly to all the house rules, he is said to be ethnocentric or at best ungracious (Mouer and Sugimoto, 1986, p. 382).

Thus, internationalisation of Japan has become one of the major challenges to Japanese people at a national, institutional, and individual level. With the movement of internationalisation in Japan, it seems to be necessary to re-cultivate Japanese people’s perceptions of social, cultural, and political issues.

2.2.3 Internationalisation from top to bottom within Japan

As mentioned before, it is hard to define the concept of internationalism in Japan, however there is some consensus about a definition. Among many suggestions, the majority of opinions support the idea that Japanese internationalisation is a process that
the nation is currently putting enormous effort into realising. For example, Mouer and Sugimoto (1986) stress that it is “a desirable process of change” (p. 380). Sugiyama (1992) explains that the process of change occurs at three different levels: nation, organisation, and individual:

At the level of nations, it refers to…the extent of co-operation with other nations, involving the movement of people, goods, capital and information across national boundaries; the standard of socio-political reforms; and the degree of political and economic interdependence with other nations. At the level of organization, it includes the extent of trans-national technological transfer; the establishment of multinational co-operation; and the exchange of students, scholars and other types of persons between educational and cultural organizations and civic groups. At the level of individual, it entails the extent of knowledge of foreign languages and…countries; adaptability to life in foreign countries; and acquisition of the sensitivity, linguistic capabilities and other abilities necessary for international experiences (p. 73).

Two types of people who use the term ‘internationalisation’ in Japan are defined by Mouer and Sugimoto (1986); the second group is described in a critical way.

[The] word seems to be manipulated as an ideological symbol by at least two groups in Japanese society. One is a committed elite with a solid grasp of the realpolitik and the realities of western imperialism in Asia earlier this century. Its members generally accept the nation-state system and subscribe to the first set of goals mentioned above. The second group consists of those who are wary not so much of nationalism as of the present political arrangements and the present conservative regime in Japan…To be sure, there is also a sizeable stratum of persons interested only in “getting along” and in promoting their own self-interest (p. 383).

Mouer and Sugimoto (1986) criticise the second group of people as “apathetic” (p. 270). Since there are so many people who prefer to use the word, internationalisation, only for their own interests, it seems that the word has been “overused” in Japan (Lincicom, 1993).

2.2.4 Returnee children as cosmopolitan Japanese

With the idea of internationalisation, Former Prime Minister Nakasone officially announced in the late 80’s the need for Japanese children to become cosmopolitan if they
are to survive the interdependent community of nations across the world (Lincicome, 1993). Lincicome (1993) describes four elements that the cosmopolitan Japanese encounter: “the ability to communicate in one or more foreign languages; a thorough knowledge of foreign countries and cultures; a capacity to appreciate cultural differences; and an “international consciousness” (kokusaiteki ninshiki)” (p. 127). Lincicome (1993) adds that these criteria of what it is to be a cosmopolitan Japanese need to include more complex ideas such as the development of self awareness, including creativity, independence, individual character, and self-discipline. Lincicome (1993) implies that Japanese people lack these characteristics, in comparison with non-Japanese people. This reflects Lincicome’s (1993) perspective as an outsider, a non-Japanese person.

Ogata (1992) argues that, as the result of Japanese economic growth, the exchange of people became frequent: “there has been [a] ‘push’ effect of sending Japanese overseas to carry out business from foreign bases; on the other, the ‘pull’ effect of bringing into the country foreign businessmen and workers who try to profit from the high yen” (p. 65). The situation of returnee children relates to Ogata’s (1992) ‘push’ effect. The returnee children, are often called kikokushijyo; they are the children who return to Japan after spending a certain amount of time in other countries because of their parents’ jobs overseas (Ehara, 1992; Falk, 1992; Ogata, 1992; Sugiyama, 1992; Lincicome, 1993; McConnell, 2000; and Hood, 2001). Some criteria for returnee children, as claimed by Goodman (1990), are that they are born in Japan and have been brought up in the mainstream Japanese culture although they live overseas.

Cosmopolitan Japanese seem to be the most idealistic Japanese people in the age of an interdependent world. In addition, the returnee children seem to be the perfect candidates to fit into the category of cosmopolitan Japanese, yet they do not seem to be encouraged to share fully their international minds and experiences. Kobayashi (1989) critically discusses the contradiction of the requirements of returnee children’s re-adjustments. It seems that only these children are asked to change themselves to fit into Japanese society again, however the society and people are not required or willing to change for these children. Furthermore, Kobayashi (1989) points out that the parents of these children, as
well as the children themselves seem to accept this reality as normal. The parents’ concerns are focused on how they can compensate for “whatever handicaps their children might have as a result of having being outside the Japanese educational system” (p. 189).

In summary, the issue of returnee children exhibits two core values of Japanese people: the two dimensions of tetemae (obligation) and honne (truth) that were discussed earlier in the chapter. The government policy on internationalisation and the creation of cosmopolitan Japanese are regarded as tetemae in this case. On the other hand, the discriminatory treatment of returnee children at schools can be associated with the honne side of Japanese.

McConnell (2000) discusses the difficulties and negative aspects of returnee children in Japanese schools in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Since the idea of internationalisation of Japan was in the spotlight at various levels of political, social, and educational settings, the situation has improved. As Japanese people became more aware of their roles in international society, their attitudes towards returnee children slowly changed for the better. Where once there was “considerable ambivalence many Japanese feel towards these children” (McConnell, 2000, p. 21), the new perspective of these children as “cosmopolitan Japanese” became a trend. Mouer and Sugimoto (1986) call the returnee children “symbols of a more idealistic concept of internationalism” (p. 382-383).

Nowadays, they are likely to be viewed with envy and to have better opportunities and choices to enter higher educational institutions and employment situations because of their international experiences and foreign language skills (Goodman, 1990). Goodman (1990) criticises the way in which the issue of returnee children is exaggerated in some literature-literature written by both Japanese and English researchers. In his opinion, the problems of returnee children are not any different from the ones that non-returnee children in Japan have in their school life. Furthermore, Goodman (1990) claims that the issue of children from minority groups is far more serious and needs to be discussed in order to improve their situation and treatment in Japanese society and schools.
2.3 English language education in Japan

Both early studies on Japanese internationalisation by Befu (1981) and Mouer and Sugimoto (1986) that investigate Japanese people’s perceptions of internationalism suggest that one of the key aspects of internationalisation is learning the English language. A recent study by Hashimoto (2004) also agrees with the notion that the teaching of English as a foreign language is an essential element to the internationalisation of Japan. “English has been identified as a device to develop abilities and qualities that will enable Japanese citizens to earn the trust of the international community” (Hashimoto, 2002, p. 64). This satisfies Lincicome’s (1993) and Hood’s (2001) ideas of Japanese internationalisation as westernisation. The idea of internationalisation has influenced the reform of the current education system in Japan. Particular educational reforms, including the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) and the introduction of English language education in primary schools are the main examples of how the internationalisation of Japan has impacted on the educational setting.

2.3.1 The JET program

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) is a unique program for the promotion of internationalisation. It is administered by Japanese government departments including The Ministry of Home Affairs, The Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The main aim of the JET program is “to promote language education and regional internationalisation by inviting foreign individuals to work in local government organizations throughout Japan” (Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, 2005). McConnell (2000) calls this program “the centrepiece of a top-down effort to create mass internationalisation” (p. x). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recruits participants through its embassies and consulates overseas, and they are allocated to a city in Japan, and then the local government employs them. The participants’ jobs are mainly divided into two types. The first is a job as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) in English language classes in Japanese public schools. This group makes up “more than
90 percent of all participants; their primary duties…involve team-teaching communicative language classes with a Japanese teacher of English” (McConnell, 2000, p. 2). The second category Coordinators of International Relations (CIR) involves participants who “assist in a variety of international activities in their area” (McConnell, 2000, p. 2). According to the program website, there were 6,103 foreign participants in the JET program between 2004 and 2005. Participants from The United States made up 2,841 of the people in the program (the largest number), 1,060 people were from The United Kingdom and 431 were from Australia (Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, 2005).

McConnell’s (2000) publication provides a detailed insight into the JET program. It includes observations of the program and participants, the voices of various people involved in the program, and the difficulties experienced in overcoming the differences between Japan and the participants’ countries. It outlines personal experiences and frustrations of the participants when they meet Japanese students, teachers, and people in the local communities. McConnell (2000) argues that the images that Japanese teachers and students hold of non-Japanese people are challenged when ALTs are integrated into their language classes. For example, an African American participant speaking fluent English became a source of surprise to a Japanese English language teacher because s/he did not fit the stereotype of native English speakers. McConnell (2000) categorises the participants from overseas according to a range of characteristics, as the diversity among the ALTs is great, This diversity creates an opportunity for Japanese people to interact with various non-Japanese people while they are still in Japan.

The summary of the JET program given by McConnell (2000) accurately depicts the program and internationalisation in Japan:

While the concept of the JET Program has worldwide scope, its implementation remains very “Japanese” in a number of ways, with mixed results. [For example,] the attention given to form, detail and careful planning leads to a degree of regulation that frequently clashes with the expectations of the foreign youth that internationalisation will be spontaneous, informal, and more free-flowing (p. 270-1).
Although there are many frustrations and difficulties for overseas participants, Japanese teachers, schools, and organisers of the JET program due to cultural and social differences, this program is certainly a starting point from which Japan has tried to change its ways and attempted to meet the demand for internationalisation.

2.3.2 Introducing English language education in primary schools

After the JET program was introduced and then reviewed, another educational reform for internationalisation begun in April 2002. It was decided that the English language studies would be officially implemented in public primary schools in Japan, in addition to the existing English language programs in secondary schools. It is important to note that English language studies would form part of the subject called, ‘Integrated Studies’, and would not be introduced as an independent academic subject.

Integrated Studies starts in Year Three in primary schools, consequently Year Three is also the starting year for learning the English language. The main aim of the implementation of the English language curriculum is for Japanese students to gain a greater international understanding, therefore the English language curriculum is categorised with one of the Integrated Studies components: Teaching International Understanding (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2001; Matukawa, 2003; and Otsu, 2004). The subject of Integrated Studies is taught by the classroom teachers, therefore these same teachers also teach the English language to their students rather than specialists who are trained in teaching a second/foreign language. In other words, classroom teachers do not receive much or any additional training to teach the language.

The introduction of the new curriculum is not mandatory. Each school has a choice as to whether the school starts teaching it. Matsukawa (2003) presents an interesting table to describe the percentage of primary schools in Japan that actually implemented the curriculum in 2002. In the total of 22,847 public primary schools, more than half the
schools started teaching the new curriculum, however the time allocated in the timetable for the studies varied in each school (see Figure 2.2). The category of one to eleven hours per year shown in Figure 2.3 was the most popular time allocation for teaching English. In real terms this means that many schools spent less than one lesson a month on English language classes. Such a small time allowance seriously undermines the students’ ability to gain a reasonable understanding of how to communicate with others in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Three</th>
<th>11,724 schools (51.3%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year Four</td>
<td>11,957 schools (52.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Five</td>
<td>12,327 schools (53.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Six</td>
<td>12,806 schools (56.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The total number of public primary schools in Japan is 22,847 schools.)

(Figure 2.2: A table of Japanese primary schools with the English language curriculum in 2002, sourced by Matsukawa, 2003:2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1-11 hours per year</th>
<th>8,072 schools (63.0%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-22 hours per year</td>
<td>2,977 schools (23.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-35 hours per year</td>
<td>1,520 schools (11.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-70 hours per year</td>
<td>222 schools (1.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 71 hours</td>
<td>25 schools (0.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The total number of public primary schools in Japan is 22,847 schools.)

(Figure 2.3: A table of the annual timetable for English language classes, sourced by Matsukawa, 2003:2)

Prior to the introduction of English language education in Japanese primary schools, the Ministry of Education published and distributed two books to each public school in Japan, in order to demonstrate the English language curriculum and to support the classroom teachers without any knowledge or experience of teaching the language. These books were: *Practical Handbook for Elementary School English Activities* (2001)

The second book is only written in English mainly for the non-Japanese assistant teachers. The main aim of these books is that the English language can be taught to improve primary school students’ skills in communication; the activities in English language classes should be based on communication. These books also suggest ideal lesson plans, teaching materials, and a curriculum. There are however several issues in regards to these books. Firstly, they were written only by specialists of the English language education and not those who specialised in the area of international understanding. Thus, the books can give the impression that The Ministry of Education wants teachers to specifically teach the English language like an academic subject, not as a tool to enhance the students’ international understanding (Tomita, 2004). In other words, there seems to be a gap between the main aim of enhancing international understanding in students and the actual content of the handbook, which only focuses on foreign language teaching.

Another issue is that ideal lessons and teaching materials in the *Practical Handbook for Elementary School English Activities* (2001) are useful only when Japanese classroom teachers have an ALT (Assistant Language Teacher) who is a native English speaker from the JET (Japan Exchange Teaching) program. Naoyama (2003) expresses a concern that some Japanese classroom teachers tend to leave everything for the ALT to teach because these Japanese teachers have a lack of confidence and experience in teaching the English language. In addition, considering that there are a total of 22,847 public primary schools all over Japan (Matsukawa, 2003), it is impossible to send a native speaker as a language assistant to each school in order to implement the team-teaching based English language classes that the Ministry of Education strongly recommends.
2.3.3 Challenges for the classroom teachers

Unlike the English language curriculum in Japanese junior and high schools which mainly use the grammar and translation method, The Ministry of Education wants the English language curriculum in primary schools to revolve around communication based activities in which students experience the English language being used as a tool for communication. Teachers are encouraged to provide language activities that motivate the students’ learning and aim to prevent students from developing a negative feeling towards learning English (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2001). Naoyama (2004) states that Japanese classroom teachers tend to only focus on singing songs and playing simple games in English because of the fear of creating negative feelings in their students towards learning the English language if they embark on too many language focused activities. These game-focused activities for teaching English in primary schools do not satisfy the official aim stated by The Ministry of Education, that is, to develop a positive attitude with interest and motivation towards communicating in the English language (Naoyama, 2004). Moreover, it is imperative that the students acquire the linguistic skills and knowledge of the English language in their language classes rather than just playing language games and singing songs in English.

What and how the teachers are to teach seems very vague, as there are not any standard curriculum guidelines. Moreover, the ministry does not provide textbooks for the subject of Integrated Studies, including the teaching of the English language, whereas all other academic subjects have authorised textbooks. In the official handbook, Practical Handbook for Elementary School English Activities, it is stated that curriculum content and teaching methods depend on individual teachers’ ideas (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2001, p. 4). Naoyama (2004) is undecided about whether the Japanese teachers are fortunate or unfortunate. Whilst the freedom might be seen as liberating, they have not had to create a curriculum for any of the other academic subjects, as the authorised textbooks are given to them with teaching manuals for all the traditional subjects from Year One through to Year Six in primary schools.
This makes them inexperienced in curriculum design and development. Considering the textbook-based curriculum is a feature of the educational practices in Japan, asking primary school teachers to create a communication-based language curriculum by themselves seems an impossible task.

The importance of re-structuring university courses in teacher education should be an additional focus (Matsukawa, 2004). Japanese universities do not seem willing to change their coursework until the teaching of the English language in primary schools becomes an independent subject. It is suggested by Matsukawa (2004) that Japanese universities would benefit from taking some effective ideas from university courses in South Korea and Taiwan to train university students for teaching English in primary schools, as these countries have already made this area of study a subject in their primary school curriculum.

### 2.3.4 Responsibilities at each level of organisation

To achieve the successful implementation of the English language curriculum in Japanese primary schools, different levels of organizations and people need to take responsibility and act accordingly, including the central Ministry of Education, each local Ministry of Education, schools, teachers, and universities. The first responsibility is that of the central Ministry of Education in Tokyo, which publishes handbooks and provides workshops. However, it seems that not enough responsibility has been taken by the leading government body for education, as only a few workshops were organised by the central office. The first one was a workshop in 2000 that six hundred teachers attended to discuss the curriculum and teaching methods for English language in primary schools (Naoyama, 2004, p. 239). There were also a couple of national conferences per year between 2001 and 2003 (Matsukawa, 2004).

The second responsibility falls on the local Ministry of Education and public education centres in each city. Naoyama (2004) indicates that the local offices need to show more
detailed curriculum plans to individual schools in the area, incorporating the main principles and aims of the English language education in primary schools suggested by the central office. The first priority of the local government should be to provide workshops and seminars more frequently for schools and teachers to discuss and to demonstrate the following points in detail: the teaching methodologies; the use of appropriate materials; how to make teaching materials; and more advanced curriculum development for English language learning. Matsukawa (2004) argues that the number of conferences and workshops are increasing however the teaching of English language is not an academic subject and so participation in these conferences is not compulsory throughout many cities of Japan. The attitudes of the local Ministry of Education in each city to the English language curriculum in primary schools has a direct impact on the quality of the curriculum in schools in the area. For example, Nagaoka city and Kyoto city in Japan are very enthusiastic about this new curriculum and provide the necessary support to the teachers and schools (Matsukawa, 2004). According to Naoyama (2004), until primary school teachers are able to teach the English language in their classroom with confidence, they need to receive full support from the local ministry; only then will individual schools be left alone to decide on the content and future direction of the English language curriculum.

Schools are also required to create clear and individualised aims of the English language curricula that are suitable for the individual situations of schools. Naoyama (2004) argues that schools should not implement the curriculum just because of parental pressure or ALTs being sent to the schools by the local ministry. It is vital that all the teachers in schools agree with the common goals and discuss how and what to teach in their English language classes. Naoyama (2004) suggests that a few teachers who are particularly interested in the language curriculum can lead a school to develop the curriculum.

The most important responsibility lies in the teachers’ hands. Matsukawa (2003) argues that an ideal approach for Japanese teachers of the English language education in primary school is that they need to become language learners themselves with their students. This would enable them to demonstrate the traits of a language learner with a positive attitude,
and then they would be able to create an appropriate program together with the students and an assistant teacher. Another advantage for the teacher in becoming a language learner with their students is that the teacher can become a mediator between the students and an ALT who is a native English speaker visiting schools occasionally (Naoyama, 2004). Takeuchi (2004) presents an example of a public primary school in Osaka where the students’ attitudes became more positive once their teacher showed his/her interest in learning the English language as a learner among these students.

There are a number of conferences and seminars for the teaching of the English language provided by universities during the school holidays (Matsukawa, 2004). Naoyama (2004) points out that universities and researchers are required to share more of their knowledge and experiences with the classroom teachers without using unfamiliar academic terms. Only Naoyama (2004) recognises this need and expresses it as a fundamental issue.

Kizuka (2005) also points out the importance of re-structuring the university courses for trainee teachers and re-viewing the government regulations on teaching qualifications. There are two distinct courses in Japanese universities to become teachers: secondary and primary school teachers. The trainee teachers in secondary school education choose their major subject and the English language subject is one of the popular subjects. Since 2002, secondary school teachers with English language as a major subject have been able to teach the English language in primary schools, but the number shows that only 0.6% to 0.9% of these teachers in Japan are actually teaching in primary schools (Kizuka, 2005, p. 4). If secondary school teachers with a teaching qualification for English language start teaching in primary schools, they face many difficulties and issues with adjusting their teaching approaches and materials according to the level of understanding in the primary school students.

The current structure of teacher training courses in Japanese universities does not offer any substantial support for training teachers to be able to teach the English language in primary schools (Kizuka, 2005). The total number of universities in Japan is 709: the
data from the Ministry of Education, Cultural, Sports, science and Technology in May 2004 (cited in Kizuka, 2005) shows this total number is divided into three types of universities including 87 national universities, 80 public universities, and 542 private universities. In general, it is relatively easy to be qualified as a secondary school teacher as many private universities have been sanctioned by the government to provide only teacher-training courses for secondary schools. In contrast, the primary school teaching qualification is mainly issued through national government run and controlled universities. Kizuka (2005) suggests that the Ministry should open its doors to private universities for all levels of teacher training courses, and more private universities should be allowed to also train primary school teachers, not only secondary school teachers.

2.3.5 Progress of the English language curriculum in primary schools

It has been several years since the teaching of English language in primary schools began. The current situation of English language teaching in primary schools is under review while the majority of individual schools seem to be still struggling to find an appropriate curriculum, teaching materials, and teaching methodologies. At the same time, the Ministry of Education is introducing the possibility of English language instruction being introduced as an independent subject (Matsukawa, 2004). Both Matsukawa (2004) and Kizuka (2005) take a cautious stance and highlight the fact that the first priority is to examine and evaluate the current situation, instead of introducing English language learning as an academic subject too soon. This early introduction might cause more confusion and bring additional chaos to the schools.

There is little research in the area of the English language curriculum in Japanese primary schools (Matsukawa, 2004; and Hosoda and Aline, 2005). Matsukawa (2004) insists that there is urgent need for nation wide research into what is really happening in English language classes in individual primary schools. Kan (2002) also criticises people in Japanese universities who regard themselves as specialists in the area of English language
teaching in primary schools in Japan; they tend to only introduce curricula and activities from overseas that are not based on the unique and specific situation in Japan.

It is still too early to judge whether the teaching of the English language in primary schools is successful. However, Hosoda and Aline (2005) conclude in their study of a number of primary schools in Japan that “the curriculum is being successfully implemented in elementary schools in that [English language] classes are actively engaging the students in English learning tasks” (p. 19). Hosoda and Aline’s perceptions of successful English language classes are based on the students displaying their interest in sounds and patterns of English language. “For example, we observed the students privately repeating the key expressions [of English language] even when they were not called on, that is, when the teachers were preparing materials, or when other students were being called upon” (Hosoda and Aline, 2005, p. 19). Their study did not consider whether or not the students’ use of English phrases was meaningful or appropriate. It focused rather on the importance of oral repetitions in the language class that most participating schools use in their teaching of the English language.

It is common to observe simple language activities and games in English language classes in most primary schools in Japan and to find that these schools do not have a structural plan throughout the year. Kan (2002) and Tomita (2004) express a concern that without a long-term structural plan for teaching English language it is difficult to expect effective and successful outcomes for the curriculum. Furthermore, these language activities in the English language classes do not cater for the main aim of teaching the English language, which is to enhance students’ international understanding as the Ministry of Education originally stated (Otsu, 2004; and Tomita, 2004). Thus, Tomita (2004) explains that the main theme of ‘Teaching International Understanding’ in primary schools is in fact activities for practicing English conversation.

The quality of the English language curriculum in primary schools depends on the attitudes of schools and classroom teachers towards teaching the language. Since the curriculum is left up to the schools and the classroom teachers to define, their interests
and ideas influence the content and duration of the curriculum. According to an educational magazine, *The English Teachers’ Magazine* (2004), there are two distinctive opinions of teachers. Some teachers are still not sure what and how to teach. However, other teachers focus on the positive side in that they are enjoying the opportunity to try a range of activities without having to focus too much on the students’ academic record (p. 11) because the teaching of the English language is part of the subject, Integrated Studies, and the subject requires observational based assessment. In addition, the subject does not have any authorised textbooks. These characteristics of the subject allow the Japanese teachers to have more freedom in choosing a variety of classroom activities. Matsukawa (2004) argues that some teachers can unexpectedly achieve great results by creating a rich curriculum for the teaching of the English language while they have been exploring and trying out different teaching methods and activities.

Various types of teachers for the English language classes have emerged since 2002. Takeuchi reports (2004) that these types can be divided into three main categories. The first is classroom teachers who take the initiative in learning the English language and in doing so consider themselves as a language learner among their students. Both classroom teachers’ English language levels and the assistant language teachers’ (ALT) Japanese language levels play a crucial role if the curriculum is to be successful (Takenouchi, 2004). The second type is joint teaching between primary and junior high school teachers when they are both Japanese teachers. English language teachers from junior high school, who are trained and specialised in teaching the language, cooperate with primary school teachers to develop a curriculum. However, some junior high school teachers do not adapt the teaching methods and aims for the primary school level. This often causes confusion in the primary school students and teachers (Takenouchi, 2004). The last type is primary schools contracting out to companies that send guest teachers to teach in schools. These teachers are native English speakers, and at times Japanese people with knowledge of teaching English language also come with these native English speakers to assist in the class. Takenouchi (2004) stresses that it is critical for schools to discuss with the company in detail the content of the activities, the quality of their teachers, and their teaching materials.
2.4 Conclusion

Educators in Japan are experiencing a turning point in the history of Japanese education. Traditional teaching and learning methods are being evaluated and alternative teaching approaches are emerging, especially in the subject of Integrated Studies and the area of English language curriculum. The idea of implementing the English language curriculum at the primary school level is welcomed. However, the problem lies in its structure and guidelines that the Ministry of Education provided. The structure and guidelines seem to be too vague. This has caused confusion among the educators and students in Japan. If the nature of the Japanese educational practices were not so heavily reliant on the authorised textbooks and curriculum guidelines, it would have been much easier for the teachers and schools to design their own English language curriculum more confidently. However, they are used to being ‘spoon-fed’ by the Ministry of Education with the tightly structured national curriculum standard. Thus, the implementation of the English language curriculum with looser guidelines creates discrimination among individual primary schools in Japan, as not only the English language skills and knowledge are required in the teachers but other skills such as a curriculum designer are also vital in order to provide a communication-focused English language curriculum at the primary school level.
Drama for teaching and learning

3. Introduction

There is a current global awareness that the role and use of Arts Education (visual arts, dance, drama, and music) in schools should be re-viewed and should be more integrated with other curricula, instead of being limited to “a small subset of human endeavour. Art in the classroom, when it occurs, is a narrow set of activities…As a result, more often than not, the creation of art works is dissociated from life experience and the arts have been separated from other disciplines and do not have a major role in hidden curriculum education” (Engelhardt, 2005, p. 3). In the Asia-Pacific region, the awareness is widely recognised in recent years and there have been a number of international symposia about the role of Arts Education in Asia, Fiji, Hong Kong, and Korea organised by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). These symposia were reported and published in 2005 (UNESCO); they included papers on the current status of Arts Education in Asian schools. The new role of Arts Education, according to the UNESCO report, is to consider the Arts as a learning medium, that is ‘Arts in Education’ (2005). Sahasrabudhe (2005) states the benefits as follows:

It is in the area of the hidden curriculum that perhaps strongest claims for transfer of effects of learning in the arts have been made. The arts have been found to relieve prejudice, hedge against violence, help children become better risk takers, become more sociable, and enhance self esteem (p. 48).

The benefits of learning through the Arts are not, however, fully recognised yet. This is due largely to the lack of research evidence (Sahasrabudhe, 2005). This explains why the shift towards the idea that the arts contribute to cognitive learning is gradual, not rapid. The issue of “transfer of learning from the arts to other subjects has become important in all rationales for justification of arts in education” (Sahasrabudhe, 2005, p. 48). Sahasrabudhe (2005) points out that most research fails to demonstrate how this ‘transfer’ occurs. There is a need for more research that shows effective ways of implementing the arts as a pedagogical tool in various areas throughout Asia.
Drama is one of the main components of Arts Education, however some Asia countries like Malaysia only provide the visual arts and music in the general school curricula, not drama. However, some students in Malaysia are familiar with drama as there are drama clubs in schools in which activities are centred around creating and performing a play on stage on an annual basis (Rajendran, 2005). The situation in Japan is very similar to Malaysia and it limits Japanese people’s understanding of drama as a learning medium.

Over the last forty years, educational drama as a pedagogical tool has been recognised by teachers in non-Asian countries including Australia, Canada, and England. This is because it has the potential for providing various learning opportunities for learners, and also has the benefits as an educational tool to enhance both students’ and teachers’ learning in the classroom. These countries have encouraged teachers to use educational drama as a pedagogical method, and subsequently some educational institutions in Hong Kong and Taiwan are now following these countries’ progress to learn more about this method.

In Hong Kong, teachers have been attending professional development courses including workshops and conferences for drama as a pedagogical tool in classrooms since major educational reform was implemented in 2000. The situation in Taiwan has also attracted attention internationally of those who share the same interests in educational drama. A major Taiwanese educational reform occurred in the late 90’s when a new subject called Art and humanity was introduced. In this subject, educational drama plays a significant role as a teaching method.

Unlike Hong Kong and Taiwan, Japan has not yet recognised the benefits of educational drama at all, particularly in the school setting. The use of simple role-play in second/foreign language classrooms is the only drama method that Japanese teachers actually use for teaching. Yet, Japan has traditionally offered many different forms of drama to its people through the ages, including traditional theatre like Kabuki and No, TV drama, movies, contemporary theatre performances, and theatre for children.
This chapter discusses several areas relating to drama. The first section is about different forms of drama that are available in Japan, focusing on Kabuki as a traditional form and TV drama as a modern form. The second section focuses on drama as an educational form of drama in schools, and the last section argues for the use of educational drama in second/foreign language classes. In the last section, the relationship between motivation in second/foreign language learning, and the use of educational drama as a pedagogical tool will be the centre of discussion.

3.1 Various forms of Drama in Japan

Drama can be divided into different forms and educational drama is considered as one of the various forms of drama. O’Toole and Dunn (2002) explain drama as “the form that explores and lays bare human behaviour for us to examine and reflect on. That’s why we use it for educational purposes” (p. 42). Educational drama in schools is not yet recognised in Japan, however other forms of drama such as movies, TV, and both contemporary and traditional theatre performances are very familiar to the people. In particular, traditional theatre forms including Kabuki, No, and Bunraku have attracted Japanese people for generations as well as many non-Japanese people from overseas. In the following sections, Kabuki as a traditional form and TV drama as a modern form of drama, will be discussed in the setting of Japan.

3.1.1 Traditional form of drama-Kabuki

Among traditional theatre forms including Kabuki, No, and Bunraku in Japan, Kabuki is the most popular form of performance that Japanese people still enjoy watching. Powell (1990) states “kabuki was…the most active when Japan passed into the modern age in 1868” (p. 4) after long years of historical isolation from the world. The main Kabuki theatres have been located in the main cities like Tokyo and Kyoto, however in 1999 a new Kabuki theatre called Hakataza was build in Fukuoka on the southern island of
Kyushu. Fukuoka is the city where my study of teaching the English language in a Japanese primary school using educational drama took place. If Kabuki was not a popular form of drama in the modern society of Japan, this new theatre in Fukuoka would not have been built, or their aim could simply be to gain a new audience base in Fukuoka.

Young Kabuki actors are well known among both young and old Japanese people; these actors are not limited to performing the traditional form, but also modern forms of drama such as contemporary theatre performances, movies, and TV drama. Japanese people from the younger generation tend to know these actors from movies and TV drama rather than watching their Kabuki performances in the special Kabuki theatres like Hakataza. On the other hand, older people mainly know them as Kabuki performers.

The audience who came and watched the February Hanagata Kabuki performances in Hakataza in 2004 were mainly older people. They seemed to have a good understanding of the performances including the story lines, characters, and scenes. There were many female audience members wearing the Japanese women’s traditional dress, Kimono. It was as though they were immersed in time travel to old Japan along with the traditional scenes on stage, traditional costumes, and the traditional language and music that Kabuki performances offer. The performance lasts for about four hours with short breaks and a long lunch break. Unlike many contemporary theatre performances, it is common to have Kabuki performances during the day from 11:00 am, instead of being limited to performances at night. The Kabuki theatres offer services to attract a wider audience than older Japanese people by leasing earphones that explain the story both in the modern Japanese language and in the English language for non-Japanese people. Because the old traditional Japanese language is used in the Kabuki performances, these earphones are necessary to gain a better understanding of the story.

Kabuki is famous for its colourful traditional costumes and stylised performances – actors using exaggerated movements to portray the characters on stage. This is why Kabuki is often considered as “theatre of the eye as opposed to theatre of the ear” (Powell, 1990, p.
4). The meaning of the word, *Kabuki*, is well explained by Keene, Ohkura, and Kamimura (2001):

The word “Kabuki” is composed of the three elements that comprise the dramatic form of Kabuki: *ka* for music, *bu* for dance, and *ki* for play or player. However, the actual origin of the word may be found in a homonym, *kabuku* or *kabuki*, meaning to incline or tilt. “Kabuki” means therefore a desire not to remain secure within the constraints of the orthodox, but to seek change (p. 13).

Because of its flexibility *Kabuki* has kept evolving since its inception, four hundred years ago. According to Keene, Ohkura, and Kamimura (2001), the female roles were originally played by women, however female roles nowadays are performed only by men called *Onnagata*. In the mid-seventeenth century (Powell, 1990), the Japanese Government banned women from acting (Keene, Ohkura, and Kamimura, 2001, p. 13).

*Kabuki* is a family business in that all the acting skills are passed down from generation to generation: grandfather to father and father to son. Therefore, it is not surprising to see all three: grandfather, father, and son at the same time on the same stage performing *Kabuki*. If there are no sons in the family to carry on the family tradition, a young male with great potential for *Kabuki* will be adopted to carry on the family name. This is to make sure that “the mission of the Kabuki actor is to inherit an acting tradition and bequeath it to those who follow [the actor]” (Keene, Ohkura, and Kamimura, 2001, p. 16). *Kabuki* is unique in a sense that it keeps its traditional elements at a high level and at the same time it tries to accept change and grow accordingly. The efforts to keep the balance between the two dimensions might be the reason for attracting both Japanese and non-Japanese audiences to the performances.

*Kabuki* had been a popular theatre performance since the *Samurai* (the Japanese warrior) era up until 1868 when people wore traditional clothes (*Kimono*) and the men carried swords at their sides. The Japanese people went to the *Kabuki* theatre to watch the performances not only for entertainment purposes but also for educational purposes. This is evident in the traditional stories of the *Kabuki* performances that include strong messages regarding moral behaviour, social etiquette, and human relationships. These
stories accurately depicted a particular era of Japan around the time when they were written. Therefore, Kabuki could be compared to ‘critical learning’ in line with the purpose of Western Drama Education. Kabuki has kept Japanese people’s attention because of its educational influences that helped shape their identity, show role models, and suggest the possible consequence of one’s action. The audience can engage with the story and characters of the performance as well as learn a lesson in life.

3.1.2 Modern form of drama - TV drama

TV drama is a very popular form of drama among both the young and older Japanese people. This particular form of drama is often considered as a component of popular culture (Sata, 1991; Painter, 1996; Gossmann, 2000; and Iwabuchi, 2002). Carroll (1996), Gossmann (2000), and Winston and Tandy (2001) discuss the influence of TV drama on young people in many countries: “the TV journals will reveal that dramas of all sorts dominate the channels. Soaps, hospital and hospital dramas, thrillers and police dramas, sitcoms and science fiction, all constitute the hard core of programming meant to attract and hold audiences counted in millions” (Winston and Tandy, 2001, p. v).

Gossmann (2000) focuses on TV drama with Japanese people while Carroll (1996) specifically investigates young Australians who are influenced by TV drama. Carroll (1996) argues that TV drama becomes “the symbolic nature of the consumption of images as a cultural activity” (p. 9). People watch TV drama not simply for entertainment purposes, but also for guidance in dealing with real life situations and relationships (Gossmann, 2000).

Japanese people are also heavily influenced by TV drama. Iwabuchi (2002) reports that Japanese dramas on TV are also extremely popular in East Asian regions including Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. In every season from spring, summer, autumn, through to winter, major Japanese TV companies introduce new weekly TV drama series to audiences in Japan such as domestic drama, historical drama,
suspense stories, detective stories, police action dramas, school dramas, and documentary dramas.

In a form of domestic drama on TV, the “importance [of] the family is very much in the nature of the Japanese” (Sata, 1991, p. 208). Sata (1991) believes that domestic dramas reflect on typical Japanese family life in each period and vividly depict “the actual conditions, aspirations and ideals of the Japanese home” (p. 208). Gossmann (2000) argues that characters in Japanese TV drama help shape the identity of Japanese people particularly gender identity. Gossmann (2000) shows examples of TV drama that had a strong influence on Japanese society and people in the 70s and 90s. He asserts that in comparison with the dramas of several decades ago, Japanese TV drama tends to present a wider range of role models.

Like Kabuki, TV drama has greatly influenced people in modern society. It suggests a model for relationships, including family relationships, relationships at work, friendships, and relationships with the opposite gender. TV drama often focuses on common issues of society, education, and morality of the targeted country and people. This is why Gossmann (2000) says TV drama guides people in dealing with situations in their real life. Thus, this form of drama is also considered to have educational influences.

In summary, some forms of drama are widely recognised and educationally influential in Japan particularly Kabuki as a traditional form and TV drama as a modern form. They both present a depiction of social and personal issues of people in a particular time in history and in a particular location.

3.2 Educational drama

There is a key difference between Kabuki/TV drama and drama in the classroom that is educational drama. The difference is in the nature of the experience to the actors and the audience. The first two drama forms provide the subject to audience and viewers. They
are usually positioned as passive viewers and audience. “The audience in a theatre [and of TV drama wait] for something to happen but the participants in [educational drama] make this “something” happen” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 119). In educational drama, the participants take the double stance of actors and audience. Here, the audience is actively involved in the creation of the drama world:

The imagined world is created by and for the participants themselves. In spite of the essential need for an audience to complete the theatre event, the lack of a separate audience in this kind of drama does not invalidate it as a theatre form. It is the participants in [educational drama] who provide this sense of audience and complete the theatrical equation (O’Neill, 1995, p. 118).

Thus, educational drama incorporates the dimensions of playwright, director, actor, and audience by involving participants directly in the dramatic action, both in creating and enacting it. The main difference is that the focus of educational drama is the participants, not the audience or viewers as in Kabuki theatre and TV drama. Educational drama is also character-centred whereas the other forms are more actor-centred. In educational drama, the participants themselves become the audience as there is no external audience in class.

This section focuses on a particular form of drama used for educational purposes—‘educational drama’. This is the type of drama which is used as the main pedagogical tool for my project with the group of Year Six Japanese students and teachers in their English language classes. Using drama as a teaching and learning tool was formed by the ideas of Western countries including England, Canada and Australia, but not Japan. It is difficult to find any literature on drama used in an educational setting that is tailored especially for Japan. The most relevant publication that I could find was the book by Kao and O’Neill (1997), which is about using process drama¹ as a teaching method for Taiwanese university students learning the English language. Although the value of using drama as a teaching and learning tool was recognised in the early 90s and it was

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¹ “This term emerged in the United States and Australia in 1990, to distinguish this complex approach from more limited improvisation, skits, dramatized stories and creative dramatics” (Kao and O’Neill, 1997, p. 21).
later introduced into school curriculum in some Asian regions like Taiwan and Hong Kong, I have found it is almost impossible to find documented accounts of these educational initiatives. In addition, the language barriers make it more difficult to access relevant literature.

Within the limited documented accounts written in English about regional initiatives of using drama in classrooms, there is a recent report of a project that investigates the situation in Hong Kong (Readman et al., 2004). The report focuses on teachers in Hong Kong, who are willing to learn the method of using drama in their teaching, attending professional development to gain a better understanding of this approach. These teachers are from various key learning areas such as the Chinese language, the English language, Technology, Mathematics, Science, Arts, Physical Education, and Social Studies in both primary and secondary schools. Through participating in the professional development sessions, they found that “this teaching approach involves a much closer teacher-student relationship…[and] requires a different conviction about knowledge and of the way students acquire knowledge” (Readman et al., 2004, p. 131). It seems that the importance of training teachers for this new initiative is fully recognised in Hong Kong; they want to ensure the effective implementation of drama within the curriculum. Moreover, some teachers are highly committed to studying this approach overseas in England and America. (Readman et al., 2004).

Liu (2002) argues that the use of educational drama is considered a creative and innovative method in Asian countries like China, Taiwan, and Japan where exam- and textbook-oriented teaching methods are common, and the school curriculum is strictly controlled by the central government. When a new educational practice is introduced, it often requires a large amount of background research, effort, and discussion. It is easy to imagine the obstacles to overcome when Taiwan and Hong Kong originally tried to implement drama into their school curriculum. Readman et al (2004) discusses two main points in Hong Kong that need to be considered to improve the introduction of drama into schools: firstly having large class sizes and short lesson times are not suitable for drama-
oriented classes, and secondly they need to have enough open-space for drama rather than a classroom full of desks and chairs.

In the following sections, I would like to examine what makes drama as a teaching tool attractive to teachers and students: not only among the Western countries but also in the Asian region. I focus on a form of drama used as a teaching tool in schools, particularly primary schools. This is educational drama that is based on “role-play and improvisation, rather than formal plays with script and audience” (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 42).

When drama in the classroom is discussed, there are several terms used to describe the method including ‘process drama’. Liu (2002) argues that ‘educational drama’ and ‘process drama’ are synonymous in that they both suggest “the development of a dramatic world created by both the teacher and the students working together” (p. 54). Simons (2004) describes teachers and students in educational drama class as ‘co-investigators’ of a topic; both students and teachers enact roles and improvise “actions in an imagined world” (p. 2). Thus, educational drama changes the power relationship between the teacher and the students in comparison to the traditional teaching practices.

### 3.2.1 Relationships between teachers and students

Educational drama changes the dynamics of the classroom and also the relationship between teachers and students from a traditional style of pedagogy. This alternative way of dealing with students can bring new realisation to teachers. Booth (1994), for example, describes the response of a group of teachers when they stood around the students with a parachute to physically gather them inside and then told a story in role. One of the teachers later wrote about how powerful and supportive the experience was instead of the teacher just reading a story to the class. This physical and narrative way of presenting a story became very effective for the students in that they remembered most of the information from the storytelling. The most important message for the teachers was that they should ‘let go’ of many things, including their traditional teaching approaches.
that they take for granted. Educational drama can provide many opportunities for the teachers to ‘let go’ and enjoy the process of learning together with their students.

The task of teachers in educational drama still includes pre-planning of activities and organising teaching materials. However, Simons (2004) stresses, “remaining ready to replace those plans with ideas that the students bring to the action” (p. 7). Learning outcomes are expected to change according to the students’ spontaneous actions and ideas within the drama. Simons (2004) defines drama outcomes as ‘transformational’ outcomes - those that are not recognised or measured immediately after the class; therefore teachers need to observe the outcomes in the long-term.

In educational drama, students develop various skills throughout different stages of development. In the early stages, for example, they are both actors and the audience themselves. Simons (2004) describes this as students developing “an early form of the audience function, and [being] in fact their own audience” (p. 11). This early stage of drama is important for them to appreciate acting and to observe their own performances in a familiar learning environment. Teachers can then lead the students to the next stage where the focus of learning is “process” rather than “product” (Simons, 2004, p. 11). At this stage, the teachers support the students in making choices and consolidating reasons behind these choices. Once the students become familiar with educational drama activities and understand their different expectations in class, they will start to fully utilise their skills in “manipulating drama elements like tension and symbol…[and their knowledge to present their ideas in] the most appropriate forms to communicate…[Then,] they arguably increase their aesthetic learning” (Simons, 2004, p. 11).

According to Winston (2004), effective drama reflects the teachers’ and students’ willingness to “create the imaginary world together.” It depends on “how well [the teachers] manage the transformative powers of [the students’] imaginations, just as magicians manage ours when they create their illusions” (Winston, 2004, p. 6). Like magical illusions, drama provides clues and at times surprises the participants with unexpected directions and outcomes. As Winston (2004) says, students will enjoy drama
“with a few surprises more than one that is too easy to predict” (p. 8). Winston’s comparison of drama with magic is remarkable; Winston discusses the sensitivity of timing ‘surprises’, and to what extent unpredictability should be taken into consideration when teachers introduce ‘a few surprises’ in drama classes. For example, some students in class might not be ready for surprises or might not welcome unexpected elements in the early stages of the drama. It is very important for the teachers to develop the capacity to sense the capability of the students and their readiness for surprises in drama.

McCallum, Nicholls, and Mooney (2004) explain the task of the drama teacher:

The teacher’s task is to encourage [the students], through the making and appreciating of drama, to articulate this intuitive understanding, and later add such concepts as ‘symbol’, ‘fiction’ and ‘context’. The best introduction to reflecting on and appreciating the key elements of drama – the who, what, where, when, why and how of it all – is to use students’ knowledge of their everyday experiences (p. 165).

Educational drama provides more learning opportunities for the students to become active participants and for the teachers to witness and discover the hidden potential in their students.

3.2.2 Stories in Educational drama

In educational drama, the use of stories including picture books, folk tales, and other tales are a vital way of engaging the students in an imaginative world, especially when primary school students are involved. These stories are called ‘pre-text’. “A pre-text...contains the germ of action. Within the pre-text there lies the possibilities of pursuing any particular course in the drama. It is not an isolated activity but an integral one” (Taylor, 2000, p. 26). O’Neill (1995) stresses that an effective pre-text has ‘focus’, which contains elements of “selection, definition, distortion, and elaboration” (p. 42). It is a teacher’s task to find a focus in the pre-text that “creates an imperative tension and provides a vehicle for the themes and images to be explored” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 43). Moore (1998), Winston and Tandy (2001), O’Toole and Dunn (2002), Miller and Saxton
(2004), Nichols (2004), and Ewing and Simons (2004) demonstrate how pre-texts can be used and how educational drama activities are developed and structured from the stories.

Winston (2004) discusses the importance of students experiencing the stories through drama instead of being just read to by their teachers. Winston (2004) suggests that there are three ways that drama contributes to story. The first one is that:

The imaginative experience of fiction through drama is more immediate than through a written story. Children feel they have lived through or have actually witnessed the experience. As a result, their talk can be situated within the experience as well as reflective of the experience under discussion (p. 21).

The drama experience becomes personal to the students therefore their discussions also become more meaningful. Instead of just listening to the story and viewing illustrations on the page while a teacher is reading, students can experience major events and characters' feelings through physical enactment in drama. Winston (2004) says exploring stories through drama is more kinaesthetic and occurs through the senses, which is its second contribution. “Some children may read a facial expression or a physical gesture more readily than they understand printed or spoken words” (Winston, 2004, p. 21).

The final contribution, according to Winston (2004), is that “drama does not spell things out as clearly as a written text does, since the narrative commentary, which often provides access to a character’s inner life, is generally absent” (p. 21). Miller and Saxton (2004) believe that stories with dramatic elements allow the participants “to find other stories that, however different, address the same themes, feelings, and attitudes. Stories are more interesting when they investigate the ambiguities of human behaviors and range of human feelings” (p. 4). Educational drama allows teachers and students to create a clearer image of individual characters and to expand on the story in a totally different direction from the original story. It is possible to have a variety of individual and creative conclusions that differ from the author of the story. This is why Winston (2004) calls it an open-ended form of learning.
3.2.3 Role taking

Educational drama is based on role-play and improvisation (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002). The importance of both the students and teachers taking a role in drama is a focus of discussion among many drama educators (Wagner, 1979 and 1998; Booth, 1994 and 1998; O’Neill, 1995; Cusworth and Simons, 1997; O’Toole and Dunn, 2002; Ewing and Simons, 2004; and Warren, 2004). This is because roles can offer “self-transcendence - something that goes beyond the here and now of the real classroom situation” (O’Neill, 1998, p. 24). O’Neill (1998) points out a vital element of taking on a role in ‘process drama’ is its spontaneity that “constantly surprises individuals into the discovery of their own competencies” (p. 24). Spontaneity is the core of improvisation (Ewing and Simons, 2004). Warren (2004) argues that role taking in educational drama not only contributes to students’ self-discovery but also contributes to their learning about the world around them. Thus, taking a role is the medium for learning.

Role taking involves transforming oneself into characters. It is like “stepping into another person’s shoes” (Cusworth and Simons, 1997; and Warren, 2004). It also confirms “the importance of their own understandings and experiences” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 31). O’Neill (1995) claims that:

these transformations and the expansion of the possibilities of role are well established in [educational drama], where a role may also be played by a single person or by everyone in the group simultaneously or consecutively, and where abstract ideas or feelings may be presented for contemplation and interpretation (p. 85).

Cusworth and Simons (1997) call taking on a role in educational drama: ‘the process of enactment’. Students learn to take on roles:

which are both similar to and different from those of their real lives, temporarily adopting another person’s perspective. They use bodies to explore the consequence of thinking in this way, maintaining their stance as other students in different roles interact with them (p. 2).
In this process of enactment, students therefore engage with drama physically, emotionally, and cognitively.

The use of role in educational drama has an initial purpose that is, according to Liu (2002), “to invite participants to enter the fictional world” (p. 59). It is vital for all the participants to agree to step into an imaginary world together. Liu (2002) explains how the use of role influences students in the process of drama:

Once this invitation is accepted, participants can respond actively, begin to ask or answer questions, and oppose or transform what is taking place. Meanwhile, the role presented by the teacher is available to be “read” by the whole class, and like spectators at a play, the participants are entangled in a web of contemplation, speculation, and anticipation. The formation of group cohesion and identity is assured as interest, commitment, and appropriate responses to what is being presented are generated (p. 59).

The use of taking a role is very powerful once all the participants are committed to entering the drama world and agree to explore together. Consequently, a sense of togetherness and communal achievement within the participants emerge from the experience.

Taking a role can be a powerful experience for some students because it involves physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Ewing and Simons (2004) say that it is necessary to provide “protection into role” (p. 6). This means that teachers need to guide students to explore the fictional world safely, particularly in regards to emotions:

If a distance is established between the students’ reality and the fiction, they are saved from confusing the fictional world with distressing elements of reality. The roles they adopt should clearly differ from themselves (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 6).

Class discussions that involve reflection on the roles that students undertook can be a helpful way to slowly detach them from the fictional world and bring them back to
reality. Ewing and Simons (2004) also suggest the use of “more contemplative techniques like tableaux”\(^2\) as a way of gradually calming the students down.

### 3.2.4 Roles for the whole class and teachers

In Educational drama, the students take on multiple roles as an audience, playwright, and actor. “In the genres of drama in education,…the gaps between artist (playwright), medium (actor) and responder (audience) are at their most vestigial” (O’Toole, 1992, p. 147). In the role of playwright or what O’Toole (1992) also calls ‘the characters’, each student experiences “the tensions of that character’s attempts to realise his or her goals, the primary ‘first-order’ tensions of the task, of conflict, mystery and secrecy” (O’Toole, 1992, p. 148). For the second role as an actor or “participants playing the characters” (O’Toole, 1992), activities such as role-plays and ‘Class-in-role’ (where the whole class is in role) are used. Taking a role individually is part of the practice of most forms of drama. The final role that the students take is of an audience. O’Toole (1992) stresses that the audience in educational drama does not just watch the action like an external audience in theatre performances. They also watch “their own involvement in the action as participants and as characters” (O’Toole, 1992, p. 148). By adopting these different positions within educational drama, the students eventually identify with the story in more detail through sharing and negotiating ideas.

In the process of negotiation, Ewing and Simons (2004) stress the importance of accepting each other’s “offer” of ‘suggestions’ and ‘ideas’: they believe that students “may need to be taught how to accept an offer, or how to disagree without blocking” the offer completely (p. 7). If a student completely blocks someone else’s ‘offer’ during the development of role, the whole process of the drama might be stopped, which might lead to the collapse of the fictional world that the students have built together.

\(^2\) A tableau is one of the techniques used in educational drama that involves students “in using their bodies to create an image…that represents how a selected moment or incident might look” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 27). It also called Still-Image, Frozen-Picture, or Depiction.
The expectation in students while they are in role as a group or a class differs from that of actors on stage. Individual acting is not expected, however students need to “adopt particular attitudes and perspectives and respond appropriately” (Kao and O’Neill, 1998, p. 26). When a whole class is in role, all the students become both actors and audience while they are engaging in the drama. A successful drama activity using a group or class in role can provide a strong sense of togetherness, and individual students can feel that they are important members of that particular community within the classroom.

Another significant aspect of taking a role in educational drama is that the teacher as well as students can participate in the drama. ‘Teacher-In-Role’ is a convention where teachers commit to entering the fictional world with the students and taking on a role. This is an effective teaching tool that enables teachers to invite their students into the drama world. Teachers in a role can suggest a new beginning or guide the students to further discussion:

It is an amazingly powerful teaching strategy that can develop and deepen students’ understanding of and commitment to a drama experience. As teachers become confident in its use, they will find it to be a comfortable and rewarding technique that engages and authorises students. Its ability to empower is at the heart of its success (Warren, 2004, p. 19).

The status of the teachers is changed from a typical classroom situation when they use ‘Teacher-In-Role’ because it enriches “the action beyond just being guide, facilitator and instructor” (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 8). O’Toole and Dunn (2002) suggest that some teachers might be uncomfortable using this technique because teachers feel that they only have limited skills in drama and they fear losing their authority in class. Ewing and Simons (2004) cite a well-known drama educator, Gavin Bolton (1984), who was resistant to the use of the technique at first, as the idea of teacher ‘joining in’ with the students was against the traditional idea of teaching. Initial apprehensive responses to the technique seem to be very common.
However, O’Toole and Dunn (2002) believe that teachers already have skills of ‘pretend play’ from their childhood. They might have forgotten how to use these skills because they are not necessary for daily use, or some teachers might feel that it is silly to do a ‘pretend play’ when they are grown up. “In fact, [teachers] have more than [students] do, skills and command of language register and vocabulary, or gesture and movement, that are important to model” (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 8). O’Toole and Dunn (2002) apply a metaphor: “it is like riding a bicycle” (p. 8). When adults start riding a bicycle again, they probably need to practise for a few times but it does not take much to master it again because the skills are already there. Teachers taking a role in classroom are the same. They might need a few trials to polish up their skills, but they will be able to manipulate these skills again.

It is still possible to run successful educational drama sessions without teachers taking a role in the process. O’Toole and Dunn (2002) outline a sample lesson that does not use the technique of teacher-in-role. However, the technique is a very powerful and useful teaching tool, and they argue that it is worthwhile for teachers to try out and experience the strength of the technique in their classroom.

Using ‘Teacher-In-Role’ enables teachers to organise their students’ learning “from inside the drama world, using [their] adopted character for subtle pointing – or more forceful emphasis – when significant issues arise” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 32). The technique can provide opportunities for the teachers to discover different ways of interacting with the students from typical pedagogical interactions. The connection of ‘Teacher-In-Role’ enables teachers to also enjoy themselves in a learning context (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002). This is an opportunity for them to model and demonstrate how to add fun to learning, rather than them just verbally telling their students to enjoy learning.

There are several significant benefits in using this technique. The first benefit is that ‘Teacher-in-role’ can directly empower the students, especially when another technique
‘Mantle of expert’[^3] is used in conjunction with ‘Teacher-in-role’. “Regular use of these techniques can change the dynamics of your classroom, offering your students more control over both the content and direction of the drama and the learning process” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 31). When a group of students become ‘experts’ in the technique of ‘Mantle of expert’, these students are required to share their understanding and experiences with the other students. This allows students more control in the process of the drama. Another benefit of using ‘Teacher-in-role’ is that the status of the teacher in class dramatically changes by being in role of a messenger or information-seeker. Consequently, the teacher becomes the ‘playwright’ who gives clues to the students who have “the audience mind” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 126). O’Neill (1995) explains that among these clues “for which they will be searching is a sense of their own relationship to the teacher’s role, their own role function, and the power and possibility it presents. They become united in paying attention to the fiction created by the teacher in role” (p. 126). Thus, ‘Teacher-in-role’ provides an opportunity for the teacher and students to re-create a new relationship in class with the help of fictional roles that they adopt.

### 3.3 Drama and second/foreign language teaching and learning

The use of drama as a teaching and learning medium in second/foreign language classes has spread widely throughout the world. There are various ways of using drama as a methodology including simple role-play, theatre based activities, and more complicated units of work based on stories and picture books. The first type, simple role-play, is often chosen by second/foreign language teachers who do not have any experience or knowledge in drama. The use of simple-role play is not context-focused. For example, students practise a given dialogue focused on a particular sentence pattern or vocabulary that follows their textbook or the curriculum. The main focus is the students’ linguistic

[^3]: “In this technique, a group of students act as experts in some enterprise (e.g. as historians or farm managers). It is important that the other participants respect their claim to expertise as they go about solving the problems that they’ve been consulted about. The students are not merely told that they are experts, their authority is established over time through drama work in which their status is created and enacted” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 36-7).
abilities, including their pronunciation, the use of grammar patterns and sentence structures in the correct manner. In this type of activity, the language teachers are not concerned with the students’ non-linguistic abilities. These non-linguistic abilities include body language, facial expressions, and use of eye contact which are important for communication.

Heathcote and Bolton (1998) suggest that simple role-play in a typical language classroom can be more drama-focused when teachers add extra characters to set dialogue and provide adjectives and descriptions. By doing this, characters will have more detailed role-play descriptions, instead of using a simple term such as ‘a person A and B’. For example, a customer becomes an angry customer or a shopkeeper becomes a young girl who helps out in her parents’ shop. This helps give some dramatic context to the language activity. It encourages the learners to explore other ways of using the targeted language by changing their tone of voice, adding extra words, and using appropriate gestures and facial expressions according to the given description of the role. It seems that many language teachers do not realise the potential of expanding a typical role-play in a language class.

The second type of drama used in a second/foreign language class is theatre-based activities, which I experienced in Australia when I first came as an ESL (English as a second language) student. Drama teachers or English literature teachers with some theatre background tend to prefer this approach. It focuses on drama activities and games that are used for training actors, including mime, improvisation, solo-performances, group performances, and stage performances. Like the simple role-play, these theatre-based drama activities in language classes are not context-focused in that each activity or lesson is not connected within a shared fictional situation.

The third type of drama used in the language classes is the main focus of this study. It is often referred to as ‘educational drama’ (Ewing and Simons, 2004). Others like Kao and

4 See 1.3.2: Learning English as a second language in Australia, in Chapter One, p 14.
O’Neill (1998) call it, ‘process drama’, whereby Booth (1994) uses the term, ‘story drama’. This third type of drama was discussed in the early part of this chapter.

3.3.1 Types of drama activities in second/foreign language classes

The different types of drama activities discussed previously are used in second/foreign language teaching. Kao and O’Neill (1998) categorise these forms of drama. The most common activities such as language games and scripted or rehearsed role-plays are considered as the first group of “closed and controlled drama approaches” (Kao and O’Neill, 1998). These activities are exercised-based and they are predictable in that both the teacher and students know how to achieve their set goals. Kao and O’Neill (1998) explain that role-play exercises in this first category “will probably focus initially on accuracy, the transmission of information, and growing familiarity with simple social interactions” (p. 7). This is often teacher-centred learning and the roles in this type of drama are set and are not negotiable.

The second group are “semi-controlled drama approaches” (Kao and O’Neill, 1998), which includes improvised role-play and scenarios. These activities are more open for students to negotiate. Theatre-based activities can fit into this category because they are not directly focused on the use of target sentence patterns and grammar structures in the target language. These activities are loosely connected with each other but are not tightly integrated as process drama.

The last category is categorised as “open communication” by Kao and O’Neill (1998). This includes educational drama or process drama, which requires “language to be used in meaningful, authentic situations, where the focus is on problem posing and resolution” (Kao and O’Neill, 1998, p. 12). Educational drama is based on student-centred learning where roles are negotiated by the students. This creates a whole new dynamic to the

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5 See 3.2: Educational drama in this chapter, Chapter Three, p. 55.
learning environment; it changes the teacher-student relationship and the student-student relationship through participation in individual, pair, and whole class activities.

The key aspects of these three categories are thoroughly described by Kao and O’Neill (1998) in terms of objectives, organization, context, roles, decisions, dramatic tension, and teacher functions. Figure 3.1 below is slightly modified from their table (1998, p. 16) and is used to describe the differences in the three categories. In the figure, some significant points are highlighted and one of the key aspects of ‘decisions’ in the closed-communication approach is changed from ‘none’ in Kao and O’Neill’s table to ‘decided by teachers’ in this table as this approach is focused on the teacher-centred approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drama Approaches</th>
<th>Closed communication</th>
<th>Semi-controlled communication</th>
<th>Open communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>Fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Authenticity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisation</strong></td>
<td>Pair work</td>
<td>Small groups</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small groups</td>
<td>Some rehearsal</td>
<td>New classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>Unpredictable ending</td>
<td>relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>Determined by students in</td>
<td>Launched by teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Naturalistic</td>
<td>consultation with teacher</td>
<td>in role or a scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher selected</td>
<td></td>
<td>from a selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roles</strong></td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Group members</td>
<td>Generalised at</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Teacher determined</td>
<td>Spokes-person groups</td>
<td>first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fixed attitudes</td>
<td>Individual role-taking</td>
<td>Becoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decisions</strong></td>
<td>Decided by teachers</td>
<td>Determined by students</td>
<td>individualised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tension</strong></td>
<td>To produce accuracy</td>
<td>Arising from the social</td>
<td>Arising from the</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>of language and</td>
<td>dynamic rather than a focus</td>
<td>dramatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vocabulary</td>
<td>on accuracy</td>
<td>situation and the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Function</strong></td>
<td>To set up exercises</td>
<td>To initiate</td>
<td>In role</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To provide resource</td>
<td>To support</td>
<td>As model</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be evaluator</td>
<td>To provide resource</td>
<td>To support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Figure 3.1: A constructed chart of “Three categories for drama approaches in second/foreign language classes”, sourced by Kao and O’Neill, 1998, p. 16)
Each key aspect of the three categories can be compared to show different characteristics. For example, a significant difference is seen in the summary in the above table with the Objectives. Closed communication approaches do not offer the learners fluency development, whereas other approaches with more drama focus can help in developing the students’ fluency skills. Additionally, educational drama in open-communication does not provide as much repeated language practice. Instead, it gives authenticity in a student-centred learning environment where students can negotiate their ideas, interpretations of events, characters and roles, and direction of the story that they are working on. It also creates a new classroom relationship.

Closed-communication approaches and open communication approaches have different objectives and purposes. Kao and O’Neill (1998) suggest the closed communication approaches like language games and scripted role-plays are suitable for language learners who are at the beginner level of language proficiency. “However, pre-determined features of these activities restrict learners from progressing to higher levels in using the targeted language” (Kao and O’Neill, 1998, p. 9). Araki-Metcalfe’s (2001) study showed that a combination of the two approaches, the closed-communication and open-communication approach, is more effective for beginner level students in learning the target language. In this study, I found that the closed communication approach prepared the students with necessary and basic linguistic skills first and then they explored how to use these linguistic skills in a meaningful context in the open-communication approach.

Liu (2002) supports the idea of using educational drama in the open-communication approach as an additional tool for teaching so that students can also explore and negotiate how to use appropriate non-linguistic skills including facial expressions and gestures. Through participation in the open-communication approach, students might experience how linguistic limitations can be supplemented with non-linguistic skills when they communicate with others. Liu (2002) 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” (p. 61). If students learn to fully use their non-linguistic skills at the same time as their
linguistic skills from the beginners’ levels, they are more likely to become far more successful in communicating in the target language. They are more aware of the benefits of manipulating the two types of skills, instead of relying on just linguistic skills.

3.3.2 Different expectations of language teachers and students in a drama focused language class

It seems easier for teachers with drama backgrounds to see the benefits of using educational drama in teaching a second/foreign language than for language teachers who lack understanding of drama as a teaching tool. 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, p. 61). To teachers and students who are used to learning their second/foreign language in a traditional language classroom, it is often difficult or takes a while to accept educational drama as a teaching and learning method, as this method is innovative. An innovative way of learning can be a challenge for teachers and students because it requires them to step out of their comfort zone into an unfamiliar area. “The best learning occurs within a supportive classroom environment in which students are challenged to think beyond the square and encouraged to connect with what’s happening in their world” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 1).

Both Liu (2002) and McCallum, Nicholls, and Mooney (2004) agree that teachers need to understand the elements of drama within a classroom when they apply educational drama in their teaching:

The teacher has to not only manage the physical settings of the classroom in terms of the furniture placement but also control the pace and mood of the class in terms of what, when, and how to present the pre-text and guide the students through various phases of dramatic activities to enhance effective learning (Lim, 2002, p. 63).
Liu (2002) discusses the use of drama in the setting of second/foreign language learning, however McCallum, Nicholls, and Mooney (2004) focus on primary classroom teachers in general who are interested in using educational drama as a teaching method. As classroom expectations for teachers and students in educational drama differ from a typical language classroom, it is vital for students to know that it is acceptable to make mistakes and for the teacher to become a “co-learner on the journey” (Ewing and Simons, 2004). The dynamics of power relationships in a drama classroom, including teacher-teacher, teacher-student, and student-student relationships, differs from the traditional classroom setting. Educational drama breaks the typical hierarchical structure of the classroom in order to create a closer and more flexible relationship between the teacher and students. Thus, commitment and cooperation from both students and teacher are the key to successful drama-oriented classes.

3.3.3 Educational drama as a motivational tool in language learning

The implementation of drama activities can change a typical language class to a more exciting one for the students. In particular, the open communication approaches including educational drama can stimulate the students’ second/foreign language learning (Araki-Metcalf, 2001). My previous study (2001) indicated that Australian primary school students who were learning the Japanese language as their foreign language at school were more motivated to learn the foreign language through exploring an imaginary world together with their classmates. The chosen pre-text was a story of a Japanese girl and her family who find a lost puppy on a street in Japan and the puppy subsequently disappears. I worked with a group of Australian students who participated in various drama activities and used their linguistic skills in the Japanese language within the safe learning environment that drama created for them.

One of the findings from the study was that students with less confidence in the Japanese language classes felt more motivated to use Japanese without fear of making mistakes. Within the process drama, they experienced great joy and a feeling of success in being
able to communicate in Japanese with their own words. Another vital finding was that the students’ long-term memory was stimulated and developed: they remembered more Japanese words and understood how to use them in appropriate contexts for a longer period of time whereas in the typical Japanese language classes they easily forgot what they had just learnt in a previous class.

A question comes to mind as to what makes the educational drama approach more effective in terms of capturing the second/foreign language students’ attention throughout the class. Some possible reasons are considered for why drama provides more motivation towards language learning than a typical language class. In particular, an important structural element in educational drama, tension, cannot be ignored. ‘Tension’ as a drama term has a different meaning from the one that teachers use in daily situations in classroom. The differences are clearly explained by O’Toole (1992) that:

The word ‘tension’ is not one which most teachers are likely to regard positively as a key element of their teaching, rather than as something to avoid. The definition which we are using would probably be even less popular: that the source of tension is the gap between people and the fulfilment of their internal purposes, a gap created by deliberately imposing constraints in order to create an emotional disturbance (tension itself) in the participants (p. 132).

In association with the word ‘tension’, other terms including ‘conflict’, ‘dilemma’, ‘secrecy’, ‘ritual’, ‘surprise’ and ‘deception’ are often used as ways to create motivation in drama (O’Toole, 1992). As suggested by many drama educators (O’Toole, 1992; Cusworth and Simons, 1997; Liu, 2002; and Ewing and Simons, 2004), tension in drama refers to ‘emotions’: it can be interpreted as “the emotional reactions of a group of participants” (O’Toole, 1992) which exists “within the [dramatic] situation and between situations across time. It is the [gap] between what is known and what is unknown, between what is anticipated and what actually happens” (Liu, 2002, p. 60). Thus, “drama is significant because it allows [students] to get in touch with their feelings; it deals reputedly with ‘the heart’ whereas other subjects are confined to ‘the head’” (Bolton, 1986, p. 100). This idea of Bolton’s (1986) can be applied to the situation of a second/foreign language class whereas the traditional approaches in language classes that
offer linguistic-focused and repeated language exercises are more concentrated on ‘the head’.

Typical language classes, which mainly deal with ‘the head’, do not include any ‘tension’ or ‘getting in touch with the students’ feelings’ throughout the lesson. Kao and O’Neill (1998) suggest that tensions are removed deliberately in traditional language exercises in order to “isolate a particular [linguistic] factor and allow attention to be focused on it” (p. 28–29). This approach means that “natural discoveries [in learning] that come from emotional involvement cannot arise” (Johnson and O’Neill, 1984 cited by Kao and O’Neill, 1998, p. 29). Emotional involvement is the key to creating a motivational learning environment in a second/foreign language classroom because it allows the language learners to experience their targeted language more personally.

Emotions in drama clearly differ from “the raw emotion of day to day life” (Bolton, 1986, p. 107). Emotion in drama is more controlled and “it is accompanied by the pleasure of being in control” (Bolton, 1986, p. 102). Thus, tension is negotiable (O’Toole, 1992). As suggested by Kao and O’Neill (1998), tension is “never merely suspense, waiting for something to happen, but implies both pressure and resistance” (p. 28). The nature of dramatic tension being negotiable and controllable by the participants keep “dramatic interaction alive” (Kao and O’Neill, 1998, p. 28).

Bolton (1986) discusses a sensitive issue in dealing with emotions in dramatic contexts. “If the make-believe world has been upsetting, the world [the teacher] offers must be reassuring” (Bolton, 1986, p. 98): the dramatic situations should create a learning environment for the students to feel ‘safe’ and ‘comfortable’ enough to expose their feelings. Dramatic emotions, therefore, should provide ambivalence “-of being hurt yet not hurt; surprised and yet not surprised; saddened and yet not saddened—that is central to the child drama experience” (Bolton, 1986, p. 97). In other words, all the participants should be aware that what is happening in the dramatic world is fictional, not real. This agreement is vital before they enter the drama world. In addition, teachers should be
fully aware of the importance of sharing a period of emotional adjustment by reflecting with the students after experiencing intense dramatic events to ‘cool down’.

Bolton (1986) also expresses his concerns that a classroom situation where drama-like activities are used without tension is considered the same ‘drama’ as the drama with tension. According to Kao and O’Neill (1998), “without this essential dramatic and interactional element, the drama is unlikely to develop effectively” (p. 29). Experiencing tension in the fictional world is “the key to the dramatic educational process” (Bolton, 1986, p. 101) and therefore to both the engagement and the learning.

In addition, the emotional responses that arise from tension in educational drama offer the participants to deal with these emotions as a ‘verb’ (Bolton, 1986). Words that describe emotions are usually adjectives such as ‘angry’, ‘confused’, ‘happy’, and ‘sad’, however educational drama changes this to a verb, so that participants are ‘experiencing’ the emotions in the fictional context. Bolton (1986) differentiates these two quality of emotion in the following way: “a static feeling that may give integrity to the beginning of the process [is] the adjective [whereas] the changing emotion experienced once the feeling quality is established [is] the verb” (p. 107). This is why the emotional involvement that emerges from tension in drama helps students to constantly focus on the dramatic world; this motivates them to participate in a journey of discovery in themselves as well as with others in the class.

Thus, educational drama is a holistic approach that can provide a new way of involving students physically, emotionally, and intellectually in their second/foreign language learning at school. Through participating in educational drama, language students can develop their understanding of how the target language works in possible situations, for various purposes, and with different people. Moreover, they can develop sensitivity towards how to interpret appropriately the feelings of others and themselves in their targeted language. In a second/foreign language class, it is vital for the teachers to provide opportunities where their students can get in touch with their feelings while they
are learning the language, and to manipulate the language more effectively by taking all the physical, emotional, and intellectual elements of the specific context into account.

‘Tension’ is a vital element that is sometimes sadly overlooked in the eagerness to provide as much information and knowledge as possible to the students in the allocated lesson time frame. Second/foreign language teachers could provide alternative learning methods by using dramatic tension in their classroom.

3.3.4 Three crucial conditions for motivation and educational drama

There are additional significant elements in drama, other than ‘dramatic tension’, that influence second/foreign language students to become more motivated in class. In the following sections, conditions for motivation in the area of applied linguistics will be introduced, and I will discuss how other significant elements in educational drama can be applied.

In the area of applied linguistics, especially second/foreign language teaching, substantial research on motivation has been conducted. Publications such as Schmidt and Dornyei (2001), Dornyei (2001) and many others present definitions and discussions of motivation in second/foreign language learning in general. Falout and Maruyama (2004) focus on a group of Japanese people in English as a foreign language class. The term ‘motivation’ is discussed among teachers in many subject areas however it is difficult to define exactly what it is. Motivation is considered to be complex because it relates to human behaviour. Dornyei (2001) suggests motivation as “a broad umbrella term that covers a variety of meaning” (p. 1). It is further explained by Dornyei (2001) that it refers to “the antecedents (i.e. the causes and origins) of action”, in other words motivation means “why people decide to do something, how hard they are going to pursue it and how long they are willing to sustain the activity” (Dornyei, 2001, p. 7). In Motivational strategies in the language classroom (2001), he outlines three conditions for motivation: appropriate teacher behaviour; a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the
classroom; and a cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms. The use of educational drama as a teaching tool in class provides these basic and essential conditions.

The first condition for motivation is the behaviour of teachers. Dornyei’s (2001) study discusses four fundamental points, including teachers’ enthusiasm; their commitment to and expectations for the students’ learning; relationship with the students; and relationship with the students’ parents. Here I will focus on the first element, the teacher’s enthusiasm. Many teachers already know that teachers’ enthusiasm greatly influences the students’ motivation towards learning in any academic subject area, not just in drama or second/foreign language learning. Enthusiasm of teachers is vital yet it is often taken for granted. The enthusiastic teachers are defined according to Dornyei (2001):

> The ones who love their subject matter and who show by their dedication and their passion that there is nothing else on earth they would rather be doing. They are the ‘nutcases’ whose involvement in their areas of expertise is so excessive that it is bordering on being crazy…Such a commitment towards the subject matter then becomes ‘infectious’, instilling in students a similar willingness to pursue knowledge (p. 32).

In the area of educational drama, most drama teachers are skilled in projecting their passion and enthusiasm in class. For example, the well-known drama educator, Dorothy Heathcote, is influential to many students and teachers, due to her enthusiastic use of drama in classroom. Dornyei (2001) points out that these teachers’ ability “to make this enthusiasm public rather than hiding it is one of the most important ingredients of motivationally successful teaching” (p. 33). Teachers who understand educational drama as an effective teaching tool write about their enjoyment in the classes: in participating in the drama activities by taking on different roles, engaging in a new adventure in a story with their students, and becoming participants in the drama activities with the students (Cusworth and Simons, 1997; Booth, 1998; Kao and O’Neill, 1998; Moore, 1998; O’Toole and Dunn, 2002; Ewing and Simons, 2004; and Miller and Saxton, 2004).
Furthermore, teaching with enthusiasm presents ‘a model’ or sets an example to the students (Dornyei, 2001, p. 33). Educational drama offers many opportunities for the teachers to demonstrate a model to students, one that is different from the traditional teacher’s position, the authoritarian figure that is a common teaching method in Asian countries such as Japan. One of the educational drama techniques, Teacher-In-Role, for example, offers another positive perspective for the teacher-student relationship as discussed earlier in this chapter.

The second crucial condition for motivating students’ second/foreign language learning relates to the classroom atmosphere. Learning a second/foreign language can be very stressful for some students because it requires a high level of attention and concentration in order to become a successful language learner. As Dornyei (2001) says, “it is all too easy to make a mistake when you have to pay attention to pronunciation, intonation, grammar and content at the same time” (p. 40). This is why Dornyei (2001) believes that a supportive classroom atmosphere is vital in the second/foreign language class so that students can take risks and do not feel embarrassed about making mistakes.

In language classes using educational drama, a mutual trust and respect emerges in the classroom through the process of creating an imaginary world together. As discussed in earlier sections in this chapter, role taking is one of the main characteristics in educational drama and the students can transform themselves into something/someone else. Taking on a role can create distance between the real self-identity and the fictional role. If second/foreign language learners make mistakes being in a role, this distance can prevent them from taking the mistake too personally; they might accept that the mistake was made by the character or the role which was fictional, and was not made by the students themselves. The learners are also able to explore the possibilities of how the target language works while they are in role. This means that they are allowed to take risks freely because they know that they are in a fictional world and are taking on a fictional identity.
Humour is also a necessary factor in improving the supportive atmosphere in a classroom. Dornyei (2001) explains humour as a relaxed attitude towards learning, however it is often ignored in many publications on motivation. Dornyei’s (2001) notion of humour in a second/foreign language classroom seems to overlap with Winston and Tandy’s notion of drama being playful (2001). “Since we were very young children, we have [learnt] to distinguish between the conventions of play and those of everyday life and exploring the boundaries between the two can be a great source of delight” (Winston and Tandy, 2001, p. vii). The application of educational drama in second/foreign language classes, therefore, helps fulfil the sense of playfulness and promotes a sense of humour in the students. As a result, it enhances the quality of a supportive classroom atmosphere.

The last condition suggested by Dornyei (2001) is to create a cohesive learning group in class, a sense of togetherness and “a strong ‘we’ feeling” (p. 43). In a cohesive learning environment, students provide mutual support and make each other welcome in the group. This increases students’ motivation towards learning (Dornyei, 2001).

In educational drama, each person’s cooperation in the class is indispensable. Students “share their understanding with the rest of the group, allowing them to further shape ideas, feelings and attitudes which might otherwise remain wholly private and unavailable” (Kao and O’Neill, 1998, p. 17). Consequently, second/foreign language learners in educational drama are “highly motivated and actively involved in participation through risk-taking and practice” (Liu, 2002, p. 57). In a supportive environment with the use of educational drama, students are given opportunities for trial and error through implementing their ideas in action and finding the appropriate linguistic and non-linguistic expressions according to the fictional situation. A strong sense of support is in the nature of educational drama as teachers and students are all active participants (Liu, 2002). Through participating in various educational drama activities together, students genuinely start developing a sense of cohesion and group dynamics. Educational drama is student-centred learning which allows students to take initiatives and to negotiate meanings within an imaginary world.
3.4 Conclusion

Educational drama is a student-centred learning approach that changes the power-relationships in class including the teacher-student relationship and the student-student relationship. In classrooms in the Asian regions such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan, altering the power relationships in classroom has great impact as these countries are still heavily influenced by a more traditional educational approach. However, as there are many benefits in using an educational drama approach for second/foreign language learning, this pedagogical tool has slowly begun to be accepted within the Asian regions. Moreover, educational drama can integrate with the three crucial conditions for motivation\(^6\) and can assist in increasing students’ motivation towards learning their second/foreign language. This can be achieved due to the significant elements of educational drama: involving the students physically, emotionally, and cognitively; focusing on communicating each other’s ideas; negotiation by the students; allowing them to take initiatives in their learning; and being more context-focused. Kabuki and TV dramas have educationally influenced Japanese people’s perceptions of the world, their relationships, and emotions. Educational drama has influenced participants more directly in their learning. Students can become the actor, audience, playwright, and director in educational drama with their direct involvement and participation in the dramatic action.

\(^6\) Dornyei’s (2001) three crucial conditions for motivation are: appropriate teacher behaviours; a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom; and a cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms.
Applying action research in Japanese education

4. Introduction

This study investigates the responses of Year Six students and teachers in a Japanese public primary school who participated in a unit of the English language curriculum as a foreign language using educational drama. This was the first experience for these participants of educational drama in their classroom. Educational drama was a novel idea for both the students and teachers. Action research is the methodology I used to implement this investigation. This methodology chapter will cover the following features: Action Research as a research methodology, preparing for the project, the context of the project, the data and data analysis, and concerns that arose throughout the project.

4.1 Action research

Research is about creating new knowledge, finding ways of testing its validity, and sharing the knowledge for specific purposes. In action research terms, those purposes are always to do with learning and personal and social growth (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 7).

My decision to use action research for this project was based on its characteristics; the methodology provides an opportunity for improving a situation as well as for self-improvement as a teacher. Action research is also flexible in that it can cater for specific needs of the study as they arise. This project is conducted by teacher-researchers, and the project focuses on the participants’ responses to an alternative English language curriculum using educational drama.

Action research has been recognised as a popular research method, especially among teacher researchers, within the last few decades. There are some possible reasons for its popularity for school based research projects. One reason is that more and more teachers
tend to feel that their own opinions as well as their participants’ opinions are valuable and should be shared with others. Action research allows this to happen. Another possible reason is that action research focuses on self-growth and that it facilitates social growth, as McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003) suggest. In the following sections, definitions and characteristics of this particular research methodology will be discussed.

4.1.1 Definitions

The definition of action research seems to differ slightly according to individual authors and their area of focus. Carr and Kemmis’s (1986) definition, however, provides a general idea of what action research is about:

> 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 (p. 162).

In action research, improvement within a certain area with which participants are concerned is the key element (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Kember, 2000; Macintyre, 2000; Arhar, Holly, and Kasten, 2001; Johnson, 2002; and McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003). The three areas that action research aims to improve are; improving practice, improving “the understanding of the practice by its practitioners” (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 165), and improving a situation.

Regarding ‘improvement’ through action research, Kember (2000) 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” (p. 25). Action research allows researchers to examine their concerns and enables them to take action for changing the current situation.
Educational Action Research

The concept of action research was developed by Lewin in the 1940’s to investigate social practices, however these original social practices did not include school-based research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; and Arhar, Holly, and Kasten, 2001). Since Lewin’s original action research model was developed, action research has been adapted for a much wider range of areas. Consequently, the use of action research for education became popular among educational researchers (Kember, 2000; Macintyre, 2000; Arhar, Holly, and Kasten, 2001; Johnson, 2002; and McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003). In comparing Lewin’s model to the current one, Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001) suggest that “instead of continuing the tradition of focusing on changing others, research was turned toward changing one’s own behaviour and understanding. The research itself was empowering to the person and group conducting it, and it contributed to knowledge about social relations and change” (p. 48). This type of research is referred to as educational action research, as Carr and Kemmis (1986) originally named it, in order to differentiate a general model of action research.

According to Macintyre (2000), in school-based research, action research is a way of “carrying out self-appraisal through evaluating any or all of the activities which make up classroom practice” (p. xii). The popularity of action research for educational studies seems to relate to the characteristics of action research, which researchers can adapt to almost any area of study in education. “In education, action research has been employed in school-based curriculum development, professional development, school improvement programs, and systems planning and policy development” (Carr and Kemmis, 1983, p. 152). Educational action research was used as the methodology for this project with the Japanese primary school students and teachers because its characteristics can specifically cater for the focus of this particular study: to monitor participants’ responses to educational drama in their English language classes and to reflect on their progress.
4.1.2 Characteristics

There are distinctive characteristics of action research; action research cycles are systematic and reflective. Another characteristic of action research is the way it involves the researchers themselves in the research project. This differs from traditional research practice where “[o]ther paradigms tend to avoid perturbing the subject of their research. Action researchers set out with the avowed intention of improving their practice” (Kember, 2000, p. 25). Action research helps researchers to investigate their concerns from within the situation and to put plans into action in order to reach their goal of ‘improvement’.

A Cyclical Process

An action research cycle mainly contains four stages of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This gives an impression that an action research cycle is straightforward and sequential as shown in a diagram of action research cycle in Figure 3.1. Action research starts as a single loop of an action research cycle however Carr and Kemmis (1983) express their concern “whether a single loop should be considered as action research at all” (p. 162). In other words, action research consists of several loops or cycles, which are described as spiral or cyclical improvement (Carr and Kemmis, 1983; Kember, 2000; Macintyre, 2000; Arhar, Holly, and Kasten, 2001; Johnson, 2002; and McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003). The spiral or cyclical process is indicated as a diagram in Figure 3.2.

![Diagram of action research cycle](image)

Figure 3.1 a typical action research cycle (a single loop)
In many publications on action research, there are diagrams like figure 3.1 and 3.2 to describe a system of action research. Yet, McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003) advise not to apply these diagrams to action research projects without critically examining individual cases because these visual diagrams are “not the reality; [they aim] to represent reality” (p. 28). Moreover, McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003) suggest that “the models that communicate most effectively in the creative nature of action research are those that try to present the fluidity of open-ended, free enquiry” (p. 28). Thus, the diagram in Figure 3.2 can be expanded to a more flexible model in Figure 3.3.

In Cherry’s understanding of action research cycle, the original four stages of the cycle (planning, acting, observing, and evaluating) are slightly modified and evolved. Instead of having these four stages, Cherry (1999) puts both the observing and evaluating stages
together as one category, and another stage is added in Figure 3.4 such as “attending, noticing, diagnosing, focusing and refocusing” (p. 2). Before the first stage of planning begins, Lewin’s original cycle (1946) starts from an investigation on “what is happening now” (refer to a diagram of Lewin’s Action Research Cycle, 1946, cited by Taylor, 1998, p. 217). Within this stage of investigation, the investigator engages in discussions, negotiations, exploring opportunities, assessing possibilities, and examining constraints. However, it is focused only on the other four stages of planning, acting, observing, and evaluating as far as the action research cycle is concerned. Cherry (1999) revisits the importance of the investigation stage in the action research cycle and includes it as one of the significant stages in the cycle (refer to Figure 3.4).

**ATTENDING, NOTICING, DIAGNOSING, FOCUSING AND REFOCUSING**
- Identifying or defining a program, an issue or opportunity
- Developing-and later reframing-an idea, hypothesis, or vision
- Asking “What else is possible?” “What should be done differently?”

**OBSERVING, EVALUATING AND CONCLUDING**
- Studying the consequences of action
- Specifying learning
- Making sense of experience
- Describing, explaining
- Developing theory and knowledge
- Asking “So what?” and then “What next?”

**ACTION PLANNING**
- Developing a strategy: for collecting data or solving a problem or implementing an idea

**ACTION AND EXPERIENCE**
- Collecting data
- Implementing action

Figure 3.4 Cherry’s version of action research (Cherry, 1999, p. 2)
In Cherry’s action research diagram, the last stage of the cycle, ‘observing, evaluating and concluding’ is a little crowded. The last stage would be better, in my opinion, to have two separate stages, one for observing and another for both evaluating and concluding. Therefore, an ideal diagram may have five different stages instead of four.

In the process of action research, “action is continually enriched by reflection, planning and the injection of ideas; at the same time, the action produces experience which changes the way we think about things” (Cherry, 1999, p. 1). Cherry (1999) describes what is expected to happen within a successful cycle:

Successful interventions (ones that work) and meaning (knowledge and learning) are created by the sustained interplay of activity and reflection. During the action research cycle, experience is continually recycled; earlier experiences and data are revisited in the light of accumulated data; new action is planned in the light of what went on before, and all experiences are systematically reviewed and evaluated (p. 1).

In Cherry’s terms, the action research cycle tends to become a more complex process to follow in comparison to the simple diagram of the typical cycle shown earlier in Figure 3.1 and 3.2. It demands that researchers critically investigate events and concerns that emerge during the research project. Furthermore, they are required to produce convincing justifications for their own actions.

**Reflective Practice**

Action research is reflective. This suggests that action research can become a messy form of inquiry (Taylor, 1998; Kember, 2000; Arhar, Holly, and Kasten, 2001; and McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003). Action research is “less linear, less tidy and [more messy] that what we normally think of as research. It doesn’t often have a neat beginning, middle, and end” (Arhar, Holly, and Kasten, 2001, p. 41). Thus, it is common “to bring an unsatisfactory situation to closure” (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 22). Once researchers start their action research project, they frequently realise that simply following the four stages of a cycle (planning, acting, observing, and reflecting)
does not help the project run successfully. Kember (2000) explains that these four steps will “all be present but there will be overlaps between them and shifting back and forth. Many projects, and particularly more complex ones, also tend to have multiple spirals as topics and sub-topics emerge” (p. 27).

Furthermore, it is not necessary to follow the steps sequentially in that a project does not always start from planning. “Action researchers can begin anywhere in the cycle…, and they can proceed in a number of ways. They can revisit parts of the cycle as the study evolves” (Arhar, Holly, and Kasten, 2001, p. 41). According to Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001, p. 41), a cycle of action research can be described as a two-way process as action research requires reflection (see Figure 3.5). In other words, action research can be flexible enough to accommodate the complexities of individual ways of reflection.

Macintyre (2000) sees this flexibility as a crucial advantage of action research because “all the time as the action unfolds, there is constant reflection on the ongoing process” (p. 2). This ongoing process of evaluation causes amendments according to individual situations, participants, researchers, and research questions. Cherry (1999) explains that reflection is “a creative act (the creation of meaning)” (p. 80). Smith’s (1992) definition of reflection provides more detailed explanation, reflection is referred to as:

![Figure 3.5 “Cycle of reflective practice” Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001, p. 41)
the processing of data to create or modify meaning schemas...Meaning schemas are learned cognitive structures by which we give order or meaning to events which impinge on us. They determine the way the individual views and orders his or her world. Since meaning schemas are learned, they are neither static nor universal, and are subject to continuing confirmation or negotiation (Smith, 1992, p. 29 cited by Cherry, 1999, p. 80).

Thus, reflection is the core of action research cycles because “the construction of meaning is happening at all phases, the researcher has the chance to become conscious of and, to some extent, direct the process” (Cherry, 1999, p. 82). Action research allows researchers to have freedom to reflect on emergent events during the process of the study based on their prior experiences, values, and beliefs. This is why action research tends to become a ‘messy’ enquiry.

In school-based research, both Macintyre (2000) and Kember (2000) agree that conducting a research project is not easy as classrooms are “complex arenas” (Kember, 2000, p. 25). “Technical-rational approaches are unlikely to be successful, as a prime element of their methodology is the narrowing of problems to simple hypotheses by holding other variables constant. This implies ignoring much of the complexity of a teaching and learning system” (Kember, 2000, p. 25). Action research can accommodate the complexity of an educational structure because its methodology is flexible.

**Action Researchers**

Another important characteristic of action research is the involvement of researchers. In action research, researchers are fully involved as participants: it is a participatory research method. Macintyre (2000) explains that, unlike research methodologies observed from a distance, full involvement of researchers is necessary to conduct an action research project. Action research is conducted by practitioners who regard themselves as researchers, thus it is “insider research (not outsider research), which means that the researcher is inside the situation and will inevitably influence what is
happening” (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 12). In educational action research, teachers are practitioners and teacher-researchers.

The difference in the role of researchers between the more traditional type and action research is clearly identified by McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003):

> In traditional types of research, researchers usually carry out what is required by someone else, such as policy makers or founders. They may make decisions about research procedures, but they do not make decisions about the aims of the research. Action researchers make their own decisions about what is important and what they should do. This is a massive responsibility, because researchers then base their decisions for action on how they understand what is good, and how they think the world should be. They use their values as the basis for their action (p. 15).

McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003) state that action researchers need to pay more attention to “whether their [decisions] are justifiable values, whether they are living in the direction of their values, and whether their influence is benefiting other people in ways that those other people also feel.” (p. 15). This is to ensure researchers do not abuse their position, but justify their potential influence. Consequently, more than one researcher often conducts action research: “it is normally a group activity involving those affected by the topic being investigated” (Kember, 2000, p. 28). This is often called ‘triangulation’ which means “looking at something from more than one perspective” (Johnson, 2002, p. 73). This helps investigators look at all the possible aspects in analysing data and also enhances accuracy and credibility of the project.

Due to the characteristic of researchers’ full involvement, a critical approach towards their own actions and reflections is vital. Taking a critical stance in action research involves researchers knowing when to be subjective and objective. Being subjective can be both an advantage and a disadvantage to the researchers:

> It can be an advantage because [the researchers] may have an insider knowledge of events. It can be a limitation because [they] may come to biased conclusions about what you are doing. Therefore [they] need to be systematic in questioning both [their] motives for action and [their] evaluation of its outcomes. To get a reasonably unprejudiced view [they] need to involve other people who will act as critical friends to critique [their] interpretations (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 25).
Macintyre (2000) believes that in school-based research the familiarity of teacher-researchers may stop them seeing clearly what is happening in the classroom, as they know their students too well. They may be easily influenced by their “preconceived assumptions about the children and how they might cope with any innovation, and may have difficulty seeing beyond these! This is a possible source of bias and can distort the research findings” (Macintyre, 2000, p. 5). Importantly, researchers are required to give their investigation credibility by collecting various types of data to support their outcomes and interpretations of events during the investigation.

**Writing Narratively in Action Research**

Due to the characteristic of action research being a reflective practice, researchers can write their experiences narratively. Narrative accounts provide an opportunity for readers to capture the essence of the researchers’ experiences. Cherry (1999) explains the value of narrative writing in action research:

> If it is done well, it can provide a template against which the reader can review his or her own experiences: it thus becomes a trigger for third position thinking in others…most of us have experienced being challenged and stimulated to think about our own lives when reading an account of someone else’s. To be stimulated by an account of someone else’s thinking process is perhaps more unusual, but hopefully possible. Thus the value of the individual story should be assessed in terms of the thinking that it stimulates in others, rather than whether it is representative of the experiences of others (p. 105).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that narrative writing is widely used in the areas of anthropology, psychology, psychotherapy, and organisational theory. Effective narrative texts should not be just telling a story but should be retelling a story that allows for “growth and change” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 71). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identify narrative enquiry as “a process of living and telling stories, and reliving and retelling stories not only those of participants but those of researchers as well” (p. xiv). Thus, both action research and narrative writing highly value researchers’ and participants’ voices regarding their shared experiences.
Various writers have described the importance of writing narratively in action research (Cherry, 1999; Arhar, Holly, and Kasten, 2001; and McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003). Describing an event that occurred during a project using a narrative style allows the researcher to “tell the processes of coming-to-know, and [to] share people’s thinking” (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 27). McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003) stress the importance of “the ‘live’ evidence” of the researchers’ interactions and conversations with others that happened in the action research project (p. 27). In narrative accounts, researchers make a link, synthesise, integrate, and make meaning of certain experiences. Therefore, “narrative reports are those that take the reader to the data in personal and highly descriptive ways” (Arhar, Holly, and Kasten, 2001, p. 237).

An appropriate metaphor is that researchers need to ‘fall in love’ with their participants and the project, yet at the same time need to distance themselves to see “the larger landscape on which they all live” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 81). “This movement back and forth between falling in love and cool observation is possible” throughout the project (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 82). Action researchers need to deal with the shifting between an objective and subjective stance.

4.1.3 Using action research in my own 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 duration of the project 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 Lesson One to Seven and the second half was Lesson Eight to Twelve. Lessons were carried out every Tuesday morning in the following order: 6-B, 6-A, and 6-C. 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.
The room was located on the Year Six students’ floor and they came to the room to participate in the Drama-English classes. 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, as well as 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 3.6). The first category was the investigation 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. As I would need to amend the original plan of the action research cycle, it seemed appropriate not to plan everything at this stage.

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 when I critically reviewed and examined the entire project.
From the single loop of action research shown in Figure 3.6, many 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 3.7 shows the stage of ‘acting’ divided into four main phases according to emergent themes: Phase One, Two, Three, and Four.

Figure 3.6 The single loop of the overall action research cycle for the project
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 the first experience for them to participate in any educational drama activities. Many new sub-themes emerged particularly in this phase, as educational drama was the centre of the project. As a result, these sub-themes became mini action research cycles (see Figure 3.8).
Phase Three involved the implementation of further educational drama activities when the participants interacted with each other more fully. In the last phase, 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. In this method, twelve sub-action research cycles emerged. In the project, I found it was challenging to deal with three Year Six classes for 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 (see Figure 3.9). 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.
research cycles\textsuperscript{7}. Figure 3.9 shows the interrelationship of these action research structures.

Figure 3.9 Sub and mini action research cycles in the acting stage of the project

Developing a clear structure for these small cycles, shown in Figure 3.9, helped me organise the collating of data every week and reflect on each individual class. As the project was unfolding, many concerns emerged 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

\textsuperscript{7} See Appendix 1 for the Weekly Lesson Plans, p. 256.
responded to unexpected emergent concerns, and created more structures of action research cycles accordingly.

In short, I found myself positioned in the middle of the process of ‘Cycle of reflective practice’ in Figure 3.5 identified by Arhar, Holly, Kasten (2001, p. 41). In my reflective practice, I was going back and forth within the three stages of acting, observing and reflecting as Arhar, Holly, Kasten (2001) 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 a problem which emerged during a lesson.

4.1.4 Summary

Action research has many benefits for teachers in conducting school-based research. It also has some limitations. This research methodology allows researchers to address problems on both a personal and a 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 researchers’ own process of learning and to “explain how [their] new learning has helped [them] to develop [their] work within the situation” (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 13). Since Lewin introduced action research originally in the 1940s, the characteristics of action research have greatly changed. However, the main aim of the method still remains in that action research provides a cyclical process of investigating and improving teaching and learning.

4.2 The context of the study

My project of teaching the English language using educational drama in Japan did not start as smoothly as I had originally hoped. Once I started organising the project, unexpected events emerged that became a challenge to overcome. The first challenge
was my difficulty in finding a Japanese school that would host the project. The second was my concerns with how to deal, in culturally appropriate ways, with the teachers and the principal in the school that had agreed to conduct the project.

4.2.1 Finding a Japanese primary school

It was a lengthy process for me to organise the project, to find an appropriate school, and to receive the necessary information for starting a school-based research project in Japan. There were some explanations to the difficulties I encountered in finding an appropriate school for the project. Teaching the English language in Japanese primary schools had just been recently introduced; consequently many schools and teachers were still experiencing a chaotic situation in terms of organising this new component. In addition, the concept of educational drama was hardly known, if at all, among educators in Japan. I had many vain attempts at trying to explain to schools in Japan the nature of the project and what educational drama involved. Another reason for my difficulties was the nature of the Japanese education system and its relationship between the individual schools and the Ministry of Education. The relationship between public schools and the local educational authorities within the Ministry of Education is strong, and it is commonly known that in order to conduct a research project, researchers need permission from both parties. The following sections will describe how I gathered the necessary information about the project and how I contacted the official organisations and potential schools in Japan.

The Ministry of Education in Tokyo

Before leaving Australia for Japan to conduct the research project, I gathered some background information about the current situation of Japanese education, particularly the introduction of the English language education and the appropriate way to approach schools in Japan to obtain permission for the research project. The first place that I contacted was the central office of the Ministry of Education in Tokyo through sending
emails and making phone calls. As I am native to Japan and understand the Japanese language fully, the process of finding the appropriate people to talk to in the Tokyo office was relatively easy.

However, it seemed challenging to find out any accurate information on several topics: the current situation of English language teaching at primary schools; and conducting a school-based research project in Japan. In the Ministry of Education, Tokyo, the person who answered my queries was in a section called Teaching International Understanding in primary and junior high schools. Until I contacted the Ministry of Education in Japan, I assumed from reading related literature that all primary schools had already started to teach the English language throughout Japan. According to the person from the department of Teaching International Understanding, Japanese primary schools took individual stances in introducing the English language curriculum and it also varied according to each local educational authority. Thus, some schools had already implemented teaching the language, but others had not even begun the process of introducing the language to the students.

Each school had a choice because teaching the English language was not introduced as a new academic subject but as part of an academic subject, Integrated Studies. In other words, what to teach within the allocated time for the subject, Integrated Studies, was up to the individual schools and teachers. At the end of several discussions with the person at the central Ministry of Education in Tokyo, I was advised to contact the local educational authorities where I was planning to conduct the research project in order to get more information about the local area. It seemed that all the Tokyo office did was to publish two books (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2001 and 2002) as a guide for all the primary school teachers in Japan to demonstrate some ideal English language lessons for primary school students.

As far as teaching the English language in a primary school was concerned, I was also informed that it would be difficult for me to teach the language in Japan because I am not a native English speaker. I was surprised to hear such a discriminatory comment, but
there was a reason for this comment. This related to the history of English language
teaching in Japanese schools in that English language teachers have mainly been
Japanese people with some knowledge of the English language. Many blamed these
Japanese teachers for the students not improving their English language proficiency,
especially their speaking and listening skills. This opinion led to the development of an
official project, the JET program (Japan Exchange Teaching program), for recruiting and
employing native English speakers to teach the English language in Japan\textsuperscript{8}. Native
English speakers are more preferred by Japanese people to teach the English language
curriculum than native Japanese teachers. Therefore, there seemed to be no opportunity
for me, as a native Japanese person, to teach English in Japanese schools.

I asked about conducting a school-based research project in Japan. The Ministry of
Education in Tokyo gave no satisfactory answers and said that it depended basically on
the individual school to decide whether to give permission. I was also informed that it
would be better to have a connection with teachers or principals in a school where I
wished to conduct the project, otherwise it would be an arduous task to find an
appropriate school.

The Local Educational Authorities, Fukuoka

The next step that I took was to contact the local educational authorities in the city of
Fukuoka (the place where I eventually conducted the research project). Fukuoka was
also my hometown. Teaching International Understanding was in a section of the local
educational office of Fukuoka as it was in the central office in Tokyo, however in
Fukuoka only one person was allocated to that section. The person told me that he was
moved from another section recently and that he did not know much about teaching the
English language in primary schools within the area of Fukuoka. The only useful
information I gained was that he could not help me in finding a school because he did not
have such authority. He suggested that perhaps there might be a school that would allow

\textsuperscript{8} See 2.3.1: The JET program, in Chapter Two, p. 36.
me to teach and conduct the project if I tried individual schools in the city by personally contacting them. The Japanese people I dealt with in these offices were very polite but I sensed undertones of negativity towards outsiders like myself behind their politeness.

Approaching Primary Schools in Japan

About ten public primary schools refused my proposal to teach the English language and to conduct a research project focused on English language classes. I chose these schools at random, based on information I received from local people, connections I made since I came to Japan, or connections that I had from my childhood including the primary school that I attended when I was a child. The reasons for the refusals varied. Some schools basically did not want to know anything about English language teaching, as they had not started teaching the language yet. Other schools showed interest but were not willing to share their timetable for English language curriculum. These schools were in the middle of discussions as to whether they should start the English language curriculum soon and how they should do it. A couple of these schools even mentioned their preference for a native English speaker to teach the English language. One school replied that it had already started their English language curriculum with a native English language teacher from the JET program and that the school did not need an extra teacher, let alone a Japanese person like myself.

Most of these ten schools showed some negative responses to the school-based research project and some schools said that I needed official permission from the local educational authorities first, as all the public schools must follow the protocols and regulations set by the authorities. On the other hand, the local educational authorities told me that the permission for me to conduct a research project depended on the school principal. It seemed that these two parties were avoiding taking personal responsibility.

After experiencing refusals from these public schools, I decided to change my angle and tried a private school hoping that it might have fewer restrictions from the local
educational authorities. The private school I tried was a sister school of the Australian school where I used to teach the Japanese language as a foreign language. Unfortunately, the school already had two native English speakers following a sequential curriculum organised by the school.

The next attempt was to contact a primary school in a village in Saga prefecture that was located one hour away from the city of Fukuoka by car. There was an acquaintance of mine in the village committee, and the village had an independent governing body so that it did not have to seek permission from the local educational authorities in Saga for recruitment of teachers for the English language. However, the recruitment for that year had just been completed and the village had already made a contract with three native English speakers for that particular year.

4.2.2 The school and students

The school that accepted and allowed me to conduct the research project was, unexpectedly, located in the same residential area where I lived. Since I had no success in finding an appropriate school for a while, I had decided to contact all the schools in the city of Fukuoka by fax and phone in the hope that one of these school might be interested in the project. The very first one that I tried was the closest primary school in my residential area. The principal of the primary school was very enthusiastic about the research proposal that I faxed to him. He returned my call on the same day that I faxed my research proposal. I remembered that my first impression of the principal was very positive and that he sounded like he was willing to try anything innovative for the school. The first meeting was arranged within the same week with the principal, the vice-principal, the school co-ordinator, and the co-ordinator of the English language curriculum, Mrs. Noda, who was also one of the Year Six teachers. The meeting progressed well with discussions on several topics: my research proposal; the current situation of teaching the English language in this particular school; educational drama; my professional background and qualifications as a teacher; and possible timetable for
the project. In the first meeting, I pointed out that my husband, being a native English speaker, was able to assist with the lessons as much as he could. Mentioning the cooperation from my husband as a native English speaker played an important role in the negotiations with the school.

I also made it clear that conducting the research project in the school was purely voluntary. The principal was pleased to hear this, as his school was a public school funded totally by the local educational authorities. He explained if there was an additional cost charged to the school also, the principal would have to provide vast amounts of paper work to the educational authorities seeking their approval. The principal was concerned that my teaching qualification gained in Australia was not officially recognised in Japan. In other words, this might affect my position in the school if the school was questioned. However, the problem was solved as I was a resident of the same area as the school, my teaching position within the school was explained to the local educational authorities as a guest teacher from the community on a volunteer basis. It seemed that there was a way to do things, once you started to work out how things worked in Japan.

**Year Six Students**

From several discussions with the principal and other teachers in the public primary school, it was agreed that the Year Six students and teachers would be the most suitable participants because of their timetable availability. The most important reason was that Year Six was the last year of primary schooling and in the following year, they entered a junior high school where the English language curriculum was officially introduced as an academic subject for the first time. Both the teachers and principal wished them to become more familiar with the language before their junior high school entrance.

There were three classes in Year Six and thirty-five students were in each class (I have given a number to each class: 6-A, 6-B, and 6-C to identify them in this thesis). The total
number of students in Year Six was as one hundred and five students. The school was a mixed-gender school because this was a public school for students living in the area. Unlike Australian schools, in Japanese primary schools, particularly in Fukuoka, students are basically not able to choose their school. The local Ministry of Education informs each student which school the student goes to just before s/he enters a primary school. As a result, all the students in Year Six were from the neighbourhood area of the school.

There were three teachers in Year Six who all had experience in teaching. The teacher in the first class, 6-A, was a female teacher (I have named her, Mrs. Abe in this thesis). A male teacher was in charge of the second class, 6-B (Mr. Tanaka), and the last class, 6-C, was another female teacher’s class (Mrs. Noda). Mrs. Noda was also the co-ordinator of the English language curriculum for the school. The study was conducted with all three Year Six classes and the three teachers. These teachers became the co-researchers for the project as insiders, however my position in this particular study can be described as a semi-inside researcher because I did not know any of these students prior to the study.

Getting Approval from the school, parents, and students

As for the research approval, I followed the ethical clearance process and the guidelines provided by the University of Melbourne. Permission to undertake this study was sought from the principal after we discussed and exchanged our verbal agreement with each other about the context of the study. Then, this agreement was written in both Japanese and English, and we both read the agreement carefully and then signed it.

The three teachers and all students in Year Six were fully informed both verbally and in writing about the nature of the study, including expectations of them as participants and the methods of collecting data. It was clearly stated that their participation in the study was voluntary and there would be no disruption to their schoolwork, regardless of their participation in the project. In addition, it was made clear that the principal’s permission has already been sought and that he agreed to support the project conducted in the school.
Informed consent was sought from the three teachers and the parents/guardians of the students involved. Until their parents’ written consent was obtained, students were not considered as participants. If any teachers or students decided not to participate in the project, they were given assurances that anything they did, said, or wrote during their Japanese classes would not be used for the purpose of this project. All of them, however, agreed to participate in the project.

Any references to individuals in the data were coded in such a way that the participants’ identities were kept secret and safely protected. Moreover, close attention to the participants and institutional anonymity was ensured, enabling the findings and conclusions to be disseminated in an ethical way.

4.2.3 The data and data analysis

Action research methodology provided many opportunities to collect a range of qualitative data during the project through the cooperation of the participants. Inevitably the amount of data collected from the project became so large that it was a difficult task to analyse and interpret. McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003) state that the validity of the research depends upon the quality of collected data:

Collecting and organising the data involves the same processes of action and reflection as the rest of your project. You are active in gathering the data, and then you reflect on what you have gathered in order to arrange it so that the actions it represents begin to make sense. In the same way that your project is a transformative process of realising values as practice, so also is your data collection and organization a transformative process of turning raw data into meaning (p. 97)

In undertaking reflective practice and action research, the ways I monitored and documented the classes reflected my personal and professional values. All the participants’ values influenced the outcomes of the project.
The Data

Qualitative data collected during the project included: videotaped lessons and class discussions, photographs of students’ work, the teachers’ observational written notes every week, my observational journal, interviews with the students and teachers, written questionnaires obtained from the students and teachers, and students’ work samples. Each lesson with Year Six students was videotaped with their parents’ permission. As I was a researcher and teacher during the project, these videotaped lessons became very helpful in reviewing the class afterwards, re-visiting critical events, observing the lessons objectively, and discovering emergent themes.

Videotaped data became evidence of the ‘live’ action in the project and was a very useful tool to review and reflect particular events that occurred in classroom. Johnson (2002) warns the video camera can be “an obtrusive instrument, and thus it creates a non real teaching environment” (p. 62). In order to prevent that, all the participants in the project were shown and informed of the location of the video camera and they were allowed to touch and see the camera before the first lesson started. Videotapes captured the participants’ verbal and non-verbal expressions and assisted me to document the details of their individual interactions towards each other. Visual data in video can help to guide researchers beyond the documentation of words. Videotaped evidence also becomes a tool for self-reflective practice. “By looking at the videotapes of yourself in company with others, you can check whether or not you are doing what you believe you should be doing, or whether you are seeing yourself as a living contradiction, and why this may be happening” (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 127). Thus, videotaped data can be critical material for researchers to reflect on their teaching and classroom interactions.

There can be a problem in using a video camera in a classroom with a teacher-researcher as the video camera needs to be set up in a certain spot. In the project with the Year Six students, the video camera was located in one corner of the room. Although the video camera was removable, there was not enough time for me to go to the corner of the room to remove and re-set the recorder during the lesson as I was the main teacher in the class.
Consequently, the use of photography needed to be implemented as an additional method to document events. Current digital cameras have a videorecording function that can capture a ‘live’ action and record the voices of the participants. Having a digital camera with me all the time greatly assisted with monitoring the participants’ behaviours, particularly in group discussions. Photography also brought the opportunity to capture a particular moment of students’ drama work such as presentations of their mime and role-play. As photographs can record changes over time (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003), the progress of students’ work, especially their group work, was clearly captured in photographs.

All three teachers were asked to take observation notes every week. They were informed that they needed to write reflective comments about the particular week and the students’ responses, educational drama activities, classroom management, and my teaching style. I also told them that any critical feedback was welcome in order to help improve the teaching of the unit. Their involvement was necessary because they were able to help me “make a disciplined and critical study” of my practices in the project (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 111). Action research is based on the collaborative work of several people who share the same concerns in a specific area of study. Therefore, the collaborators’ critical comments are valuable; their written feedback can depict a particular moment and provide their opinions, their emotional responses, and insight into their values.

My research journal was kept up to date as much as possible. It was basically written every week on the same day that I had the Drama-English class with the Year Six students. Ideas and reflective comments that appeared during the week were also documented in writing. The style of research journals can differ as some researchers use it to collect field notes and other types of data. However, other researchers use it just for recording their impressions and ideas (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 53). “It is up to you to decide what you want to call your diary and how you want to use it, but you must be clear about its purpose and the types of entry you intend to make in it” (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 115). My research journal was organised in
chronological order and included descriptions of noticed events, analysis, diagrams, students’ comments, my thoughts, feelings, and impressions. My journal became one of the most important sources of data in providing insights into the project.

The thoughts and individual opinions of the participants were collected through questionnaires, class discussions, and interviews. McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003) suggest two main reasons for the use of questionnaires in action research. The first reason is “to find out information that cannot be ascertained otherwise [and the second reason is] to evaluate the effect of an intervention when it is inappropriate to get feedback in another way” (p. 122). There were two written questionnaires that were given to these participants. The first questionnaire was handed out at the beginning of the project to all the Year Six students and their teachers (see Appendix 2 for the first questionnaire). After the project was completed, the last questionnaire was provided (see Appendix 3 for the second questionnaire). The aim of the project was to understand the participants’ responses to the English language curriculum using educational drama. Therefore, open-ended questions were often asked in these questionnaires. This type of question allows “respondents unlimited choices...[and] provides a more accurate sense of what respondents are actually thinking” (Johnson, 2002, p. 67). Some closed-response questions were included in the questionnaires in order to gather factual information from the individual participants.

Interviews in the project were used for the purpose of developing conversations that “leads to enhanced insights for all participants” (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 124). Interviews were carried out in an informal manner with the teachers and class discussions with each Year Six class at the end of the project. Discussions in the final interview for the teachers were based on two key points: their second questionnaires’ answers and some additional questions about Drama and the English language. I elaborated and clarified their written comments. These interviews had elements of reflective practice as unlike the questionnaires, I was able to choose between open and

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9 See Appendix 1 for the weekly lesson plans, p. 256.
10 See Appendix 3 for the second questionnaire and interview questions for teachers, p. 260.
closed questions during the interviews. Interviews have “distinct advantages over questionnaires because they provide richer data as a result of being able to probe future” (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 124). However, one of the suggested guidelines by McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003) is not to mislead and deceive the participants. Choosing the types of questions and being involved in the interview process may lead the researcher to manipulate the participants’ responses to favour the researcher’s ideal outcomes.

Data Analysis

Due to the large number of participants and the duration of the project of twelve weeks, the data was analysed in chronological order. In the process of data analysis, researchers re-visit all the collected data and “pull meaning from the different records of evidence to identify constructs such as themes, incidence, patterns and trends. This is the critically important step in providing explanations of what occurred – rather than merely descriptions of what went on” (Macintyre, 2000, p. 91). Furthermore, the collection and analysis of data needs to be accurate and credible (Johnson, 2002). The aim of analysing data in action research is stated below:

Action researchers…observe messy, real-world events in which humans are mucking about. These humans are inherently…unpredictable and not at all inclined to exist in hermetically sealed worlds. Thus, each time we search and research we expect to see different things. The closest we come to repetition is noticing recurring items, themes, or patterns that emerge from our data…Therefore, action research findings are not generalized broadly, instead they are used to help understand particular situations as well as inform similar situations. (Johnson, 2002, p. 73).

In the analysis of the collected data, all the data needs to be categorised and coded (Ely, 1991; and Johnson, 2002). In the project, the process of analysing data had already started while I was collecting data. The data analysis was an ongoing event while I conducted the Drama-English curriculum. Within this ongoing process of data analysis, it was vital to be as objective as possible to make ‘sense’ of the situation that I was dealing with. As a result, the following main categories were identified and coded: individual
characteristics of the Year Six classes, the students’ negative and positive responses to
drama activities, the teachers’ attitudes towards teaching and learning, patterns of action
research cycles, and any major incidents that occurred during the project. These
categories were developed and reflected on while the data was collected. All Japanese
words were described phonetically and in italics to show the difference from English
words. The participants’ comments and class discussions in the Japanese language were
accurately and directly translated into English, which were written in italics.

4.2.4 Issues and concerns

There were several concerns that emerged for me during the stages of collecting and
analysing data. Firstly, how to introduce educational drama to the students and teachers
was a major issue for me. For these participants, it was their very first experience of
educational drama and they had not even heard the term ‘educational drama’ before.
They could not possibly imagine what educational drama involved.

In the meetings with the teachers, I explained verbally the concept of educational drama
and how it had been used in schools throughout Australia. I also showed them several
lesson plans using some picture books as an example. Then I shared my overall plans for
the Year Six students using a picture book called The Waterhole by Graeme Base (2001).
These plans were not specific because educational drama needs to be flexible and able to
be adapted to the participants’ level of engagement and creative work. It was important
to explain this to the teachers beforehand so that they could prepare themselves for
amendments of the original plans during the classes. Interestingly, they seemed
uncomfortable to hear that the plans might change, as they were more used to following
specific set plans in their day-to-day teaching.

A short verbal explanation about educational drama was also given to the students. Their
expectation of educational drama was the main focus of the study as they were expected
to share their ideas with others and present their ideas in front of the class through
movement. 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 between Japanese and English in the project was the second concern. The teachers told me that these students were considered as beginners as far as the English language was concerned. Based on this 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, on the other hand the activities were carried out only in English. This was because educational drama activities generally required verbal explanations 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 ‘satisfactory’ and ‘successful’ drama work.

My final problem was with the analysis of data. Due to the large number of participants in the project, 105 students, it was a challenging task for me to describe exactly the number of students showing similar patterns in their responses. Therefore, it was necessary to use broad descriptive categories such as ‘most students’, ‘generally’, and ‘most groups’ in presenting the data in the next two chapters. These general terms were used when more than 70 % to 80 % of the participants showed similar responses.

4.3 Conclusion

The main aim of the project was to investigate the Japanese participants’ responses to educational drama in their English language classes. In order to monitor and reflect on
their responses, action research seemed an appropriate method because it allowed me to study the project systematically and thoroughly. Once the project had begun, the action research enquiry process became complex and messy as I tried to deal with the many emerging action research cycles, to manage three large Year Six classes, and to cope with three different teachers with different teaching approaches. However, the methodical approach of action research helped to organise this ‘mess’ into an orderly structure. In other words, the action research methodology caused the mess and at the same time it provided the solution for this mess.

During the process of summarising and reflecting on the ‘messy’ nature of this study, I was also able to re-evaluate my own teaching and learning. Thus, working with the Japanese students and teachers in the project provided me with the opportunity to gain various perspectives on my educational approaches and philosophy. The project originally aimed at the improvement of the teaching of the curriculum, however it also greatly promoted my own personal growth as a teacher-researcher.
Entering the world of ‘The Waterhole’

Look, the frogs are getting sick as the water in the waterhole is drying out. It is a great book and I love the pictures.

[a girl from 6-B class]

5 Introduction

This study investigated how Japanese students responded to Educational Drama as a teaching and learning methodology in their English as a foreign language class. Through engaging with various drama activities, these students explored the possibilities in a story and its characters. They also learnt how to use the English language while they were participating in the project. Their teachers joined in with the students to experience a new way of learning. To these Japanese students and teachers, using drama activities in their English language classes became a new learning environment to explore.

The drama-English classes with the Japanese students were carried out once a week. Every Tuesday morning was allocated to this project for a period of twelve weeks. There was a six-week summer break in the middle of the allocated period. Every Tuesday morning, I had three Year Six classes and, in this and following chapters, these classes will be identified in the teaching timetable in the order of 6-B, 6-A, and 6-C classes. The same lesson plan was used for all of these classes every week. As far as the action-research cycle is concerned, each class was regarded as a mini action research cycle: there were three mini cycles every week. In other words, although I used the same lesson plan for all three classes, the content of each class slightly changed as I evaluated and improved the lesson plan from the previous class\textsuperscript{11}.

\textsuperscript{11} See to Figure 3.9 Sub and mini action research cycles in the acting stage of the project, in Chapter Four, p. 98.
The main topics that will be outlined in this chapter are: the students’ initial reactions to a different learning concept (drama); discussions about their confusion with the drama approach; my struggle with how to manage the cultural differences in myself as well as in the Japanese students and teachers; the influence of the various teachers on students’ attitudes in class; and a descriptive account of the Japanese students adapting to educational drama. I organised and categorised the collected data according to three elements: weekly lesson sequences; characteristics of the action research; and significant incidents that occurred while students and teachers were participating in this project. As a result, this chapter will be divided into two major phases, Phase One and Two.

In the project, the Japanese language was often used to explain procedures, to ask questions, and to implement classroom management in consideration of these students’ level of English as beginners. Thus, the Japanese language is indicated in italics in this chapter and the next.

5.1 Phase One - Class dynamics and teachers’ influence

5.1.1 The first meeting with class 6-B

On the first day that I went to the public primary school to conduct the project, the principal, the vice principal, and the coordinator of the school welcomed me at the school entrance. The following narrative section depicts the orderliness of the setting of the classroom and my initial anxiety about meeting the first class:

It is a warm spring morning and sunlight brightens up the multi-purpose room on the third floor of the school building where I start my first Drama-English lesson in Japan. The room has a well-polished wooden floor, which makes it difficult to walk on with the supplied plastic inside use slippers. I cannot wait to take them off. (As is Japanese custom, students and teachers in Japanese schools take their shoes off at the entrance hall of the school and then wear their inside shoes or supplied slippers for guests.) There are foldable chairs at the side of the room and one blackboard is located in the middle of the room. The room is spacious and perfect for drama activities with the Year Six students. As the bell goes to let students know the first class of the day is finished, suddenly the
cheerful voices of students is heard at the end of a corridor. I quickly finish setting up for the very first lesson, as the first class of Year Six students comes into the room quietly in lines of two. One line is the boys’ line and another one is for the girls. This reminds me of military like discipline. All the memories from my childhood in Japanese schools flash into my mind. The lines seem endless and there are thirty-five students altogether. All the students are wearing school regulation inside shoes. Most girls wear red ones and the boys blue. I feel myself getting very nervous about the lessons and I am also experiencing a rush of emotions within a split second. All sorts of memories regarding the Japanese schools I attended in my childhood and old classmates’ faces occupy my mind (3/6/03).

The narrative account below depicts the orderly manners in class that teachers and students are expected to follow in a Japanese school. It also shows the confusion caused between the classroom teacher and myself regarding the students’ seating positions.

“Excuse me. How would you want these students to sit?” asks the male classroom teacher, Mr. Tanaka, whom I have not met before. I smile and answer “Anywhere they like.” Mr. Tanaka says “Anywhere they like???” (A short sigh) All right everyone, sit in the same seating order as the classroom. Get to your position quickly without talking.” His sigh suddenly reminds me that I am dealing with students and teachers in Japan, not in Australia. I forget that Japanese students expect teachers to provide detailed instructions even to the point of their seating positions. The teacher’s confusion reflects many of the students’ confusion.

As they line up in small gender-mixed groups of six called Han (a small grouping system used in most Japanese schools), the students in the front row who are the lead children of each group face the other students and then start giving them commands. “Maeni narae! (Line up!” says the lead child of each group. The lead children place their hands on their hips and other children in the line face them and raise their arms to shoulder height in line with the shoulders of the child in front without touching. Once the lines become straight, the lead children command the others to sit. Then, all the students are seated quietly clasping their knees with their hands waiting for the lesson to start.

This narrative conveys the tension, anxiety, and excitement of all the participants, including myself, in the first class, 6-B. This represents my responses to the first day back in a Japanese school after ten years of living, studying, and teaching in Australia. I had forgotten about the way lessons in Japanese schools are run and the differences between the expectations of students and teachers in Australia and Japan. I could not fully grasp how the Japanese school operated in the first lesson and this made me more nervous about conducting the Drama-English lesson. I felt myself becoming very apprehensive about many little things that I took for granted as a teacher, including
maintaining classroom management, providing introductory activities, and engaging these students in the lesson tasks.

The History of 6-B

My first impression of the 6-B class was that there would be difficulty in getting these students to participate fully in class, especially as their level of engagement was very low from the beginning. I commented in my journal at the end of the day:

I received a negative impression from the first class that they seemed to think participating properly in their learning was ‘uncool’ and showing honest emotions was also not acceptable. Is this class having social problems? Is there anything I should know about? They looked as though putting a poker face on was the best way to survive everyday life in school. Some students at times made a greater effort to participate, but others appeared to stop them by giving them a look (3/6/03).

Every time I asked questions or sought agreements from them, there was a short silence and only a few boys, always the same ones, put their hands up slowly and uncomfortably to show their response. Class support as a whole was missing and I felt they needed to develop basic social skills in respecting others and cooperating with each other, in order to function as a class unit for effective learning.

According to Mr. Tanaka, the classroom teacher of 6-B, his class had social problems last year when these students were in Year Five (from an informal discussion after Lesson 3, 17/6/03). The problems included bullying in class, ignoring teachers and other students, not participating in learning, and interfering with the lessons.

They had a different teacher last year and as from April this year (the beginning of a new schooling year in Japan) Mr. Tanaka took over the teaching. His aim was, therefore, to solve these classroom management problems with his students. At the end of the first lesson, he apologised for his students’ poor participation. The negative atmosphere that I
sensed from the students seemed to be based on these unresolved social problems from the past year.

The Classroom Teacher, Mr. Tanaka

Mr. Tanaka has been teaching for twenty-six years and was one of the most experienced teachers in the school. His experience in drama was to use some basic role-play for his history classes and to watch popular contemporary plays like ‘Cats’. He did not know much about Japanese traditional theatre such as Kabuki, No, Bunraku, and Kyogen\(^\text{12}\). Consequently, he had not seen any of these forms of performances. He did not seem to understand the connection between educational drama and traditional Japanese theatre forms. His students associated drama only with TV drama and his concept of drama was the same as his students. Mr. Tanaka seemed apprehensive about teaching English at school as his experience in the English language was very limited. Although he learnt the language for ten years in school based on the grammar-translation method, he could not communicate orally English. In addition, he had never travelled to other countries. From discussions with him, he gave the impression that he was not interested in improving his language skills for teaching, however he felt the need to gain more knowledge and understanding of the English language for learning and teaching\(^\text{13}\).

The Influences of a Class Clown

It was not difficult to spot the ‘class clown’ even though I had never met these students before. The class clown in 6-B was a boy called Ogami-kun (all students in Japan are often called by their surname and receive a title after the name. \textit{Kun} is for boys and \textit{San} is for girls.) He wore a bright yellow top and sat in front on the right hand side of the class. He always appeared to look for the right moment to do something funny.

\(^{12}\) See the second question in Appendix 3, p. 260.

\(^{13}\) See Appendix 1 for the Weekly Lesson Plans, p. 256.
The existence of a class clown like this boy in this particular class with social problems seemed peculiar. At the same time, he was the one who always broke the barriers of silence and awkward moments. The following section is an example of his behaviour:

When an African rhythmical piece of music starts, students are told to start moving around the room but no one moves from their ‘Space’ position (standing in an individual position in the room where students cannot reach each other). They just look around to see what the others are doing. In a sudden movement, a yellow coloured top skips through the people in the room. All the people in the room look at the yellow top. This is Ogami-\textit{kun} and the students and the class teacher as well as the school principal burst into laughter. This encourages Ogami-\textit{kun} to become more animated and he starts showing a new movement. My husband, Paul, who is the language assistant, jumps in with him and walks around the room in time with the music. I also jump in immediately after him with a tambourine in hand. All the other students slowly start walking in the same direction. Soon after, all the students, the teacher, and even the principal are walking around the room at their own individual pace. Many students still look embarrassed so they are talking to each other to hide their embarrassment while walking. Some students eventually start striking silly poses when I say ‘Freeze’ to them.

It was stressful to try to manage this first class and I desperately tried to engage the students with the activities. It ended up being the hardest way to start because there was not enough context or dramatic situation offered for them to engage with. I was focusing on this introductory activity in order to teach the basic rules of drama through body movement. Given to the students’ hesitation, based on a lack of a strong dramatic context from the beginning, it would have been better to have started with smaller groups rather than focusing on individual physical movement. It was quite clear that this activity took them too far out of their comfort zones.

However, one boy commented at the end of the class that he did not know any English but the activity was great fun. Another boy said, “I really liked learning something new with movements of the body. It was very exciting.” These students’ comments gave me new hope. I felt a great appreciation towards these boys who expressed their comments openly in front of the others, especially considering the negative classroom environment.
The Involvement of the School Principal

The school principal also joined in on some of the lessons with the students. His participation encouraged students to engage in the activities more. He was always supportive towards the project and showed his interest in educational drama. He observed the lessons whenever he had any spare moments. His active involvement made background organization much easier as well as receiving the teachers’ support in providing the necessary teaching materials. When he was available, he always invited me to his office after teaching the Year Six classes to discuss the students’ progress and reactions. The vice-principal at times joined in on the discussions as well. The conversations with the principal and vice-principal were extremely valuable as they fully explained the current situation of the Japanese education system and the pedagogical theories behind the changes within the system. They were also interested in the Australian education system and asked me many questions about Australian schools. The principal said that the information about other countries and other education systems that Japanese teachers could access was very limited.

5.1.2 The second class, 6-A

The second class was 6-A and it differed from the previous class in many ways. The classroom teacher was a happy and very friendly female teacher, Mrs. Abe, who was popular among her students. She had a teaching career lasting twenty-six years. She had learnt English for ten years in school through the grammar-translation method. Her level of conversational English was limited and she was only able to give greetings in English\(^1\). Mrs. Abe taught English in the previous year, for the first time, to her Year Six students by using some games and songs in English. A few parents of the class, who were non-Japanese people or those who had some experience living overseas, came as guest speakers to talk about their overseas experiences and the English language. She

\(^1\) From the questionnaire answered by Mrs. Abe, in Appendix 5, p. 263.
answered in her questionnaire that she was interested in learning how to develop a curriculum for second language learning, however she did not seem too interested in learning other teaching methods or in finding new materials. Like Mr. Tanaka, the 6-B teacher, she looked rather passive and confused about new educational approaches in teaching the English language to primary school students.

Mrs. Abe’s concept of drama was, like Mr. Tanaka, related to TV drama which is a very popular form of drama in contemporary Japanese society. As I asked her about traditional forms of Japanese theatre, she pulled her face slightly as though she could not understand why I was asking her this question\textsuperscript{15}. Her puzzled reaction to my question was understandable considering that she was not familiar with drama in education or theatre studies.

In general, she only enjoyed watching theatre performances as an external audience for entertainment purposes. She usually checked out popular plays to attend and these were often Western contemporary plays like *Cats* and *Beauty and Beast*. The only traditional performances that she had watched were *Kids Kabuki* with her children. A local theatre company presented this play in an attempt to make traditional Kabuki more interesting and easier to understand. The modern Japanese language was used in the play instead of the traditional form. The length of the play was short and the story was more appealing to children than the full-scale performance. Mrs. Abe mentioned that she would not mind going to see an authentic Kabuki performance if she had the opportunity. She thought that this may happen one day as a traditional Kabuki theatre had already been constructed in the city of Fukuoka in 1999.

**Meeting with the Second Class, 6-A**

Mrs. Abe’s class was very chatty and noisy from the beginning. Their cheerful voices were heard along the corridor. Although they entered the room in two lines, unlike Mr. Tanaka's class.

\textsuperscript{15} See the second question in Appendix 3. The interview was held on December 25, 2003, p. 260.
Tanaka’s class there were no reminders of military discipline here. They just sat on the floor without the people in front passing down any commands to the others in their group. Some students smiled at my husband, Paul, and I. Another student whispered to some others that one of the guest teachers was gaijin, a foreigner. From the other direction, I heard someone said “Tabun Amerika jin, (perhaps an American)”. I recognised some students who lived near my home. In the lesson, they seemed to express their feelings more freely than the first class. I immediately took a liking to this class as the atmosphere of the class was very cheerful. The 6-A teacher also participated in all the activities with her students whereas Mr. Tanaka from the first class, most of the time, stood on the side by the window, to observe the class or to take photos.

The freedom of movement in the students was instantly seen in the first activity of walking with rhythm. Many students started walking in time with the music confidently and their exuberance was obvious from their body movements; their chins were up and their steps were wide. When questions were asked, they could hardly wait to be pointed to; they often answered freely without waiting for their turn. I needed, at times, to contain their enthusiasm by telling them to become quiet or to wait for their turn to speak.

The 6-A class had more students who had some sort of experience with the English language and Western culture. Some had lived overseas for quite a long period, attended schools in English speaking countries, and some had non-Japanese parents. The higher level of exposure to the English language tended to influence the way that the lesson was run. One of the activities in Lesson One was to make a jungle list. I expected the students to say the names of jungle objects in Japanese, as I did not know their level of English. The following narrative expresses the students’ initial enthusiasm:

All the students are sitting on the floor facing towards me waiting with excitement for the next activity. Mrs. Abe is standing by the black board with chalk in hand. “I asked you to think about jungle objects for the last few minutes and now I want you to say one object each. Who wants to go first?” A loud voice pops out from a crowd, “Ki”. Mrs. Abe writes “Ki” on the board in Japanese and a class leader also moves her hand to copy from the board. “Ki, yes. They are all over the jungle. What’s Ki in English by the

16 See Appendix 1 for the Weekly Lesson Plans, p. 256.
way?” Half of the class confidently answer, “Tree”. “Yes, Tree. That’s right. When you pronounce the word, tree, you have to be careful with the R sound, as we do not have the same sound in Japanese. Can you repeat after me, Tree?” Everyone repeats the word.

“What’s next?” I ask. A girl with parents of native English speakers calls out “Tiger”. Immediately the relaxed atmosphere of the class becomes tense. I look around and ask, “What’s tiger in Japanese? They were in the Waterhole book we just read.” Some students reply to me, “Tora”. I assure them, “Yes, Tora. If you know the English words for jungle objects, you can say them in English of course, but even if you don’t know much English, it does not matter. You can say the names in Japanese and we will all put our heads together to think of the English words. So please do not hesitate to speak out. You don’t need to feel embarrassed if you are not familiar with the English words. This is not a test, OK?” Some students appear to be relieved.

It is noteworthy to mention that these students were extremely conscious of doing well academically. The sudden tension when they heard English from one of their classmates revealed their inner anxiety. A group of students with less experience in the English language tended to feel more concerned about attending the Drama-English classes. In their mind, it seemed that there was a certain level of English language that Year Six students were expected to know. This expected level seemed to be set by their parents and their peer-groups in this local area. The area where these students live was considered an expensive and trendy area and their parents’ professions included; doctors, lawyers, and company directors. Subsequently, parents’ expectations of their children’s educational achievements were high.

5.1.3 The third class, 6-C

The female teacher of the third class of 6-C, Mrs. Noda, was the Year Six coordinator; she was also in charge of organising English as a foreign language education in the school. She was familiar with much of the literature on teaching English as a foreign language in Japan and the process of English becoming a popular language in Japanese primary schools. She used a CD in which many popular Japanese cartoon songs were translated into English. Ms. Noda distributed the CD to all the classes from Year One to Six in school to listen to everyday for ten to fifteen minutes as she believed that children needed to be immersed in the English language as young as possible. Her belief was
based on her experience of previous Year Two students who were able to sing the songs well in English after listening to the CD repeatedly. She said:

*I was surprised with the Year Two students’ ability to copy the pronunciation of English words so correctly, but Year Six students cannot sing the songs in English well at all, compared with the younger ones. Their pronunciation was very Japanese* (from the teacher interview with Ms. Noda, 25/12/03).

She had also attended some seminars and workshops on methods of teaching and learning a foreign language that were provided by the local Ministry of Education in Fukuoka. By contrast, the other two teachers had never attended any professional development sessions because of their lack of interest in learning how to teach the second language and due to a lack of workshops and seminars provided by the government. In 2003, there were only a few workshops for English language learning and teaching for primary education. The maximum number of participants was usually twenty to thirty amongst the many primary school teachers within the entire city of Fukuoka. According to Mrs. Abe, it was always hard to be accepted to attend these seminars.

Mrs. Noda’s influence on Class Dynamics

Although it was the first meeting with Mr. Tanaka and Ms. Abe, I had already met Ms. Noda beforehand to discuss my project. I found it difficult to read her expressions as she always kept a straight face. It should be said here that after being away from Japan for nearly ten years, immersed in Western society, three months of time back in Japanese society was not enough for me to re-adapt to the Japanese ways. The narrative below describes how this teacher intervened with the way I ran the class:

*I ask students in Japanese, “Do you understand what to do now?” The students respond to me by saying, “Hai (Yes)” in a small voice to let me know that they are still unsure about me, as this is the first lesson with me as a guest teacher. As soon as the students respond to me, the teacher shouts at them from behind, “Your voice is too small!!” Then,*

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17 See Mrs. Abe’s written responses to the first questionnaire in Appendix 6, p. 264.
18 From the interview with Mrs. Abe, December 25, 2003.
students immediately repeat saying much louder “HAI!!(YES!!)” Suddenly, tension runs through the room. I break the silence by saying in Japanese “OK, let’s practise the rules that I just explained. Stand Up.” All students stand up from the sitting position. I say “Next one is Space!” Students scatter in the room to find their own space where they cannot bump into each other. “Make sure that you don’t touch each other or any objects in the room.” The teacher jumps in and tells some students off as they stand too close to a wall. “Over there!! Too close. Stay away from the wall”.

Mrs. Noda intervened in the class again when we were making the jungle list. As the students started listing jungle objects in Japanese, I translated all the names of the objects that the students came up with. At times, the students knew the English words so they did not need my translation.

At one point, Mrs. Noda stopped writing the list on the board and turned around to face to the students. They all sensed that they had done something wrong. Mrs. Noda told them off, “You are studying English, so stop talking here and there. Mrs. Araki is kindly teaching you English words and pronunciations. You must appreciate what she does by practising pronouncing the English words after Mrs. Araki.” By this time, all the students had related to the new activities and started enjoying them. They had gradually become more relaxed, but then they all went back into their shells after Mrs. Noda scolded them.

The comment in my journal described my concern:

The other teachers did not say anything in class, but the 6-C teacher was constantly interrupting the lesson by telling off her students for not doing the right things and for not participating properly. Sometimes the students’ engagement level increased because of her scolding, but they all became more rigid. How can I best deal with her? I understand that most students need time to get used to drama, as this is the very first time for them to experience it. I wish them to participate willingly and spontaneously without being forced by anyone. In order to achieve this, it will take a few lessons at least. Should I let her keep intervening like this or should I talk to her about my concerns? (3/6/03)

This was a sensitive issue to consider. As school based research is not so common in Japan where an outside person comes in to conduct a project and it was most unusual in this primary school, I felt I needed to search for a way of proceeding that was agreeable for me as a guest teacher/researcher and the classroom teacher. I finally decided that if
she intervened to a point that would greatly affect my project, I would discuss the matter with her.

Different Types of Students

Due to Mrs. Noda’s strict educational policy, her students gave the impression that they would not dare do anything without her express permission. However, her strict attitude towards students did not seem to make all of them afraid of doing something wrong in front of her. Some boys in the class were very confident with themselves and positive about learning so the 6-C teacher did not pay too much attention to these boys. “These boys can do most of the things by themselves so I only need to give them minimal attention.” (conversation with the teacher after the class, 3/6/03) Some students appeared to feel safe with the clear boundaries provided. This seemed to be because they knew what was expected of them.

Mrs. Noda was particularly enthusiastic about the quiet students. She did not sit back to let these quiet students take the initiative. Instead she pushed them to stretch their limits and to speak out in front of others. When I asked the students what they thought of the first lesson at the end of the class, some cheerful boys and a couple of girls put their hands up and commented that they enjoyed learning the English words (the basic drama rules that I taught as an introduction to the first drama session) by moving around the room and using their bodies.

I still had a few minutes left in the lesson so I asked the teacher to pick a couple more students at random to make some comments. She said “Stand up if you have not made any comments at all today.” More than a half of the class immediately tensed up and hesitantly stood up. “Yokote-san (Miss Yokote), you have not said anything this week so you go first.” Miss Yokote was very nervous and looked down. After a moment, she quietly said, “I don’t know any English but it was easy to understand the lesson because we ran around the room and learnt some rules in English”. Instead of memorising
English words through the familiar drill and exercise method, learning some English words with movement obviously gave this student a new insight into learning.

5.1.4 The Waterhole as a ‘pre-text’

Although the book, ‘The Waterhole’, is written in English, its simple story line and vivid pictures of various animals immediately helped the students enter the world of ‘The Waterhole’. With its detailed and realistic illustrations, ‘The Waterhole’ captured the students’ attention. The sounds Paul (my husband and the assistant native English teacher) made of each animal in the story added to their understanding of the text. All the students from Year Six indicated that they really enjoyed listening to the story. While they were listening to the story that was read by Paul, no one talked or moved. Their bodies leant towards the book and their eyes followed closely each character of the book. Some students were so engrossed in the story that they stood up to get a better view.

For many students, this was their first experience of an English book being read to them by a native English speaker. By manipulating his facial expressions and his tone of voice, Paul helped trigger their imaginations more. The obstacle of the English language did not seem to matter to these students. A boy in 6-B who had never learnt English before summarised the story in Japanese as follows:

*The story was about different animals coming to drink water in the waterhole and the water slowly disappeared. I think because the animals drank too much water or the temperature on the earth got too hot, maybe. Eventually, all the water was gone and the land got very dry. Then, it rained and all the dry land became moist. All the animals came back (3/6/03).*

The details in the illustrations (such as when the frogs near the water packed up their belongings and went away and when the number of animals increased as the water dried out) made these students more excited about the new discoveries in the story.
The limited situation for learning the English language in Japan seemed to shape these students’ impressions of learning English. There were two learning situations that they could access for English language learning. One was to learn the language at school. Secondary schools use the grammar-translation method used by Japanese teachers. Teaching English at primary schools in Japan was just recently introduced as part of a subject called Integrated Studies. This subject was taught by classroom teachers with no training as a specialist in teaching the English language. Another situation was to learn the language from native English speakers at private English conversation schools (*Eikaiwa*), mainly using card games and songs in English.

Drama has never been taught in the Japanese education system. I had not experienced drama until I moved to Australia and the majority of these students and teachers in this project did not know what educational drama involved. Thus, these participants’ understanding of drama as well as English language learning was limited by their access to social and cultural circumstances. The gap between my understanding of these two areas as a drama-second/foreign language researcher and the participants’ understanding seemed enormous. Thus, I felt one of the challenging aspects of this project was that I, as a Japanese person who was greatly influenced by Western educational ideas and practices, was trying to introduce a western teaching method, drama, into the English language curriculum to Japanese students and teachers with limited ideas of these areas of study.

**The Impressions of Drama**

The final class discussion with all the Year Six students revealed that their impressions of drama were only of TV drama such as soap operas and *LavuKomeh* (comical love...
stories). This seemed to be because the word ‘Dorama’ (directly adapted from the English word, ‘drama’) was often and only used for TV drama. This limited use of the word shaped the students’ ideas of drama as only one particular form of drama, TV drama. No students mentioned any other theatre performances such as contemporary plays and traditional Japanese performances of Kabuki, No, and Kyogen as ‘drama’.

The actors and actresses in the TV drama programs were all celebrities and/or singers in Japan. The programs were often broadcast at night around 8 to 10 pm from Monday to Sunday. The teachers of the Year Six students all agreed that these programs shaped students’ ideas about life and relationships. Some students tended to mimic the same body movements and scripts that they watched on TV when they talked to their friends at school (Mrs. Abe’s interview, 25/12/03).

The Views of English Language Learning

The views of these primary school students about learning English were also limited. Most students made a link between learning English and memorising as many English words as possible. I expected to hear this view from them as they were going to enter a junior high school next year. Japanese students officially learnt English as a subject from the first grade of junior high school. It was not surprising to hear the students putting no emphasis on body language and gesture when they talk about learning another language. Their main understanding of learning relied heavily on the Japanese traditional method where students sit on chairs all day and copy directly from the blackboard.

Another interesting aspect was that the students associated learning English with non-Japanese people who are fair skinned and brown or blond haired. Japanese TV programs and popular Hollywood movies portray foreigners only as these types of people. In the students’ minds, non-Japanese people are often associated with Americans. As American

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19 From class discussions with the Year Six students, December 24, 2003.
20 From the interview with the teachers, December 25, 2003.
influence is very strong in Japan, American English is used as a model form of the English language. Most students who participated in this project have been overseas on trips, particularly to Hawaii and Guam.

Mrs. Noda confirmed that there were obvious differences in the students’ responses towards learning English with and without an English native speaker as a guest teacher:

*Having only a Japanese guest teacher with a high level of English skill in class does not excite these students as much. It is sad but this is the reality in Japan. They still admire someone who looks very different as far as learning English is concerned (3/6/03).*

Mrs. Noda’s comments reflected these students’ associations with learning English. To them, English was a foreign language that they had to learn “to communicate with foreigners because it is an international language” (a female student’s answer)\(^{21}\). Most students knew the word ‘internationalisation’ and used the term in their answers to the written questionnaires. They believed that learning English would help them become more ‘internationalised’ when they grew up. However, their understanding of ‘internationalisation’ was limited and they could not explain what it meant. They appeared to use the word ‘internationalisation’ so often because people around them used it.

### 5.1.6 Each Class as a Mini cycle of Action Research

The three Year Six classes received the same lessons every week. However, the lesson plan was slightly adapted according to students’ responses from the previous lesson and the characteristics of the individual classes. Thus, each class represented a mini action research cycle: the first cycle was the 6-B class, the second cycle was the 6-A class, and the final cycle was the 6-C class\(^{22}\). After teaching each class, there was always something that needed to be modified and then in the next class some alterations were

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\(^{21}\) See Appendix 7 for students’ answers to the first questionnaire, p. 265.

\(^{22}\) See Figure 3.9 Sub and mini action research cycles in the acting stage of the project, in Chapter Four, p. 98.
made for activities, explanations, and classroom management in order to improve the content of the lesson.

I made some adjustments after the first class of 6-B. One of the occasions for adjustment was when I asked the students to walk around the room to the rhythm of a piece of music and eventually to find their own style of walking. The 6-B students looked very confused and lacked the confidence to cope with the task of walking with their own style. This could have been because of their poor social skills within the class being unresolved and because their expectations of drama were uncertain. They all seemed hesitant and frozen when I outlined what I wanted them to do. After a moment, Ogami-kun, the class clown, started walking around the room and many students started to follow him.

To save these students getting embarrassed with an unexpected task, I modified the activity slightly for the second class of 6-A and I asked them to copy their friends’ walking instead of finding their own style. Many students giggled while they were copying someone else’s way of walking.

Suddenly, the atmosphere of the room changed for the better and students seemed much more relaxed. The response from the students in 6-A gave me some confidence in that I was getting to understand these students a little better. In the last class of 6-C, I could afford to give an instruction to the students at the right moment with certainty. Mrs. Noda wrote some comments in her observation notes:

It was a good idea to tell students that they can copy someone else’s walking in the class. I sensed some students becoming relieved as they were not sure about their expectations in this new class yet (3/6/06).

This incident brought me to the conclusion that these students were self-conscious with the new style of learning and it was necessary to take them through the lesson step-by-step in future, instead of surprising them.
5.1.7 **Summary of phase one**

Phase One became a very important stage for all the participants. This was the stage of getting to know each other: the students, teachers, school, and myself. In the beginning, all participants including myself were concerned with the outcome of this project because it was an unfamiliar area to explore for everyone. I found that all three classes were unique in the students’ dynamics and each teacher’s approach to the individual classes.

The students’ initial response to educational drama in their English language class was very positive. Many students were excited with the different learning method, and the Japanese teachers were surprised by the effectiveness of the drama approach. As a teacher, I found this stage rather challenging to adjust back into the Japanese education protocols. I found I needed to pay attention to these protocols in order to create closer relationships with the school, teachers, and students.

5.2 **Phase Two – A new challenge**

The focus of Phase Two is to describe the students’ struggle with grasping the concepts of drama, given that drama education has not been part of the Japanese schooling. Both the students and teachers showed confusion as I introduced more drama activities. However, they kept trying very hard to understand this different approach.

5.2.1 **The numbers game**

I used an introductory game called ‘The numbers game’ to help the students become familiar with using the English language and taking on a role - in this case a given
number was their role\textsuperscript{23}. In their participation in the game, the students’ relationship with the opposite gender and the class dynamics caused some problems to emerge.

**Attitude Towards the Opposite Gender**

A numbers game was introduced as a warm-up activity in Lesson 2. This activity revealed the students’ self-conscious attitudes towards the opposite gender. The game involved students introducing themselves by name and greeting each other in English. The goal of the game was to construct a group containing consecutive numbers, using simple English sentences. Each student was given a number card from one to ten in English. As they met the other students and introduced themselves, they had to find the other members of their group. Students in the first two classes, 6-B and 6-A, seemed very excited about the game.

In the first game, there were many small groups of two to five students who were clearly separated between the boys and girls. It was obvious that they were all very sensitive about participating in activities with the opposite gender. My aim was for these students to become friendlier with each other through the drama activities, therefore I asked them to include at least one student of the opposite gender in their group for the second game. They all complained and seemed embarrassed but they all had mixed gender groups in the end. Although they expressed their hesitation, it was interesting that they quickly followed my instructions because they were used to obeying instructions given to them by their classroom teachers.

**Class Bullying in 6-C**

In the last class, 6-C, an unexpected event occurred during the number game. As the game started, boys went to boys and girls to girls. Yet, this time it was slightly different

\textsuperscript{23} See Appendix 1 for the Weekly Lesson Plans, p. 256.
from the previous classes. There were incidents where particular students were ignored and left out of the game. A skinny girl who appeared to be extremely shy was left out of the game. Her name was Shiroki-san. She was a taller student with beautiful short thick black hair. Shiroki-san encouraged herself to speak out in English and to join in with the others, and finally she found a girl who had a different number card. However, the girl decided to join a larger group who needed someone with the number that she had. Shiroki-san stood alone on the side and the game finished. When the students were presenting their numbers to the class, there was a group that Shiroki-san was able to join so I moved her to the group. Although she was now part of a group, she looked embarrassed because rather than being able to find her own group by herself, I had allocated her to the group and she was the centre of attention for the moment.

Before the game was carried out for the second time, I asked all the students to make a mixed gender group this time, like I had in the other two classes. As the rhythmical piece of music started, the students started finding others with different numbers in their hands. I recognised Shitano-kun trying so hard to talk to his classmates in English, but it seemed that the others just ignored him. Very occasionally, some students talked to him but this did not lead him to find any group members. He finally decided not to try anymore and quietly sat in a corner of the room watching all the others participating in the activity with excitement. I immediately stopped the game and moved onto the presentation of their numbers. I asked for Shitano-kun’s number and he answered in English, ‘Five’. As the presentation continued, I found a group missing the number Five so I asked him to join in the group. He appeared to be very happy to find a group for himself.

While they were presenting their numbers in English to the class, it crossed my mind that perhaps I should discuss the issue of bullying with them, however something stopped me doing so at this early stage of the project. The following section is an extract from my journal:

I almost talked to the students in 6-C about the importance of playing games cooperatively to make the experience enjoyable and fulfilling. Something however stopped me. Looking back on the incident, there were some reasons for not discussing
the matter with these students as I sensed a great divide between them and myself. This reflected the lack of trust between us (10/7/03).

One of the reasons for the lack of trust was that the students seemed to have a proud attitude and that they did not let any outsiders see their domestic problems. This was only the second lesson with them after all, and so it seemed natural that they still considered me as an outsider taking their cautious nature into account. Another reason was the classroom teacher Mrs. Noda. She did not say anything while this was happening. She was usually very quick about telling the students off. I felt a need to talk to her privately about the problem after class. I felt that if I ignored the atmosphere in the room and tried to talk to them about the issue, all the students probably would have been very quiet and would have decided not to say anything. It was a very sensitive moment. I was not sure whether my decision was right at first, but I made up my mind as best as I could considering the nature of students, the atmosphere in the class, and the politics of the class.

In the conversation with Mrs. Noda after the class, she mentioned that they had an extensive class discussion about bullying in April. Yet, some students still targeted Shitano-kun and bullied him when there was an opportunity. We discussed inappropriate structures of games for these students, in particular the grouping structure, and reviewed this grouping for future lessons to prevent bullying.

A week after this lesson, Mrs. Noda talked to me in a corridor to report that she had reprimanded her students after the previous lesson.

Mrs. Noda (N): *Araki-sensei* (Mrs. Araki), *I scolded my students after the lesson last week.*

Myself (M): *Was Shitano-kun all right?*

(N): *Yes, he was quiet but he was fine. I told them that I was very disappointed about what they did to him and the other girl. I also said, “Even the guest teacher clearly noticed what you all did. You should be ashamed of yourselves.”*

(M): *I have been thinking about it for a week and I do not mind discussing this matter with them today, but since you have already talked to them, I won’t bring this up today. I am sure that they are embarrassed enough, but if I see a similar*
incident next time, I will not hesitate to talk to them during the lesson. Would that be O.K with you?

(N): Yes, it’s fine. I am sorry that you saw this unpleasant side of the class.

(M): There is no need to apologise. I am glad that I was there to experience it and I saw the different sides of the students whether it was good or bad. It was an important experience for me to get to know your class better.

The discussion above indicated the tendency of Japanese people to clearly divide insiders from outsiders. To outsiders, these students wanted to present their positive and happy sides. This refers to tatemae/omote (obligation / public) face. They did not wish to show their negative side to the outsider. Their classroom teacher’s apology above reflected the same notion. In the third lesson after the discussion with Mrs. Noda, her students seemed very embarrassed to see me because Mrs. Noda told them that I had noticed some students were bullying in the last lesson. I felt a little more distant with them. They behaved extremely well, however there was an awkward atmosphere that we all felt in the class.

5.2.2 Making a jungle poster

Through the jungle poster making activity, the Year Six students showed various ways of approaching the tasks, cooperating with others, discussing ideas, and completing their group posters. This activity also provided an opportunity for me to understand each of the teacher’s preferences towards a particular teaching approach.

Confusion

After spending time with the Year Six students for two lessons, I realised that it was going to take much longer for these students to get used to the unfamiliar educational method, Drama. Learning the English language itself was quite a challenge to many students. Thus, instead of taking them to a full drama activity straight away, I decided to
slowly introduce them to the drama world by introducing the jungle poster making activity. This activity was not simply making a poster or drawing pictures that these students were used to doing. They were asked to draw the jungle from the individual animals’ perspective. All the groups were given the role of a jungle animal.

Before the activity, I prepared these students by reading ‘The Waterhole’ book and creating a class jungle list both in Japanese and English. Yet, this new task still caused great concern and confusion among them because none of the students in Year Six had tried anything like this activity before. Most of the students looked at each other with puzzled expressions on their faces after they heard the task. There is a Visual Arts subject at the school from Year One to Six where these students enjoy drawing and creating artistic work. However, making a jungle poster was very challenging particularly with the task of being in the role of an animal.

Due to the class problem in 6-C that I previously mentioned, extra attention was paid to the composition of the poster groups in each class. I asked these students to each pick a number card from a box. This created some nicely balanced mixed gender groups. There were eight groups of four or five students in each class. I provided a set of coloured pens for each group and there were some extra crayons for the class. It was very obvious that all the students were very cautious about what they were going to draw. There was not one student who simply picked up a coloured pen and started drawing what they imagined. All three classes followed the same pattern in that all group members started discussing with each other; one or two students eventually picked up a pencil, usually the girls, but they were not drawing much. Their cautious nature was evident in their questions to me including: “Which way should they draw, vertically or horizontally”; and “Where should they write the word ‘Jungle’ on the poster”. At least two or three groups in each class asked these questions to seek assurance. The size of the butcher’s paper also added an extra challenge to them. One boy surprised me by drawing a tree in a jungle using his ruler.
At the end of the first poster-making lesson, some groups carried out meaningful discussions and seemed to enjoy this challenge. One group, in the role of ants, was planning to draw a huge water puddle on a poster with leaves floating on the water. This group was carefully considering the size of their animals. As I visited each group to listen to their discussions, I noticed that most students were still confused with how to start drawing, but their individual ideas were on the right track. A common issue, I recognised, was that there seemed to be a lack of trust within the group members; thus nobody was saying their ideas aloud as they were too concerned about what the others might think. Consequently, when all the posters were gathered at the end of each lesson, most groups had just written the word ‘Jungle’ and others had drawn nothing.

Different Approaches of the Teachers

The jungle poster making caused chaos not only among the students but also the teachers as this drama activity differed from typical educational practices in Japan. Individual teachers expressed different opinions on the activity to me. The male teacher in 6-B, Mr. Tanaka, felt the need to provide more physical materials including posters on jungles, books, videos, and magazine articles given that these students had never experienced drama activities before. The conversation below presents his concerns.

Myself (M): *It seems a challenging task for many students to imagine what a jungle looks like. Many students are not using their pens.*

Mr. Tanaka (T): *Ummmm. Yes, it would be better to provide more materials of jungles like showing videos and presenting posters. As you can see, the school and the local area are located in the middle of Fukuoka city. These kids have never seen a jungle before or experienced walking through bushes by pushing branches and leaves away, so of course it is difficult for them to picture it in their minds.*

(M): *I understand what you mean, Mr. Tanaka, but they have seen jungles on magazines and TV these days. It would be interesting to find out what their images of jungles are, I think. They don’t have to draw real jungles. Imaginary jungles are fine. I told this to your students to take some pressure off. This is what drama is about.*

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24 See Appendix 8 for the photos of their posters at the early stage, p. 269.
I discussed Mr. Tanaka’s suggestion with Mrs. Abe in the next class. Mrs. Abe felt that there was no need to provide extra materials as these students had already created a class jungle list and also ‘The Waterhole’ book presented vast images of jungles and animals. She appeared to enjoy watching the challenging process. Mr. Tanaka, on the other hand, was more concerned with students getting further challenges on top of the unresolved social problems in his class.

Mrs. Noda’s response in the last class, 6-C, was different again. She did not show any interest towards the drawing activity. In her written responses to the second questionnaire, she answered that poster making was her least favourite activity in the project. She was much more enthusiastic about correcting her students’ pronunciations of English words on the class jungle list. The only comment she made about making a jungle poster was that she would have preferred me to advise students on how many lessons they would have to complete this activity. She believed this prevented them wasting their time just on decorating the word ‘jungle’ on paper.

I explained to her that the poster making activity was important because I tried to get these students to think about how a jungle can be seen differently from each animal’s perspective. The aim was for these students to understand how a bird, for example, saw a jungle compared to an ant’s view of a jungle. Considering that these students still were developing their understanding of different expectations in drama, there was a need to slowly introduce them to the concepts of drama. I felt that this drawing exercise was an appropriate introductory activity for them to start thinking from a drama perspective.

In my journal, I noted the experience of the first poster-making lesson as very significant:

Through the first class of making a jungle poster, I was able to observe the students more closely and to talk to them individually. This helped me to understand those students’

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25 See Appendix 11 for teachers’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 276.
attitudes towards learning and approaching an unfamiliar task. Their posters were big blank spaces, but I believe they were not wasting their time as Mrs. Noda stated.

I am glad to get to know the cautious nature of these students yet they are full of potential and unspoken ideas. Probably, they were not used to being allowed so much free discussion time, considering their booked timetable and tightly scheduled curriculum ordered by the Ministry of Education. Here, I feel that schools are there for The Ministry of Education, not the other way around. The teachers and principals always told me about the restrictions given by the Ministry of Education and they seemed to have given up on trying to change things. I often hear from them, ‘Shouganai (Cannot be helped or This is the way.)’ I sensed their frustration but public schools do not seem to have much individual choice (My journal 17/7/03).

5.2.3 Reflective action within Action Research Cycle

My first challenge in introducing the Japanese students to a basic drama concept (being in someone else’s shoes to see the world) happened unexpectedly when I was not fully prepared. Many teachers probably experience moments when they have to make split second decisions when they are teaching. These moments usually occur when they are least expected, but because they know their students well, they can make appropriate adjustments. In the case of this project, it happened when I did not know the students well enough to make suitable adjustments.

My First Big Challenge

The following situation was an example of the lack of preparation and thorough planning on my part as a drama teacher, especially when the students were not familiar with the expectations of the drama approach. I caused some confusion to a few students because I asked them to do something unknown. Jungle poster making was a challenging activity not only for the students, but also for me as a teacher. Their response was unexpected because I had always introduced this activity as an easy, warm-up exercise back in Australia. Teaching in Australia, I gradually started building a belief in the students’ roles and the fictional world together with the students, after introducing a warm-up activity like the poster making. In this project, I was starting in a similar way with the
Japanese students as I had already done with the Australian students that I used to teach. As a teacher I made the mistake of taking my expectations for granted and not communicating precisely what I was requesting from the Japanese students.

While I was observing and walking around the classroom in the first class of 6-B, I recognised that the students were more confused with the task than I had originally thought. The main reason seemed to be a block in their imagination. Simply, they could not imagine what a jungle looked like from an animal’s perspective. One student was so concerned about what the real jungle looked like, he wanted to change his group animal from an elephant to a spider. As far as he was concerned, there were no elephants in a real jungle. Although I gave an example of Asian elephants in the jungle, he was quite adamant that there were no elephants in the jungle. After his group had a discussion, they decided to finally change their animal anyway. This was an example of causing unnecessary concern to the boy because I was asking him to create a drawing from my perspective rather than from his own way of seeing the world. Although I reminded the class several times to put their imagination on paper, I was not fully accepting their own images and understanding of what they perceived or understood a jungle to be.

It was obvious that just telling these students to draw what they imagined a jungle to look like was not enough direction for them to start drawing confidently. At the end of the first period, not much drawing had been done on the paper. If these students had shared a common fictional world of the jungle through building belief together with dramatic or non-dramatic activities before they started the poster-making activity, perhaps they would have experienced less confusion and become more confident in expressing their understanding of a jungle on paper.

I was getting desperate to think of a way to remove the blockage of thoughts in these students, to allow them to imagine what jungles looked like from an animal’s perspective. The process of finally reaching an idea was written down in my journal:

In the short break after teaching 6-B, I watched the students playing outside in the schoolyard. Some students were kicking balls and others were chasing each other. I
moved my eyes towards the trees by the school gate and these trees were covered with fresh green leaves. I let my thoughts wander freely instead of trying hard to think of a solution for teaching them to see the world from different perspectives. Suddenly, an idea came to mind that I should ask students to compare how the trees by the gate look when standing under the trees instead of when viewed from the multi purpose room on the third floor. If they were able to do this then, I could begin to discuss with the students the relationship between distance and size. I thought about walking to the trees outside during the class, but I knew that it would take more than half of the lesson time to do so and our time together was very limited as it was.

Another idea came to mind that I could use students’ pen cases to show that an object can be seen differently from a lying, sitting, and standing position. After they experienced the differences in size and shape, we would be able to transpose the experience to the animals in the jungle. I definitely felt that these little practice exercises would help these students to understand what they were expected to do on paper” (My journal, 24/7/03).

I remembered that I felt a sense of satisfaction after I had decided upon this new approach that I would discuss later with the students.

A New Perspective

As soon as the next class, 6-A, began, I tried out the new ideas. The following section outlines how I introduced the little exercises to students and how the students responded.

Myself (M): Before I let you move on to the poster making, I would like you to do a little exercise with me. Can you all go to the window and look around the schoolyard from this third floor?

(The students slowly stood up and walked to the window.)

(M): This is the schoolyard that you play in everyday so you are familiar with the view, I am sure. I want you to look the trees over there by the gate. Can you tell me how you see the trees from here? We are standing higher than these trees. What can you see? What part of the trees can you see?

Boy 1: The leaves and the bottom of the tree trunk.

(M): Yes, we can see that. What else?

Boy 2: Well, I can see the treetop.

(M): We can see the treetop as well. Now I want you to think about what you can see when you come to school through that gate every morning and look up these trees? Can you see the trees in the same way as you can see them from here? Can you just close your eyes? Imagine that you are walking towards the school on a nice warm day like today and go...
through the gate. You now hear something up in the tree, maybe a bird, then you look up to see what the noise was. Open your eyes and can you stop there and tell me what you can see?

(The students opened their eyes and there is silence.)

Girl 1: Lots of branches and leaves, but I don’t think you can see the treetop from there.

Boy 3: When I look up I saw the tree trunk but I did not see the bottom part because I am looking up. I think the tree looks bigger if you stand under the tree, but it does not look so big from here.

(M): Thank you. We are talking about the same trees yet they look different depending on where you stand. Think about animals. What kind of animal would be looking down the tree from here?

Girl 2: Big animals like a giraffe and an elephant.

Boy 3: I guess when you go through the gate you are like smaller animals or insects walking through the grass.

(M): Good point (Most students still looked puzzled). Now, keep in mind what you saw and what you heard from the others just now. You all brought your pencil cases with you today, so I want you to stand next to your pencil cases.

(All students went back to the middle of the room and stood looking down at their pencil cases the floor.)

After this experience, I actually asked them to see the same pencil case from three different positions: standing, sitting, and lying. Then, we discussed more animals and their views on jungles, including monkeys and birds that can move around between the different levels. Even some students who still looked a little puzzled after the tree exercise seemed to understand the concept of different perspectives as a result of experiencing the pencil case exercise. There was an obvious improvement in these students’ progress in poster making because they had experienced the little exercise and broadened their understanding of visual perceptions. Through this, my aim was for them to eventually feel what it was like to be in someone else’s shoes and how different the same world could look. I received positive feedback from the 6-A students so I tried the same exercises with Mrs. Noda’s class afterwards and with the first class of 6-B in the following week. Mrs. Noda was impressed with the little exercises and mentioned in her written observation notes that:

*The exercises definitely helped to pass the message across to these students. They seemed to be very clear about what they had to do after the exercises. They finally started to draw more on the paper (24/7/03).*
Most groups finished their posters within the third lesson of the poster making. Truly, it was unexpected that it would take three lessons just for the poster making. However, I felt it was definitely worth spending such long hours to prepare these students for entering into the drama world.

**Spiral Improvements**

This poster making activity illustrated how each lesson improved. This improvement was like a spiral stairway. Each step represented each stage of action research including planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating. The first class, 6-B, was the first mini action research cycle. In this class, I tried to pay extra attention to questioning. This first class was for specifically identifying what they were confused about. My evaluation of the class was that these students needed to experience an example of being in the role of a different animal. Here, experience was the key. This experience was needed to provide a feeling that one object can be seen in various ways depending upon the size of the animal: visual perception changes according to your eye level. They obviously needed more guidance.

The second mini cycle was the next class, 6-A. Here, I tried the new exercises that I came up with in the break. I planned some exercises, implemented them in class, observed the students, and then evaluated these exercises as successful or not according to the students’ responses and progress in their poster making. In the last mini cycle of 6-C, I slightly modified some of the questions in these little exercises. As a result, all the participants, including myself, climbed up the long spiral stairs of action research. At the end of the poster making sessions, after three weeks all of the groups had completed their posters.

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26 See Appendix 9 for the photos of their posters, p. 270.
5.2.4 Making animals using your body - Mime

By this time, these students seemed to be used to the idea of being asked to do something unexpected. This mime activity was the first drama activity that challenged them to use their minds and bodies together. When I explained the procedure of the activity, some students giggled and others looked at each other and pulled faces. I noticed a difference between the different genders. In all three classes, the boys participated more fully than the girls. They made more interesting and unique shapes using their bodies and were quick to complete their work, in comparison to the girls. In comparing these three classes, the responses to this activity varied according to each class. Some students selected this activity as their favourite one in the questionnaire.27

Responses from 6-B

This class showed some honest responses to the unfamiliar activity, and they showed how they gradually grasped the idea of drama - adapting themselves to the new task.

As the familiar music starts, all the students start walking around the room. They all look excited waiting for the next instruction. Some are walking slowly to be ready for the next instruction and others are looking at me. When my tambourine gives them the signal to stop, all the students’ eyes are suddenly on me. The tension in the room is getting higher and higher.

I show them a picture of a crocodile and say, “four and crocodile”. Immediately, boys and girls separate from each other to make groups of four. One group of boys makes the shape of a crocodile by lying on the floor one by one and holding onto each other’s legs. Other groups are standing, kneeling, or sitting together and talking, but they look very confused. One or two students in some groups lead others to make a shape but others seem too shy to jump in.

I tap my tambourine again and instruct them to start walking again. After these students walk around the room for a short period of time, I stop them to show a picture of a fish this time. In groups of three, they start making the shape of a fish. More groups make a flat fish on the floor and a few groups again do not make any shapes at all. The next animal is a spider. Finally all groups of four make some sort of spider shape. Most shapes are flat on the floor. Only two groups make the shape while standing up.

27 See Appendix 10 for students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.
While the students’ tension is high, I ask two groups to present their mime. They look proud of their shapes, especially the boys’ groups. As the boys and girls are self-conscious of each other, I ask them to make two big kangaroos. This time, they are divided into boys and girls. Boys immediately start making the shape and everybody gets to a position without being told by anyone. Within a second, one huge kangaroo is standing in the middle of the room, whereas, the girls are still standing around and talking. All the boys come to surround the girls to see their progress. The girls become conscious of the boys’ stares. They are just about to start to make a shape, but it all stops suddenly as they feel embarrassed. It is not going anywhere so only the boys present their work to the girls. “Wow. It’s good”, say some girls. All of them are having a very close look at the shape that the boys made. Looking up and down, side-to-side, and back to front. It is an enormous kangaroo standing in the room. It is not only flat but also a well-structured three-dimensional piece. The last animals that all the students make are the best so they all present their shapes to the class.

The students’ confusion and hesitation can be seen in the three sections of narrative above. I noted that their ideas of physically transforming themselves into the shapes of the animals were extremely limited. Their shapes at the beginning tended to be two dimensional and low to the ground: most of the shapes were flat like a drawing on a piece of paper. It was rewarding to see the gradual improvement in the students’ presentations.

**Unexpected Responses from 6-A**

The responses from the second class, 6-A, was unexpected. As this class was so cheerful and energetic, I naturally expected better quality work, by this I mean originality in their ideas. It took a few practices for them to get used to the idea of mime. I spent a great deal of time with each group to encourage them to physically start making a shape instead of just talking and watching other groups. As they were so conscious of what the other groups were doing, their shapes were very similar when they presented them to each other. Again, most of their work was flat and two-dimensional. Although they were not imaginative in their work, some of them seemed very excited with the idea of making the animal shapes and at the same time learning the English names. One student answered in a class discussion (8/7/03), “I really enjoyed making the animal shapes. It was very challenging but I liked it.” The classroom teacher also thought that she saw her
students getting very excited with the activity: this was one of her favourite drama activities.\footnote{28}{From the interview with Mrs. Abe, December 25, 2003.}

6-C Students’ enthusiasm

Unexpectedly, I received more positive responses from the 6-C class. Students in the class were very responsive and easy to work with and their collaborative work and presented drama pieces were full of interesting ideas. In my journal, the following comments were noted:

After teaching the first two classes, I thought that the third class would need more guidance and encouragement, as their teacher was very strict and structured. My mind was full of ideas about how to encourage the students to push themselves beyond their boundaries.

However, this class was the most responsive class amongst the three, despite the teacher’s influence. The joy and excitement that I saw on their faces is still fresh in my mind. Shitano-kun and Shiroki-san, who were the targets of bullying, participated fully and the others included them without any resentment. These students made all sorts of unique shapes as small groups. This helped their presentation to be very interesting and we had a meaningful and rich discussion about each shape. Were the students’ vigorous and enthusiastic reactions the result of the teacher’s control and suppression? (8/7/03)

Time passed so quickly in the last lesson. Again, the boys were more active but the girls also put forward lots of ideas. It seemed that there were more shy and quiet students in this class, but it did not seem to matter when they were all participating together. The teacher, Mrs. Noda’s opinion on the activity was however negative. She mentioned in her evaluation sheet:

\textit{It would be better to spend more time on the preparation for the lesson next week instead of just making animal shapes, as they will be required to present their jungle posters in an international animal meeting using the English language (8/7/03).}
The other two teachers both told me that they highly approved of the use of this unique activity in the English language classes, but Mrs. Noda was not impressed with the activity at all\textsuperscript{29}.

\textbf{5.2.5 International Animal Meeting}

I felt that the last lessons in the first semester before the summer holiday were very successful and that the students and teachers participated in the rich drama experiences using the drama techniques, ‘Teacher-in-role’ and ‘Class-in-role’\textsuperscript{30}. In the ‘International Animal Meeting’ activity, all the students took on the role of animals and presented their jungle posters.

\textbf{Power of Masks}

The successful outcome of the activity was based on the use of animal masks. I had about twenty animal masks that I had brought from Australia. These masks were sold at a craft shop and they cost about one dollar each. They were made of a sponge type material that covered the top half of the students’ faces. It was easy to recognise each animal as these masks captured the individual characteristics of the animals in detail; elephants, parrots, rabbits, dogs, and pigs. There were insufficient animal masks for all the students as there were thirty-five students in each class. I searched for more masks in the local shops and found some rubber gorilla masks in the 100-yen shops, which were equivalent to the $2 shops in Australia. The gorilla masks covered only the mouth of the students, however they looked so real. I was still five masks short. After I looked around the shops, I found a black Mickey Mouse hat that was made out of plastic. There were also pieces of fabric printed with animals in the shop. I thought that I could make a hat

\textsuperscript{29} See Appendix 11 for teachers’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 276.
\textsuperscript{30} ‘Teacher-in-role’ means that a “teacher takes on a role and manages interactions and direction from within the drama” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 128), whereas ‘Class-in-role’ refers to a situation where a whole class take on a role and participates in activities and discussions.
that looked like cat ears if I cut the ears of the Mickey Mouse hat using triangular shapes and applied the animal printed fabric on the ears. I made the cat hats at home and they were quite easily recognisable as a cat. The animal masks, gorilla masks, and cat hats became effective teaching materials for the ‘International Animal Meeting’.

After the preparation of the materials, the next teaching decision I had to make was how to present these masks to the students. I felt that these students were ready for a surprise. This was risky, considering the nature of these students and their lack of familiarity with the new learning style of Educational Drama. There seemed to be two options for me as a teacher in presenting the masks. The first one was to simply pass them to the students once the class started. The second way was to surprise them at the door with me in the role of a bossy and noisy parrot, welcoming them to the international animal meeting and handing out the animal masks. To be honest, I was not sure how they would react to the surprise; however, I felt that it was worth trying. Although I explained to the students at the end of the previous lesson that we were going to participate in the ‘International Animal Meeting’ next week, I had not mentioned anything to them about the animal masks and being in the role of animals. Thus, surprising them at the door when they entered the classroom was an unexpected event.

I decided to take the character of a bossy and noisy parrot although it was not from the picture book, *The Waterhole*. It was an imaginary character that I created. I simply chose an animal from the animal masks - one that was colourful and could have a cheerful yet bossy characteristic. I decided not to choose a larger animal for the role because I did not wish to adopt a strong authoritarian character or to intimidate. My aim as a teacher was to create a mutual relationship with the students – all of us being in the role of animals.

The following account describes the 6-B students’ excitement when they received the animal masks from me. Being in the role of a parrot, I decided to change my voice to a higher pitch and flapped my arms in the air like wings when the animal masks were given
out to the students at the door. I only spoke English to the students in the role of the parrot. I also talked fast and was noisy all the time.

Myself (M): Welcome to the international animal meeting, everyone. Welcome. Welcome. It is good to see all the familiar faces this year as well.

(As the students enter the classroom, one animal mask is given to each student.)


(One of the boys starts making the sounds of gorilla and walking around the room like a gorilla. Some students giggle as they watch the boy mimicking a gorilla.)

Girl 1: My mask is a cat. Oh, I know. This mask was a Mickey Mouse hat from the 100 yen shop. Araki-sensei (Mrs. Araki) must have cut the ears to make triangle shapes for a cat.

Girl 2: I have a cat mask but a different colour. Mine is pink. How do I look? I am a pink cat.

(Girl 2 mimics a cat and giggles with her friends.)

This extract of the lesson above demonstrates that some students spontaneously accepted the role of the animals as soon as they were given the animal mask. In other words, they were able to quickly engage physically and emotionally with the drama world by putting on the animal mask. Some other students looked a little shy wearing the masks but others put them on straight away. The mask became a symbolic means of entering the drama world. The mask captured their attention immediately and motivated them to participate in the drama activity without being told to do so by myself or any of the other teachers. Even the teachers joined in with masks on. Mrs. Abe from 6-A commented after the class that she was amazed about the impact that the masks had on the students:

I do not use props much in my class anymore because my students are already in Year Six, but I realised from observing them with the masks that they still like to do things with props. They were a bit shy to put them on at first, but I could see that they were enjoying being in the role of animals. I was also surprised that just by giving a mask to each student can help to motivate their learning. In an activity like this, you as a teacher did
The excitement on the students’ faces when they were each given an animal mask at the
door still remains fresh in my mind. This was the first time I felt united with these Year
Six students: this was the moment that I finally felt I had fully gained their trust. They
seemed to readily accept and enjoy the unexpected tasks and surprises that occurred
during the drama activities.

Presentations in Role

In the ‘International Animal Meeting’ activity, the students presented their jungle posters
from the perspective of their individual animal roles. In order to reduce the students’
concerns, I explained the procedure of the activity in Japanese. I wanted them to join in
the activity as an animal and to speak only in English during the activity because this was
an international event. In the class discussions before the activity, I asked them how
animals would praise others’ presentations and how animals would simulate clapping
their hands when some of them could not do so. This preparation was necessary for them
to be ready to physically take on the role of an animal for the activity. I demonstrated to
the students that I, as a parrot, made a noisy bird sound and waved my wings wildly.
Some students afterwards shared their ideas in class about how they would praise others
as a gorilla, an elephant, and a dog. The following account shows an example from the 6-
C class showing how the students shared their ideas:

Myself (M):  
I will be a parrot in the animal meeting. As a parrot, I will make a
sound after other animals present their jungle posters.
Kwa, ku, ku, ku.  Kwa, ku, ku, ku.  Ahaaaaa, kwa, kwa, kwa.

(I use a high-pitched voice and flap my arms wildly up and down. The students in 6-C
laugh and giggle at me being a parrot.)

(M):  Can you share your ideas on how you would make a sound being in the
role of your mask animal?

(There is silence for a while and some students start giggling because one of the boys
quietly makes the sound of a pig in Japanese.)
I heard a pig making a sound in Japanese, ‘Boo. Boo’. Do you know how to describe the sound of a pig in English?

(Some students shake their heads to indicate that they do not know how.)

O.K. In English, the ‘Boo. Boo’ sound becomes ‘Oink. Oink’. This is the international animal meeting so let’s use these two sounds. If you know any other ways to describe the sound of animals in other languages, of course you can use them as well. Now, we talked about a sound and now we need to talk about applauding because some animals cannot clap hands.

(After a moment of silence, a girl puts her hand up.)

Girl 1 (G1): I am not an elephant but if I were an elephant, maybe I could stomp my feet like this.

(While she is sitting on the floor, she stomps on the floor with her feet.)

Thank you for your suggestion. I can just imagine that elephants are doing that to show their appreciation. How about other animals? I see some gorillas in this room.

Boy 1 (B1): We can do the gorilla noise.

(A boy looks at another boy sitting next to him.)

Boy 1 and 2 (B1 and 2): Ou, ou, ou, ou, ou.

(These boys pound their fists against their chests. The rest of the class burst into laughter.)

There were a few students in each class who did not put their masks on because they seemed to be embarrassed. In the class discussion, I made sure that all the students understood when all of us were in and out of role, using the masks as indicators. I explained to them when I put the parrot mask on that I was in the role of the noisy parrot who organised the international animal meeting, however when I took the mask off I became Mrs. Araki again. I told them that this rule applied to them as well and by taking the masks off unnecessarily during the activity, the parrot and other animals saw them without masks as humans intruding in the animal meeting. Most students laughed at this idea and the students who did not have their masks on immediately put them on. The following account describes how the activity was carried out with the 6-A students.
Myself (M): Welcome to the International Animal Meeting, and thank you for coming to the meeting from all over the world.

(All the students wearing their animal masks make noises of barking, bleating, singing, croaking, roaring. Some stomp their feet on the floor like elephants, beat their chests like gorillas, and jump on the spot like monkeys to celebrate the opening.)

(M): Thank you. Thank you for your support. The topic for this year’s meeting, as you know, is that ‘Your jungle, My jungle, and Our jungle’. Humans are cutting down our trees and some of our important waterholes are being contaminated, but the majority of our jungle is still beautiful and alive. The presenters will be showing their posters of the beautiful jungle to you. The first group of presenters will come up to the stage please.

(The animals cheered the first group by making animal sounds. The group members took off their animal masks and put an ‘Ant’ name tag on their clothes. Then, they all came up onto the stage with their jungle posters.)

(M): Hello to the first group!! Let’s find out who they are. Are you ready, animals?

All the animals in the audience (A): Yes!!

(M): OK, who are you?

(A): Who are you?

The ant group (Ant): We are ants.

(M): Let’s ask again. Their voice was so small so we could not hear them very well. Who are you?

(A): Who are you?

(Ant): We are ants!!

(M): Oh, you are ants. I can imagine that it took a long time for you to draw the poster considering your body size. They are tiny but they see things in the jungle that bigger animals easily miss. Let’s have a look at their poster. There is a big waterhole in the middle of the poster and something is floating. What’s this?

The first ant (Ant 1): This is a leaf.

(M): A leaf is floating on the water, but there is something on the leaf though. What about this? What’s this?

The second ant (Ant 2): This is an insect.

(M): I see. This is an insect having a nap on a leaf. How about a huge green leg on the edge of the poster? What’s this?

The third ant (Ant 3): This is a croc...croco...croo...!

(Ant 1): Crocodile (teach the third ant how to say the word).

(M): Oh, this is a crocodile’s leg. I guess he was too scary to say the name. Can you say crocodile again? (encouraging the third ant to say it again.)

(Ant 3): Crocodile
In the poster presentation, each student explained at least one object on the poster in English. Considering their level of the English language as beginners, they practised a set sentence pattern, ‘What’s this?’ and ‘This is a/an~’. My aim was for the students to focus on listening to the short speech in English and to pick up any familiar words within the speech.

In my journal, I wrote a reflection on the activity and foreign language learning using drama:

Throughout learning and teaching a foreign language, I realised that there were not many opportunities for foreign language learners to feel that they can talk in their target language, especially for beginners. Building up their vocabulary and familiarising commonly used sentences were the main focus in the typical language classes for beginners. It was interesting to note that some of these students were not confident about saying the set sentence pattern when we practised them before the presentation, however they pronounced the words confidently and understood the appropriate timing of replying to a specific question during the International Animal Meeting. In the activity, I wanted these students to feel, as naturally as possible, that they were successfully having a conversation in English. I felt that this was an opportunity for them to contribute to the conversation. Without their contribution, the piece of conversation would not be completed.

After each group presented their jungle poster in English, the audience being in the role of animals praised the group’s efforts by making noises and sounds like animals, stomping on the floor like an elephant, hitting their own chests like a gorilla, barking like a dog, squealing like a pig, and crying like a cat. It was noisy every time a group finished presenting their poster, however the noise level was controlled and was within an acceptable level for a classroom activity. Using the drama techniques was vital for the success of the whole class becoming one and it was necessary for individual contributions to be recognised and rewarded (My journal, 15/7/03).

The presentation of the jungle posters went smoothly because of the high level of contribution from individuals and the whole class. The use of masks enabled the students to create and take roles within a fictional world that provided different ways of presenting the students’ work in class and speaking English in a meaningful context. The setting of an International animal meeting and their roles were powerful tools that assisted the participants in transforming themselves physically, emotionally, and cognitively into the fictional world of the animals.
Teachers’ Comments

The use of the drama techniques of ‘Teacher-in-role’ and ‘Class-in-role’ as ways of presenting students’ work was an innovative teaching approach for the Japanese teachers. They were used to making presentations in a traditional pattern where presenters stood in front of the class to show their work and the audience sat in their chairs. Mr. Tanaka particularly showed his enthusiasm for the idea of teachers and students being in role while presenting. He said that presenting their jungle posters in role ensured continuity with the poster making activity; and he believed that there was a sequential improvement in the unit. He also commented that each drama activity was nicely intertwined with each other as a unit: ‘The Waterhole’ (15/7/03).

Although these teachers agreed that using ‘Teacher-in-role’ and ‘Class-in-role’ were interesting ways to do the presentations, they were not keen to use these techniques in their own classes. There were various reasons for this: Mrs. Abe felt that it seemed time consuming; Mr. Tanaka believed that teachers needed to have advanced skills in acting; and Mrs. Noda was concerned that the students would get out of control. I explained that more conservative roles, including reporters, police offices, scientists, and people in a village, could be adapted for these techniques according to the stories that they wished to work with. I explained why the role of animals was used, given that the book ‘The Waterhole’ was the focus.

It seemed that recognising the value of an innovative technique and actually adapting it to their own teaching were different matters for these teachers. On many occasions, they tended to observe from a distance what I did and how I used drama techniques in teaching the English language to the Japanese students. The distance, at times, made me feel isolated in this Japanese learning environment, and also made it difficult for me to develop a connection with them at a personal level.
5.2.6 Summary of phase two

Most students stayed behind to talk to me after the last class in the first semester before the six-week summer holiday started. As I spent more time with these students, they slowly opened up to me. Their response towards learning English through drama activities appeared to be more positive and their engagement level seemed to be increasing. I gradually started to witness their collaborative work in each class, particularly near the end of Phase Two. Engaging physically, emotionally, and cognitively in an imaginary world was a totally new learning experience for most of the participants, I noted that it took much longer for these Japanese students to reach this level than the students in Australia whom I had taught previously.

Action research cycles greatly contributed to my understanding of three important areas: improvement of the lesson plans; alteration of the teaching approaches during the activities; and the management of the classroom and students. As each Year Six class represented a mini action research cycle, I was able to reflect on and evaluate a previous lesson in an orderly fashion to provide a better lesson for the next class. Through action research cycles, the students, the teachers, and I were able to discuss and overcome the problems and any obstacles together in order to create a better Drama-English class. This process of going through stages in the action cycles helped to establish a closer bond among all the participants.

5.3 Conclusion

There were several key emergent themes evident in the data. The first theme arising from Phase One was that there was some confusion with the new learning method of educational drama. The second theme from Phase Two was that overall the students responded positively. This chapter has mainly focused on the first two themes - Phase One and Phase Two. Both the third and forth themes, Phase Three and Four, will be discussed in the next chapter, Chapter Six.
Exploring ‘The Waterhole’

I thought learning English meant memorising words just like memorising KANJI in class (Chinese characters for writing), but after I learnt English with ‘The Waterhole’ story, I can see that learning English is more fun.

[a boy from 6-B class]

6 Introduction

Since I became a teacher, children’s ability to grow and adapt themselves to new situation has always amazed me. This chapter presents Phase Three and Four of the Drama–English project with Year Six students at a public primary school in Japan. There was a six-week summer break in between the second and third phase. This chapter focuses on the last two key themes that emerged. The third theme in Phase Three was about students gradually coming ‘out of their shells’. The final theme in Phase Four was that students started showing their confidence as they became more familiar with the idea of learning the English language through the drama activities.

This chapter highlights the way in which these students adapted to the new educational concept, Drama, in their foreign language classes. At the third and fourth phase of the project, students started showing a deeper aspect of themselves as their trust in me developed.

The main focus of this chapter will be the way in which the students, slowly but steadily, gained confidence in their Drama-English classes. Another focus will be the change in the participating teachers’ attitudes. As the students acclimatised to the new concept of educational drama, their teachers’ attitudes towards the English-Drama project and also towards me as a guest teacher became more respectful. My impression of each teacher changed, as I spent more time with them.
6.1 Phase Three – A Deeper insight of the Japanese students

6.1.1 Outside the Drama-English classes

There were different faces that the participants showed outside the Drama-English classes. The following sections describe events that occurred during the summer holiday and school lunch.

*Natuyasumi* (The Summer Holiday)

The Japanese summer holiday for school aged students usually starts from late July lasting till the end of August every year. In the summer holidays, many students from the school stopped to talk to me on the street and at a supermarket in the local area. I was introduced to their parents and siblings and the parents often told me how much the children enjoyed the new English classes at school. The principal also wrote a letter to me during the summer holidays expressing his appreciation. Casual meetings and discussions with some of the parents and receiving such a warm letter from the principal demonstrated that the school and students were enjoying the Drama-English project.

Invitation to School Lunch

The Year Six teachers had a discussion and decided to invite my husband (as the language assistant teacher for the English language classes) and myself for lunch with each participating Year Six class. The first class that I had a lunch with was Mrs. Noda’s class, 6-C. I was very curious about her students’ behaviour in their home class as I saw her controlling them in an orderly fashion during the Drama-English classes. In all the public schools in Japan, the schools supply lunches and there was a large school kitchen with some nutritionists cooking lunch everyday. All parents receive the lunch menus for
the next month along with the monthly school newsletter. Menus were well balanced from a nutritional point of view, which included traditional Japanese dishes, pasta, Chinese food, curry, bread, rice, and desserts. The day I had lunch with 6-C, we had the following menu: curry, rice, Japanese style seaweed salad, and milk.

Lunch with 6-C

A daily helper, Yamano-san, from 6-C came to invite us for lunch after the lesson. The narrative below describes the atmosphere of the lunchtime in the 6-C classroom.

In the classroom, there are five or six desks pushed together to construct a small group. Students lay their favourite lunch mat brought from home on their desk and a chopstick case is neatly put in front of him or her. All the students are sitting nicely and talking quietly, except for six students with white hats and aprons on moving carefully through the crowded room. They all have tin plates in their hands that contain delicious curry, rice, or salad. The daily helper, Yamano-san, is standing in front of the black board to make sure that the other classmates are behaving appropriately at lunch time.

Mrs. Noda is checking her students’ homework at her desk located next to a window and is at times watching her students as well. “Yano-kun, is there any need to talk so loud?” says Mrs. Noda who is watching him for a while. He looks down and giggles to his friends sitting next to him. Yano-kun participates in the activities well in Drama-English classes but he also has a shorter attention span than the other students. It looks like he is one of Mrs. Noda’s students whom she always watches out for. Yamano-san looks at her teacher and her voice becomes louder after this, “Shizukani shitekudasai” (Be quiet please), as though she is not doing her job properly until this moment. While this is going on, the lunch monitors with white aprons efficiently finish their job bringing all the prepared lunches to everyone in the class.

From the narrative above, it seemed obvious that Mrs. Noda’s tightly controlled her class with a look or a few chosen words. Lunchtime was usually one of the exciting moments in school life however Mrs. Noda believed that students should use their time at school effectively, even their lunchtime. Her students used this preparation time usefully. Some students were practicing recorders for music presentations, others were doing their homework or reading library books quietly. The next narrative presents Mrs. Noda’s point system for disciplining her students.
“Araki-sensei asokoni suwatte kudasai” (Mrs. Araki, can you sit over there, please?) asks Yamano-san politely who is the designated daily helper. There is an empty chair near the teacher’s desk and I sit next to a girl who is very quiet, but she is very observant of everything around her. A set of wooden chopsticks is on my desk. A 200ml carton of milk and two small plates are already placed in front of me. A boy sitting on the opposite side puts his hand up in the air and firmly raises his voice to one of the lunch monitors “Sumimasen, Araki-sensei no kareega arimasen” (Excuse me, there is no curry for Mrs. Araki). A lunch monitor immediately pours curry from a big serving pot into a small tin bowl and another monitor brings it to my desk. “Arigatoo” (Thank you) I thank both the students.

Once all the dishes are passed around to the individual desks, the daily helper Yamano-san says “Teoawasetekudasai” (Put your hands together in front of your chests) “Okazuwo herasuhitowa taberumaeni herashitekudasai” (If you have any least favourite food, please put them back in each serving pots before you eat.) “Onngakuga owarumaeni tabeowatattekudasai” (Make sure that you finish eating before the music finishes). “Itadakimasu” (Thank you for the meal). All people in the room repeat after her and bow to the food to show appreciation for the food, “Itadakimasu” (Thank you for the meal).”

Immediately a quarter of the class stand up to take their least favourite food to the serving table and this reduces the food on their plates. The daily helper, Yamano-san, checks the names of the students who reduce their dishes and deducts one point from their group points. Four or five boys in class take their plates to the serving table to have second servings a few minutes after we start eating. Mrs. Noda, the teacher, eats her lunch at her desk, not sitting with her students. All the students eat their lunches in their best manner and talk quietly with an appropriate volume. Popular Japanese TV animation songs translated into English are played throughout the fifteen minute lunchtime. The music does not suit the atmosphere. It is rather ironic to hear happy and cheerful songs in such a disciplined environment.

Mrs. Noda disciplined her students strictly at lunchtime and she believed that their eating habits had improved since the beginning of the school year. Most students ate well without complaining about any particular ingredient. She commented that the most impressive thing was that all her students were able to eat their lunches on time. Whether they liked it or not, her students seemed to accept Mrs. Noda’s way and they adapted to Mrs. Noda’s group point system.

**Lunch with Two Other Classes**

In comparison with Mrs. Noda’s class, Mrs. Abe’s class was far more noisy but enjoyable. A group of girls and boys were giggling about some silly things and other
students were curious about what they were talking about. Mrs. Abe sat with the students to have lunch (she rotated to a new group’s table everyday). Her students showed an excitement at lunchtime that I had not seen during my classes with them. She was letting them enjoy the lunch time so even when they misbehaved, she did not scold them. It was not her style to jump on them quickly before something worse may happen as Mrs. Noda tended to do.

The last class that I had lunch with was 6-B, Mr. Tanaka’s class. Students in his class took more advantage of me having lunch with them. They asked me questions about my residence, family, and Australia. Mr. Tanaka did not eat with the students at the same table, but he was observing them from his desk and made jokes with them at times. The lunchtime with 6-B was a very pleasant experience.

6.1.2 Re-visitng the original story

The first lesson after the six weeks holiday began with revisiting The Waterhole book. Students from all three Year Six classes showed progress in listening to the story in English. Although it was a hot day and there were not any fans or air-conditioning in the multi purpose room, the students were enthusiastic about listening to the story and looking at the detailed pictures on each page. It seemed to me that these students looked more relaxed this time listening to the story only in English; they made many new discoveries, including recognising the English words that they had learnt previously and noticing more details of the pictures such as the facial expressions of the animals and the jungle background in the book.

Students’ Voices

Some students mentioned that they understood the story better because they had learnt many more English words relating to the story while participating in the previous drama activities. A boy from 6-B gave some interesting feedback:
I didn’t know the meaning of the title before, but I now understand why the writer named this story, The Waterhole. I think I was nervous about learning English before so I could not think of anything else but to just look at the pictures (8/9/03).

His comments seemed to represent most of the students’ feelings. They looked very tense when they first heard the story because they were not used to reading or listening to a story in English. They remembered many English words after they had used these words in the memorable drama activities. This was evident in a girl’s comment from the 6-A class:

*I understood some animal names in the book because I made shapes of these animals and saw my friends making shapes of some other animals like….. a kangaroo and a leopard. It was fun (8/9/03).*

Another comment made by a boy in 6-C was significant in that it showed the beginning of understanding the concept of drama: “I started to understand what animals might have felt as their waterhole was getting smaller and smaller” (8/9/03). His comments became evidence of him being able to perceive an event from an animal’s perspective and to imagine what they might be feeling. This sharing of emotions was the most important aspect that I was hoping these students would experience. Many students were still keeping their personal opinions to themselves, however, gradually some students opened themselves up to me by sharing their opinions. The 6-C class teacher, Mrs. Noda, wrote in her observation notes that she felt reading the story again to the students was very important (9/9/03). She felt her students confirmed their improvement in the English language and comprehended the story at a deeper level.

A New Concern

In general, the students enjoyed the first Drama-English class after the long summer break. After teaching the three classes, a concern arose which I documented in my journal:
Maybe because it was very hot today, the second class of 6-A was not so enthusiastic about anything they participated in. But is it only because of the uncomfortable weather? The other two classes showed their full participation though. My original impression of the second class was that they were very cheerful and easy to work with. The female teacher, Mrs. Abe was well liked by the students. This class also has more students who have had some sort of experience living overseas and in using the English language. Based on these factors, I expected this class to be more positive and better engaged with the activities according to my original impression of them. Are they bored with the activities? (8/9/03).

The concern that I had about this class started to grow throughout the rest of this project. I felt that the distance between the 6-A class and myself had become greater.

Differences in Levels of Engagement

The videotaped lessons showed each class’s level of engagement. The first and the last classes came together in a tight group when the story was read to them but the 6-A students did not. Mrs. Abe said that her students became moody at times in her class and she did not know why. My original impressions of the three classes had changed completely by this time. In the beginning, I thought that Mrs. Abe’s class, 6-A, was the most comfortable class to teach based on their outgoing and cheerful nature. However, the improvement of and more cooperative attitudes in the other two classes had become more noticeable.

6.1.3 Interviewing Dr. Science - Teacher and students in role

Re-visiting The Waterhole book helped to bring these students back into the drama world very quickly. These students were ready for more challenging activities and needed to move onto the next adventure. A new task (involving dramatic tension) was introduced to the students; they were to find out what happened to the waterhole after the story. I presented a short letter from one of the animals who lived near the waterhole stating that the water was getting dirty and all the animals were suffering. Then, I introduced a new character, Dr. Science, who was a researcher on waterholes.
The Keen Attitude Towards Learning

This Dr. Science activity, I felt, was one of the most successful activities in the project. All the students responded positively and the teachers were amazed with yet another way of using teacher and class in role, like the International Animal Meeting activity. Before the activity I explained about Dr. Science’s work; he was investigating the possible cause of some animal deaths after drinking water from the waterhole. I told the Japanese students about an invitation for Japanese newspaper and TV reporters to attend an interview with Dr. Science who was a well-known ‘waterhole’ researcher. Then, we all read in class the invitation written in English. Most of the students recognised some English words that they had learnt in previous lessons such as the names of animals, water, waterhole, and numbers. They looked very proud that they had remembered and recognised these words.

The activity was explained to them beforehand in Japanese so all the students were aware what their roles were; they were to be Japanese reporters for TV and newspaper companies. Paul (the language assistant teacher, also my husband) became Dr. Science and I played the role of his assistant who could speak both English and Japanese. My role was to preside over the interview. The students’ tasks as reporters were to listen to Dr. Science’s research findings and ask questions of Dr. Science in English or Japanese. From a foreign language learning perspective, this activity focused on listening and speaking skills. On the other hand, from a drama perspective, the activity challenged them to read the non-verbal aspects of the English language. The students were also asked to make notes on paper during the interview. Considering these students’ level of English as beginners, they were allowed to take notes in Japanese and use English for their names and any words that they remembered or knew.

The beginning of the activity is described in a following narrative:

All the students are writing their names in English. I say to the students, “In Japanese, you write your surname first and your first name comes afterwards, in English it is the opposite way. Please, be careful with the order and if you do not know some alphabet
letters for your name, you can always ask me.” Some students put their hands up to ask me the correct spelling of their names. When everyone is ready, I explain to the students about a ‘signal’ when I am in a role: “I have a light green jacket with me. When I put this on, I become Dr. Science’s assistant who organised today’s interview. But when I take this off, I become Araki-Sensei (Mrs. Araki) again. I want you to watch me carefully from now on and see whether I am with or without the jacket. I also have a media pass in a plastic holder for each of you. Once you put this on, you become a reporter.”

(Some students nod to show their acknowledgement of my explanation).

It was necessary to explain the use of ‘signals’ to these students because they had never had any experience of participating in a Teacher-in-role activity before. All the students were excited about receiving the media passes that I had made for them to wear when they became reporters, and they compared their news passes.

The activity involved an environmental issue. Taking these students’ English level as beginners into account, it was important that I played the role of an assistant who was fluent in both languages. If the activity was carried out only in English, there was a great possibility that some students with sensitive natures would not be able to participate fully, because of the fear of being exposed to an English only environment too long. Thus, for this situation, I decided that it was necessary to allow both languages to be used.

I put the jacket on to be ready and I say, being in the role of the assistant, “All Japanese reporters, welcome to Dr. Science’s special interview in Japan. I am his assistant. If you have any questions that you would like to ask him afterwards, I am happy to translate them into English. OK, we would like to welcome Dr. Science now. Dr. Science, please come in” (Italic sentences above suggest Japanese language speaking to the Japanese reporters and non-italic ones were said in English to Dr. Science). Dr. Science (Paul) comes into the room with thick black glasses on his face and holds a bundle of papers in his hand. He walks very slowly pretending that he is an old person and greets all the reporters “Hello, hello”. The students start to giggle when they realise who it is. Some students whisper to each other, “Paul-sensei (Teacher Paul), Paul-sensei.” Dr. Science uses his hand to push his glasses back up his nose.

I as an assistant, say “Dr. Science, thank you for coming today. We have some Japanese reporters here today from all over Japan. They are looking forward to hearing about your research on the waterhole. Before you start your presentation, some of the reporters have questions to ask. Who is the first person?” A boy puts his hand and stands up among the students sitting. “What is your name?” say the boy. Dr. Science replies, “Yes, my name is Dr. Science. This is how you write my name.” As soon as Dr. Science writes his name on the board, all the students copy the spelling from the board. I move onto the next question and point at the second person to ask a simple question in English.
The narrative account above described how the activity was introduced. It also showed the students’ positive reactions to the characters in the activity. The Dr. Science activity was a whole class activity, not a small group activity. This seemed to create a protective environment for these Japanese students where they could participate at their own pace. I also told them clearly that both languages were allowed to be used. Giving them the choice seemed to help them relax.

**Differences in Responses from All Three Classes**

After three volunteer students asked some simple questions in English to Dr. Science, he started showing photos of animals being sick and dying. He explained to the Japanese reporters (the students) in English the serious situation of the waterhole. Of course, he spoke slowly and clearly with dynamic gestures and facial expressions. He also repeated some words including ‘animals’, ‘sick’, ‘dying’, ‘waterhole’, and ‘dirty’.

All the photos used were downloaded from Internet sites so they provided a realistic and tense atmosphere of desperation: the water contamination issue was presented to them well. In the question time afterwards, the students’ enthusiasm was evident in their questions for Dr. Science such as “Why is the water so dirty?”, “What happened?”, and “What happened to the sick animals?” Some students also asked questions about specific animals in the photos. Questions from some 6-C students in Mrs. Noda’s class were particularly noteworthy. It showed that these students responded at a deeper level in the role of news reporters. The interesting questions to Dr. Science were as followed: “How long have you been researching this issue?”, “How many suffering animals have you seen so far?” “You said you are from New Zealand. Is this happening in New Zealand waterholes as well?” and “Was the waterhole you researched located near a city where many people live?” After the class, Mrs. Noda said that she tried to challenge the students’ thinking in her class. Her educational policy was to push students and challenge their understanding in the hope that they would achieve a higher level of
learning and realisation. I witnessed her constantly telling students to explain why they thought the way they did. I feel that her efforts were reflected in some of the students’ questions to Dr. Science. In the written evaluation of the Dr. Science activity, Mrs. Noda thought the idea of students-in-role was interesting although it was a new concept to her (16/9/03).

Developing Awareness of Using Gestures in Communication

Based on the students’ keen attitude toward the activity and their meaningful questions, I believed this activity went very well. Most students were reluctant to go back to their classroom after the lesson and they were more interested in having a closer look at the photos of the animals on the board. Some of the students were still discussing possible causes of the water contamination. Mr. Tanaka and Mrs. Noda also discussed the photos with their students. Two girls came to talk to Dr. Science (Paul) about a photo of birds after the class. It was surprising to see that they were communicating with him using gestures and a few English words without hesitation. Dr. Science explained the photo to the girls by pointing to the pictures and using gestures. These students were too shy to say ‘Hello’ or directly look Paul in the eye in the early part of this project because of his different physical features, including blue eyes, brown hair, and fair skin. Most of all, the language barrier created a great division. However, many students became more confident and started to understand that communication did not only include language but also physical expressions. I believe that this growing awareness was a direct result of their physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement with drama.

High Expectations

Not all the students enjoyed the Dr. Science activity, some students did not seem to feel satisfied with what they had achieved. There was a short spare moment at the end of the

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31 See Appendix 10 for students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.
lesson so I was able to ask the students what they thought of this activity. A girl in 6-B answered:

*Being a reporter was interesting, but I only recognised the animal names in English and I could not understand all of Dr. Science’s talk because it was in English (16/9/03).*

I sensed her feeling of shame because she did not understand all of Dr. Science’s talk. Some other students nodded slightly to show agreement. I asked the girl to think a little more positively. I suggested that it would be better to think that it was good to recognise many animal names, considering English was a foreign language. I sensed that these students put unnecessary pressure on themselves; a feeling of failure seemed to influence their experience.

Another boy did not like the activity and indicated that his negative response related to not being able to fully understand the English used. In the beginning of the lesson, I told each class to enjoy listening to the sounds, intonation, and rhythm of the English language and enjoy gathering information from posters, gestures, and the facial expressions of Dr. Science. I did not expect that they would understand all the English words. This was not the purpose of the activity. Despite this assurance before the activity, some students still felt that they were being tested on their ability to understand English. Consequently, they felt a sense of failure at the end because they could not understand all of the speech given in English. Having a discussion with the three teachers on this matter, it seemed that the students who put high expectations on themselves tended to be the top students in the class who did their homework well and received higher scores for tests. Their parents also tended to have high expectations of these children as they were highly educated themselves.

### 6.1.4 Thought Tracking

The Year Six students’ improvement and creativity were evident in the ‘Thought Tracking’ activity. Each class revealed another dimension to me. The first class, 6-B
showed their cooperative attitude to each other in class. On the other hand, the 6-A class was not enthusiastic at all and their behaviour in class indicated that they felt obligated to do the activity. I felt that they did not want to participate. The last class, 6-C, seemed responsive.

**Process of the Activity**

There were six small groups in each class and each group was given an animal to portray. I also divided these six groups into three sections. The first section was ‘before drinking’ which meant the two groups had to make a frozen picture of the given animal trying to drink the water in the waterhole. I put down a large blue piece of fabric on the floor to show the first section of the stage. This represented the waterhole.

The second section was ‘drinking’. Animals for this section made a shape in a drinking position. A brown piece of fabric was used for this section to represent the dirty waterhole. The last section was with a black piece of fabric and students presented a frozen picture of animals in the scene - ‘after drinking’ the contaminated water in the waterhole. In the last lesson, all the students had heard about the waterhole disaster from Dr. Science. This activity was to follow up Dr. Science’s story from the animals’ point of views.

When each group presented their frozen picture, I tapped some students on the shoulder to ask questions in English (this tapping on the shoulder meant that the students could come out of their frozen picture position to talk). The questions were: ‘What animal are you?’, ‘What body part are you?’, and ‘What are you thinking now?’ Students at times answered these questions in English, but often they replied in Japanese and I translated their words into English. Then, I asked the audience to repeat after me the translated English words. The 6-B students enjoyed repeating the English words aloud. It was

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32 Frozen Picture “involves students in using their bodies to create an image…that represents how a selected moment or incident might look” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 27)
interesting to note that some students always described their actions rather than the feeling when they were asked the question: ‘What are you thinking now?’ Therefore, the continuity one would expect in a thought tracking activity was occasionally interrupted.

**Level of Engagement**

As soon as the students in the 6-B class were allowed to start their discussion, some students could not wait to demonstrate their ideas to the other members in the group by making an animal shape with their bodies. The large numbers of questions that the students asked of me was evidence of their high level of engagement with the activity. The following conversation transcript shows one of the questions that a student came up with:

Boy 1 (B1): *Mrs. Araki, how does a gorilla drink water?*
Myself (M): *What do you think?*
(B1): .....I know. Like this?

(He stands like a gorilla and his arms are handing down. He moves his right hand to pretend to scoop up water to his mouth.)

(M): *You look very much like a gorilla. Are there any other ways?*
Girl 1 (G1): *Gorillas can drink water without using their hands. They can put their heads close to the water and drink it.*
(M): *You have at least two ideas so far. You can put more ideas or you can choose one from these two ideas and start making a mime.*
*Hurry now, you do not have much time left.*

This group was allocated to the second section of ‘drinking’ water. When they performed their frozen picture, their gorilla was drinking water by putting his face close to the water. Five students in this group made a successful gorilla frozen picture after the group discussion. I also witnessed many other creative frozen pictures in this class. One particular group showed an interesting mime of a pelican catching a fish in the waterhole but the fish was also dying because of the water contamination.
Enthusiasm of 6-B

Prior to this, I could not have imagined the students in 6-B to co-operating with each other so spontaneously. The Thought Tracking activity presented an opportunity for them to have physical contact with other classmates when they made shapes of the animals drinking the contaminated water. In this activity, the students could not avoid touching each other when making a frozen picture as a group. This seemed to bring them closer to each other, given that they do not have much opportunity to have close physical contact with others such as kissing, hugging, or sometimes touching in public in Japan. In Japanese society, it is not welcomed to show any intimacy in public, although nowadays it is becoming a little more relaxed. In chapter five, I described this class as shy and awkward and the students as lacking respect for others. However, when they participated in the Thought Tracking activity, they made the creative shape of an animal as a group (frozen picture) and shared their thoughts about being in the role of an animal.

Students’ Understanding of Drama Concepts

There were some occasions where students did not fully understand the concepts of drama. The first occasion was seen in the discussion time. Most students were making movements, not frozen pictures of a scene relating to animals drinking water. I had to remind them several times that they needed to create a frozen picture. Another incident was when they presented their frozen picture and they showed their backs to the audience. I kept reminding them to think where the audience was. This suggested to me that their understanding of the relationship between audience and actors was not well developed.

Giggling was a natural reaction from these students; especially when they presented their drama work, they often could not help themselves giggling. In this activity, I kept telling the groups that ‘freeze’ meant no giggling. Slowly, they stopped giggling and increased
their concentration and focus in the class to show their frozen picture presentations of how the animals suffered from drinking the dirty water.

6.1.5 Lethargic attitudes in class, 6-A

The 6-A students’ attitudes in the Thought Tracking activity puzzled me. The students were again chatty and less focused. I expressed my concern about this class in my journal:

I was very exhausted after teaching this class. I tried so hard to encourage them to participate more, but I felt like I was trying to move a huge rock. Was it necessary to move the rock? Did the rock want to stay there and be left alone?” (30/9/03)

Mrs. Abe also encouraged her students out of the class. She wrote in her observation notes:

I told the students to speak up and become more responsive in the Drama-English class. Their reply was that they do not know what to do. When they were in Year Five, last year, they had some English language classes. In the beginning of the every lesson, they played a short game in English or sang an English song. They really enjoyed doing these things again and again. I think that they felt secure because they knew what to do (30/9/03).

I felt that students in 6-A started showing a cautious response to unfamiliar situations. It took a lot longer for them to reveal their feelings, in comparison to the other two classes.

A Sense of Maturity

In the presentation of their frozen picture, with thought tracking at animals’ thoughts, I witnessed some students trying very hard, but at one point they stopped trying altogether.

33 It means “‘Tapping in’ to reveal what is being thought at a point in time” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 128).
The moment I saw them stop trying was ‘the last straw’. I was usually nice and gentle with them but from that moment on I became firm with the class, particularly towards a group of boys who tended to interrupt the class unnecessarily. I told them in Japanese the importance of respecting and appreciating each other’s presentation. Their uncooperative behaviour was rude and such rudeness was not welcome in the class. The students and the teacher, Mrs. Abe, were surprised to see me getting a little firm. After this, they stopped their chatting, but they still did not become spontaneous participants. Regarding the incident, I reflected to myself in my written journal:

Maybe, this class did not like the mime activity much. Their lack of enthusiasm towards the activity might be based on disliking the activity. If so, I wish that they had let me know. Is it too much to ask? They could not express their honest thoughts maybe because of the common educational practice in Japan that students do not generally question what teachers’ ask them to do. As Japanese students get older, they tend not to ask questions of teachers. This would be because some teachers tend to take questions from students as a challenge, or because students do not wish to make fools of themselves in front of others (30/9/03).

In the written questionnaires that I asked all the year six students to complete at the end of the project, some students in 6-A wrote Mime and Thought Tracking activities were their least favourite because: “I did not know how to make a shape” (a girl), “It was embarrassing to do such a thing” (three boys and two girls), and “I did not have enough time” (a girl). These comments suggested that they were becoming more mature and they might have felt the activity was too childish. I regretted that I could not understand and care for their sensitive feelings more during the activity. Although I sensed that some of the students were embarrassed, as the first class had enjoyed it so much, I believed that this class would eventually enjoy the activity as well.

6.1.6 Summary

The Year Six students became more active in their participation and showed their gradual understanding of the concept of drama. This helped me to challenge their ideas and

34 See Appendix 10 for students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.
understanding to create better drama work and to expand their experiences. While 6-B and 6-C were showing great interest and high levels of engagement, the 6-A class’s lack of enthusiasm became more obvious. 6-A’s behaviour became a source of concern during Phase Three.

6.2 Phase Four – We are in charge!!

6.2.1 Creating their first role-play

For many of the children that I had taught in Australian schools, creating role-play was one of the most exciting events in the drama-second/foreign language classes. These Japanese students were the same. Although they had never made a play before, their minds were full of ideas that were ready to be shared with others. Some students were so excited about making the play that they could not contain themselves and they jumped around the room. The students’ positive response to creating their own play overwhelmed me as I expected them to be more hesitant. There were two themes that they worked on: Why did the waterhole become so dirty? and How can we clean up the waterhole?

“Can We Use Them in the Play?”

I prepared many interesting props for the role-play activity. Most of the props that I supplied were from the 100 yen shops ($1 shops), including all kinds of hats, lots of masks, cups, small and large colourful pieces of fabrics, sticks (plastic, bamboo, wood), bottles, raincoats, gloves, mops, sunglasses, reading glasses, and bamboo plates. All the students in the three classes were excited about these props. They were all only ordinary daily items, however they were enough to empower these students. These items became
alive and meaningful to the students. They knew naturally that these could become creative symbols in their role-play.

I went through each prop to introduce them to the students and taught them the English words for these props. At the same time, I asked the students how they could use these items in a scene and what story they could make up by using each prop. I tried to let them see an item from a different perspective. For example, a purple plastic stick was not an ordinary stick. It could be a special stick that might have super natural powers.

Reflective Action within Action Research Cycle I

The 6-B class was usually the first class I taught but due to a school event, the 6-A class came first. I presented all the props to the 6-A students without including their active involvement: they sat on the floor to listen to my explanations and to answer some questions that I, at times, asked them. While the students were discussing their play in small groups, I realised that I might have rushed them a little by explaining the props too much, rather than letting them come up with ideas. Some groups were very creative in using props in a symbolic way, but other groups seemed to be struggling with their own limited ideas. I felt that these students needed to share more ideas among the class: I started considering a different approach for the next two classes.

Instead of only talking to the students and giving them ideas for how to use props in 6-B, I started to ask open questions for them to think about how to use them. The following conversation shows how the 6-B class started to put their ideas together:

Myself (M): *Tell me what really happened to the waterhole? How come it became so dirty?* Remember Dr. Science’s talk. You saw so many animals suffering from the water problem. You, as reporters, wrote notes on the water condition and some of you asked Dr. Science for the cause of the water contamination. I want you think about a reason. Anyone?

(Silence for a minute)

(M): *Let’s start thinking about who was responsible?*
Boy 1 (B1):  
  *I think people.*

(M):  
  *People, a good start. People from where?*

Four or five students:  
  *Tourists!!*

(M):  
  *What did they do?*

Girl 1 (G1):  
  *I know, they threw lots of rubbish so the water got dirty.*

Boy 2 (B2):  
  *Then, all the animals got very angry and attacked the tourists.*

(Students started to get a rhythm of building a story together as a class.)

(M):  
  *That sounds very realistic. Can you picture tourists throwing cans and plastic bags away, and all the animals losing their patience and attacking the tourists. This is a good social issue to discuss. Now, I want you to think how we can clean the waterhole next. Let’s think about a solution. Any suggestion?*

(G1):  
  *Picking up the rubbish in the waterhole.*

(M):  
  *Yes, we could do that. Can you think of any other solutions? Remember I talked about ‘using your imagination’. I have been asking you to use your ‘imagination’ since we started the Drama-English class. Anything can be possible. Let’s share your imagination and have fun together.*

Girl 2 (G2):  
  *A good witch comes and put a spell on the waterhole and it becomes clean.*

(M):  
  *I like that. An unrealistic story is good too.*

Boy 3 (B3):  
  *I’m going back to the reason part, but I think some mad scientists did an experiment and made a poisoned chemical. Then, they decided to throw it away in a jungle before their boss found out. All the animals started dying. One of the bad scientists felt guilty and decided to make some good medicine to clear the poison.*

(M):  
  *That’s another great idea. He’s made two scripts already!*  

This discussion showed that a little guidance could become a trigger for these students to explore their ideas and imaginative thoughts in class. The discussion with the second class was more fulfilling and effective because it challenged their thinking. This was more student-centred learning. I noticed that I had slowly created a more teacher-centred learning environment without realising it. It seemed that teaching in a Japanese school had caused me to slip back into a more typical Japanese educational approach.

**Reflective Action within Action Research Cycle II**

The outcome from the class discussion about how to use the props seemed greater because the students’ minds were stimulated by the discussion. Reflecting on the 6-B class, I recognised another point that I could improve upon, my way of introducing the
props. The props were kept on the floor while I explained each to them in the two previous classes. In the third class, I decided to pass on the props to each group after teaching them the English names. I asked them to come up with one idea as a group on how to use the props in a symbolic way in the play. Each group presented their ideas. One group used two bottles as containers for magic potions. One was pink for good and the other one was dark blue for evil. Another group opened two umbrellas to use as car wheels. When students moved onto a group discussion after presenting their ideas, most groups seemed to be full of ideas already for the play. This class did not take long to report to me their detailed plan for the play.

6.2.2 Presenting their first role-play

I invited the principal and the vice principal to the presentation. I decorated the room with the students’ jungle posters to create a jungle atmosphere. In the middle of the stage, a blue piece of fabric was laid out to represent the waterhole on stage. Each class was divided into eight small groups. The first four groups created a role-play on ‘Why did the waterhole become so dirty?’ The last four groups worked on the theme ‘How can we clean the waterhole?’ All the students were told that they were helping Dr. Science’s research and he was specifically coming back to Japan to discuss the reasons and solutions with them.

Role-Play as a Most Enjoyable Experience

Role-play was the most popular activity in all the three Year Six classes according to the results of the second written questionnaire to the students. Their excitement was evident in some students’ comments after presenting the play. In the process of making the play, each student in the group presented so many ideas: it took a while to decide on the final story and characters. Interestingly, these students showed how much they had

35 See Appendix 10 for students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.
improved in comparison to the earlier stages of the project when they were hesitant about including some classmates. Some students had nothing but praise for the work of others. Several notable comments are as follows: “I really enjoyed watching the play because there were so many characters in the play” (a boy from 6-A); “Four groups made a play on the same theme but none of them were same. That’s amazing” (a boy from 6-C); “I think all the groups made a play which they really wanted to show to the audience” (a girl from 6-C); and “Some groups used a narration that was an excellent idea because it was easy to understand the story” (a girl from 6-B and two boys from 6-C). This positive feedback came naturally and honestly from these students; they were not only able to appreciate the other students’ efforts in creating a play but they had also experienced the hardship of making a play themselves.

Developing a Sense of Actor-Audience Relationship

The remarks that a girl in the 6-C class made in the class discussion was significant:

_We tried so hard to make our play by thinking of how our play will be perceived by others. It was very difficult and challenging but I enjoyed it a lot (14/10/03)._  

She was one of Mrs. Noda’s quiet students who did not say much in class. Her comments provided evidence that these students had started to understand a sense of actor-audience relationship on stage. Considering this was the first time for most students to create and perform in a play, they showed an understanding of what a performance entailed. This understanding was demonstrated in the use of the performance space, the use of narration, and the use of props. The first point, the use of the space, was quite evident in that most groups performed their plays in the middle of the stage facing the audience. They slipped in and out of role according to where they stood, on or off stage.

The use of narrations surprised me because I never mentioned anything about it before. I asked several students where the idea of using narration came from, but they could not
give me a satisfactory reply. One student said that he remembered seeing it somewhere. Others answered that they did not remember. People who became narrators stood at a corner of the stage to participate in the play. This showed their understanding of differentiating actors from narrators. One group used double roles as a character and a narrator in the play. In the middle of the play, two students changed their roles between these two. The students demonstrated effective ways for using props in the play. Some groups used a coloured piece of cloth to show a scene of the waterhole being contaminated. A boy in 6-A came on to the stage as a fairy by spinning a small red umbrella on his head like in the ‘Mary Poppins’ movie. Although there were many other points that I wanted to work on in order to improve their actor-audience relationship, these students demonstrated a good understanding, particularly given that this was their very first performance.

The Use of the English Language in Their Play

In the role-play, I asked them to use at least two English words or phrases per person in their script. Some students came to ask me to translate some words that came to mind in the rehearsals. Other students used words that they had learnt during the project. Overall responses to the use of the English language in the play were unexpected. Half of the students in each class did not include any English words at all. The reason was unclear and the students did not give any concrete answers to this question.

After discussions with the teachers, we thought of several possible reasons. They suggested that it was because the students did not have enough time to practise due to their commitment to the upcoming school concert. They also suggested that they were still not at a level where they could confidently use English words. Perhaps, creating a role-play was quite a challenge so they did not wish to complicate the task further by using some English words. Or maybe they had decided not to take it too seriously. I strongly disagreed with the second reason that they were not at a sufficient level of proficiency. I had told the students to come and ask any questions or ask me to translate
scripts during the breaks and lunchtime. These students were also given English-Japanese and Japanese-English dictionaries. A girl in 6-A regretfully commented in the final class discussion, “I wish that I did my play properly. I did not take it so seriously” (24/2/04). It seemed that her comment represented some students’ attitudes towards Drama-English class as a ‘play time’ in comparison to the other subjects that they studied at school. I sensed how easily an enjoyable class can become an ‘unfocused class’.

There were about four or five students in each class who were experienced in attending schools in English speaking countries for a period of time ranging from six months up to a few years. It surprised me that these students did not take the initiative to help out the other students in using English words. They kept rather quiet about their advanced skills in the English language. At the end of the day, I was invited to the principal’s office to discuss the students. The principal explained about these Kikokushi-jyo (returnee students); he said they often did not wish to stand out in class because of their experience overseas or because of their advanced English language levels. He believed that this related to an old Japanese saying: DERUKUGIWA UTARERU (A nail that sticks up is always hammered back down). In other words, uniformity is more respected than individual opinions in Japan. The returnee students knew this unspoken rule so they behaved at the school accordingly. The principal said that other students, of course, admired these students’ extra skills in the English language and their interesting experiences, but the returnee students knew that they had to adapt themselves back into the Japanese society, which meant trying not to show too much of what they had experienced in other countries. I felt sad that these students decided not to share their advanced language skills but I also understood that there were cultural rules that even children were expected to follow. The principal said:

*How to maintain ethnic culture and what part of the culture we leave and get rid of in this international era are very serious issues. I want these students to share more about what they know in school but obviously kids have their own world and rules that they obey. This is a way of survival for them (14/10/03).*

In contrast, a group in 6-B created an English only play that was very impressive in terms of the use of English language script and the play itself. The members from this group
(two boys and two girls) kept asking me to translate some words that they did not know in English. The words included: ‘help me’, ‘Let’s drink’, ‘Oh,,, not tasty’, and ‘Look over there’. The group tried many ideas to create their play and also selected the appropriate English words.

In the class discussion after the presentation, a girl admired this group’s enormous efforts in creating a play only using the English language while all the other groups used Japanese and English. She said, “I really think that the group did a great job using English. I did not understand the words, but their acting helped me to understand the story” (14/10/03). This girl was the only student who expressed her honest admiration and respect in class. However, others seemed to have something that stopped them from celebrating the group’s efforts. The classmates’ reactions to this group’s performance were unexpected. I expected the other classmates to applaud the group’s performance. Instead, the audience suddenly became awkward. They seemed embarrassed by the group’s excellent performance and great efforts. This seemed to me to relate to the old Japanese saying that the principal mentioned previously. The group was the nail that tried to stick up, but other students were the hammer that struck the nail down by not applauding much.

6.3 Conclusion

Chapter Five and Six have demonstrated that the Year Six students became familiar with the concept of learning the English language using drama activities. At last they came ‘out of their shells’ and revealed deeper layers of themselves through the drama activities. With this growth, I felt that a relationship of trust between them and myself had gradually but steadily been consolidated.

The experience of participating in the Drama-English classes was new and unfamiliar to these students and teachers, however guiding them slowly through this new educational approach helped many students to find unexpected sides to themselves. This discovery
surprised their teachers as well. Mrs. Noda was especially thankful that some of her shy female students became so alive in the Drama-English class. She had tried various ways to encourage them to speak out and voice their opinions in class, but nothing seemed to work effectively. On the contrary, these female students started becoming more active participants in the class performances and group discussions. Mrs. Noda could not imagine them performing in front of the class at all, especially in regards to the role-play.

The students in this project that I shared memorable times with recently became junior high school students. They wear different school uniforms and have become much taller than before. I still meet them on the streets regularly and they all call out my name with warmth. They obviously have fond memories of our interaction together as they are happy to stop and talk to me about their new school life.

The public primary school in which I conducted the project was located near the city centre in Fukuoka, Japan. Consequently, all the students I worked with were ‘city kids’ who were surrounded by concrete buildings. Some students’ parents were highly qualified people living in other parts of Fukuoka who had moved to this area for a better education for their children. Taking these elements into consideration, these students were under enormous pressure to be successful at school. Therefore, on the surface they all seemed to act maturely for their ages and behaved extremely well in class.

Yet, throughout the project they found opportunities to explore and re-discover aspects of themselves, as well as their classmates, which tended to bond the class together. All the teachers mentioned that their students changed throughout the project. It did not just help them to learn the English language but it also encouraged personal growth through discussions and performances. The teachers were very surprised to see their students waving ‘good bye’ from the windows and chasing after Paul (my husband, the language assistant teacher) and me through the corridors. Although there were many occasions when I struggled to understand the students and find the appropriate solution for difficult situations, it was worthwhile in the end as I saw the looks of satisfaction and joy expressed on their faces. It took much longer to prepare them for an introduction to
drama as I experienced their initial resistance, but once I broke through their resistance they became more and more confident in performing and their level of engagement and active participation steadily increased.
Educational drama for Japanese schools

*Improvisation can facilitate the use of conversational language for new speakers of English (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p4).*

7 Introduction

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 project. 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 that decade 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.

Whilst I experienced difficulties adapting to the Japanese school culture in the beginning, it was evident from the 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 Japanese culture, education, school, students, and teachers. The
journey was documented in four different phases as outlined in the previous chapters, and each phase will be analysed in relation to relevant literature in this chapter.

7.1 Phase One Analysis: Class dynamics and teachers’ influence

The first phase involved the introductory stage of the project where all the participants became familiar with each other and each other’s ways. I did not have the luxury of meeting with all the Year Six students beforehand. Their teachers only provided limited information, such as the number of students per class, the duration of each class per week, and the gender of the participating students. Only minimal information was given to me prior to the beginning the project. More useful information that I would have liked to have in advance was information relating to the individual students, any social problems in class, and the relationship between the teachers and students. Giving such personal information to an outsider did not seem to be allowed in that particular school. Yet, they were grateful for my assistance in the teaching of the English language as they could not find as yet an appropriate person to teach the classes.

Principal, teachers, and students at the school all welcomed me teaching English using educational drama and their hospitality was warm and polite. When I explained what educational drama was about to them, they looked very keen to learn the different teaching/learning style. However, it seemed that a thick curtain appeared in front of me and I was not allowed to open each layer without permission. For example, only general information was given to me, not detailed information about the classes prior to the project. The Japanese people’s polite attitude towards outsiders is well described by McConnell (2000) in the following passage:

[Keeping outsiders] at a polite distance rather than socializing [with] them to become part of daily routines is a process at which a majority of Japanese still excel…What the Japanese have done is to meet the guests at the door with a great display of hospitality. Assured that they are only short-term guests, the hosts then focus not on whether [they]
are integrated into [particular social contents] but on whether they are treated hospitably and enjoy their [experience] (p. 272).

Although McConnell (2000) focuses on non-Japanese people living in Japan, my situation in this project as a guest teacher with background experience, knowledge, and education from Australia, in some degree, overlaps with McConnell’s argument about the experiences of non-Japanese people living in Japan.

As I spent more time in the Japanese primary school with the teachers and students, permission to see what was behind each layer of the curtain was gradually given to me; I slowly gained their trust and was accepted by them. During the first phase, I was allowed to open the first few layers of the curtain to find out more about the participants and to receive their initial responses to educational drama in their English language classes.

### 7.1.1 Japan’s recent challenge in education

The Japanese education system can be perceived as unique and seen as strictly structured when reviewed by non-Japanese people. There are some positive and negative aspects of the Japanese educational context. Positive aspects include high academic performance in mathematics and science while the negative aspects include alarming increases in bullying and school ‘refusers’ in recent years. It seems that groups of young people in Japan are trying to raise the alarm about the current education system and the culture in the schools. On the other hand, the majority of Japanese students follow the set curriculum and undertake vast amounts of study aimed at gaining entrance into better higher educational institutions. In an extensive study of educational issues such as bullying and school refusers in Japan, Kawamura (1999) critically analyses characteristics of current students in Japan in that they are becoming more self-centred and are lacking in both communication and social skills.

36 The issue of school refusers has caused great concern to Japan. School refusers are a group of Japanese students who refuse to attend their schools. Kawamura (1999) suggests that there is a relationship between the issues of school refusers and school bullying.
I felt that a number of Year Six students in the project had not yet developed the necessary level of social skills. Some students tended to be more inpatient and to vent their frustrations by hurting others and sometimes themselves (Kawamura, 1999). Perhaps these students were crying out for a change in the current educational structure that is still greatly influenced by the old traditional Japanese educational principles.

Recently, the traditional perspectives that Japanese people have in the educational area have been challenged, and more modern and international practices are expected to be implemented. The Ministry of Education at national and local levels, for example, sends teachers and principals overseas for professional development trips to learn about different teaching and learning methods. Professional development for teaching the English language in Japanese schools require the teachers to go to “English speaking countries to help improve their communicative skills and confidence in using the language, on a combination of two-month, six-month and one-year courses” (Hood, 2001, p. 61). These teachers bring back some ideas from other countries to try out in their schools. Some primary schools now have their classrooms in open space areas that have one side of the square walls removed and voices from other classrooms are easily heard. Typical classrooms in Japanese schools are usually isolated, as each room is divided by thick concrete walls with sliding doors to clearly divide the rooms and the corridor. This type of classroom structure assists in cutting out noise from other classes, and people can only see into the classroom through small windows. Therefore, the idea of using an open-space classroom is innovative in this country.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Japanese education is experiencing a significant change. It is trying to keep a balance between traditional and modern practices whilst facing many issues including bullying, school refusers, and criminal acts by students. Some of the modern practices being implemented are: placing school councillors in each public school to assist individual students; implementing support networks to assist school refusers to come back to school; and introducing more student-centred learning within the new subject in primary schools called Integrated Studies that is designed to
teach students how to become more independent learners. Teaching the English language as part of the Integrated Studies curriculum is also one of the modern pedagogical practices. The Year Six teachers in the project were struggling to keep the balance between both traditional and modern practices. The introduction of the English language curriculum was a great challenge for them.

7.1.2 The case of a primary school in Fukuoka: Teachers’ views on the English language curriculum

Teaching foreign languages, mainly English as a foreign language, is one of the major study areas promoted within Integrated Studies. The guiding principle in teaching English as in Integrated Studies is a more student-centred learning process. Teachers in the public primary school, where I conducted the research project, shared their concerns about how to teach the language using student-centred learning. It was reported in The English Teachers’ Magazine (2004) that other teachers in Japanese primary schools share similar concerns. One problem was that they were required to teach the English language without attending any specialist teacher-training courses or undertaking extra English language classes to polish up their conversational skills. In addition, considering that their background experience in learning English through different learning styles was extremely limited, asking them to become more innovative in their teaching styles and to teach a foreign language without using the teacher-centred learning style seemed overly ambitious.

Mrs. Noda who was the coordinator of the English language curriculum and was also a Year Six teacher, often said that she did not know what and how to teach regarding the English language curriculum; she had no choice but to teach English because of the school’s decision and the requirements set by the Ministry of Education. As a start to the introduction of the English language curriculum in this primary school, Mrs Noda distributed a CD to each class in all grades learning English; in this way all the students
could listen to the CD during lunchtime and could be immersed in the English language.\footnote{See 5.1.3: The third class, 6-C, in Chapter Five, p. 124.}

Another concern that the Year Six teachers expressed during the project was that there was no textbook circulated by the Ministry of Education to guide and assist in the teaching of English. The use of textbooks in Japanese schools is explained by Hendry (2003):

> Teachers have detailed plans to follow, so that children in the same grade may on any particular day be covering the same ground in Hokkaido [an island located in north part of Japan] as they are in Okinawa [an island located in south part of Japan]. The Ministry [of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology] must approve the textbooks, and their writers are occasionally instructed to rewrite whole passages to reflect the image the Ministry…deems appropriate (p. 84).

Authorised textbooks for each academic subject are given to individual teachers and students at primary schools, and the teachers receive authorised teaching guidebooks synchronised to the textbooks. There are some handbooks, not authorised textbooks, to show teachers examples of the English language lessons provided by the Ministry of Education (2001 and 2002). Creating curricular for English language teaching without authorised textbooks provided by the Ministry was a source of concern to the three teachers in the research project. Naoyama (2004) confirms that the same concern causes primary school teachers to be apprehensive.

### 7.1.3 The case of a primary school in Fukuoka: Students’ views on learning the English language

The responses of the Year Six students who participated in the project were divided about learning the English language at primary schools. One idea was to learn English at Eikaiwa (private English language conversation schools). Another idea that these students had was to attend Juku (supplementary schools) after school hours. In both
schools, teaching tends more towards Kao and O’Neill’s (1998) closed/controlled methods. The Drama-English class in which the Year Six students participated with me offered an alternative method, educational drama. Kao and O’Neill describe this type of method as an open communication method. The students in the project participated in a learning environment with qualities of “natural and spontaneous, negotiable, group-oriented, [and] fluency in communication” (Kao and O’Neill, 1998, p. 6).

In the English conversation schools (Eikaiwa), native English language speakers often teach the language through games, songs, and other language activities. In the students’ responses from class discussions during the project, African and Asian oriented teachers who were also native English speakers were hardly mentioned if at all. Students hold stereotyped views about non-Japanese people based on their experiences of meeting people with fair skin, lighter hair colour, and blue or light brown eyes from America. The stereotypical images of non-Japanese people reflected the majority of Japanese people’s opinions about native English language speakers. McConnell (2000) believes that accepting a variety of races and different types of native English speakers as language assistants in Japanese schools challenges the stereotyped Japanese perception of English language speakers.

According to the Year Six students in the project, words and set phrases repeated after the native English speakers were the main exercises in English conversational schools (Eikaiwa) while supplementary schools (Juku) tended to provide textbook-focused learning, and students were mainly asked to memorise certain vocabulary in English. Many students and their parents believed that supplementary schools prepared the students for studying at secondary schools. Hood (2001) discusses the way primary school students attending this type of school learn English as follows:

38 See Figure 3.1 Three categories for drama approaches in second/foreign language classes, in Chapter Three, p. 70.
39 See The views of English language learning in 5.1.5: Students’ impressions of Drama and English language, in Chapter Five, p. 129.
Many elementary school students have been studying English at juku though it had not been a required subject at school. The types of sentences and expressions learnt at these juku are not related to what is learnt at lower secondary school (other than some of the basics), and so it would be wrong to assume that the purpose of such classes is simply to get a head start (p. 59).

In the early sessions of the Drama-English project, each class made a class list of jungle objects both in Japanese and English as a preparatory activity for educational drama. When I presented the list written on a large piece of paper to the students, they suddenly became very tense as they expected me to ask them to memorise all the English words on the list.

I kept reminding them to listen to the sounds of the English words and to try to recognise some, not all of the words on the list. It was vital to tell them that memorising as many words as possible was not required of them in this particular class, and they were not going to be tested on the list. Some of them seemed relieved to hear this (10/6/03) after I assured them that the expectations were different in the Drama-English class. Other students still took this as a challenge, and counted how many words they knew or could memorise. This showed that their attitude towards learning was still heavily reliant on memorising and learning facts.

The study patterns for learning a foreign language have not changed much since the Chinese language was studied as the first official foreign language in Japan. In the last class discussion (24/12/03), a boy expressed his opinion that his impression of studying English language was like studying Kanji (Chinese characters). Therefore, experiencing educational drama was an interesting way of learning a language to the boy. The Ministry of Education explains the historical influence of Chinese language in Japan:

Historically speaking, Chinese was the most influential foreign language in Japan. The Japanese writing system is based on Kanji (Chinese characters) and a great variety of expressions make use of them. Though Japanized in many ways, these characters form an essential part of the Japanese language (2002, p. 1).

These Year Six students in the project memorised a set amount of Chinese characters in class and were tested on these characters every week. Therefore, the boy believed that
repeatedly writing the required English words on paper until he memorised the words perfectly was the best way to learn the language, just as his older brother did at his secondary school. Some other students nodded when he gave his opinion. This indicated that the purpose of learning English for communication did not occur to them. The main purpose of learning the language for these students seemed to be only to pass exams and produce high academic results. Mrs. Noda explained that most students in Year Six attended supplementary schools (*Juku*) after school hours to prepare themselves for entrance exams for well-known private secondary schools or for entering the nearest public school. These students already knew what kind of study patterns were expected in the secondary schools, that is, the fact-based learning based on their memorisation skills.

### 7.1.4 Japanese students’ and teachers’ impressions of drama

The participants in the project, both teachers and students, associated drama with TV dramas. It was not surprising that they did not name traditional Japanese theatre (*Kabuki, No, and Kyogen*) as forms of drama because these types of theatre were less popular.

Carroll (1997) discusses the influences of TV drama over young people in Australia arguing that it became “the predominant way in which most people in Australia conceptualise and shape their understanding about role behaviour in society” (p. 8). This could be applied to Japanese people and the modern Japanese society, as Carroll says this “trend is evident not only in Australia” (p. 8). Gossmann (2000) explains that TV influences the development of gender roles in individuals. Both Carroll and Gossmann believe that TV drama helps to shape an individual’s identity. Characters in these dramas tend to become role models to the viewers (Gossmann, 2000). According to Carroll (1997):

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40 See *The impressions of Drama*, in 5.1.5: Students’ impressions of Drama and English language, in Chapter Five, p. 129.

41 From the class discussions with the Year Six classes, December 24, 2003.
It was the authenticity of the role response that they related to, the interpersonal relationships of the roles, the interactions and the consequences for the characters were important. They used these roles in an experiential sense to construct composite personas as a guide to behaviour in their own lives (p. 10).

The primary school students in this project were also influenced by Japanese TV dramas; most students could name the current popular TV programs straight away and remember the main characters’ names, genders, and personalities. During the class discussions, some students even shouted out popular phrases that the main characters often used in the stories. This particular form of drama, TV drama, greatly influenced these students’ understanding.

7.1.5 The very first experience of Educational drama

As the Year Six students’ understanding of drama was limited to the form of TV drama, participating in educational drama was a new challenge for these students. Although Wagner (1998) says that children “bring with them to the classroom the universal human ability to play, to behave “as if” [and] many children spontaneously engage in such dramatic play” (p. 9), the students in the project, who were aged eleven or twelve and had a developing sense of maturity, were not willing to share their “universal human ability” particularly in the early stage of the project, Phase One. In the beginning, they seemed to be hesitant about the concept of drama.

In primary schools in Japan teachers allow “the force of peer pressure to play a strong contributory part” (Hendry, 2003, p. 85). This explains why the Year Six students seemed to respond in a similar manner and that they were hesitant to take the initiative to move around and looked at each other when they were asked to walk around the room to practise the rules of drama.

42 From the class discussion with the 6-A class, December 24, 2003.
43 See The influences of a class clown in 5.1.1: The first meeting with class 6-B, in Chapter Five, 116.
The attitude of Japanese students quietly observing others and only then participating in activities was a common feature of these students. Hendry (2003) states the common characteristic of Japanese students around this age is that they are “aware of differences of ability, but these are played down, or channelled into a group benefit, and competition between individual children is not encouraged at this stage” (p. 85). Thus, at this first phase of the project, instead of getting the individuals’ attentions, it was vital to draw upon the interests of each class as a whole in the Drama-English activities.

I could have taken another approach that involved a quieter drama activity instead of asking the students to do a physical activity before they had become used to me. A quieter drama activity related to *The Waterhole* story could have included showing a photo of wild animals and narrating a story about these animals in the photo, and presenting a short play or mime to show the importance of water to humans and animals.

The teaching decision I made, however, was to introduce the rules for drama activity as the very first activity. I saw this as vital because students “can’t create an alternative world unless they stay within an agreed paradigm” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 14). This activity also involved English words relating to movements, such as freeze, sit down, stand up, walk, and space⁴⁴. Ewing and Simons (2004) stress that rules are “accompanied by a high degree of concentration or absorption” (p. 14).

Through this introductory activity involving teaching the students the basic rules of drama, they experienced learning the English language through movement. As many students commented at the end of the class, this type of learning with the use of body language was very interesting; they did not feel like they were studying the English language, but they were actually able to remember most of the action words that they learnt from practising the rules (3/6/03). Ewing and Simons (2004) explain how

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⁴⁴ The term ‘space’ has a specific meaning in educational drama activities that participants find their own space in a room. They need to find a space where they cannot physically touch each other.
movements can influence awareness of learners’ environment and physical relationship with others.

In order to become more aware of how actions convey meanings, we need to understand how our bodies are located, both in the space immediately surrounding us and in larger space shared by the group. Students can develop their awareness of space by exploring their own personal space (p. 24).

In the rule activity with the Year Six students, I eventually introduced more action words: words describing speed in action, including ‘walk slowly’, ‘crawl faster’, and ‘stand up slowly’. For keeping rhythm and indicating a break between the different movements, a rhythmical piece of music from a CD and the use of a tambourine were helpful in creating effective sounds and pitch.

Exploring different levels of physical movement such as high, middle, and low as well as keeping rhythm throughout the activity contributed to the students’ ability to “become aware of the infinite ways bodies are used to communicate ideas, emotions or events” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 25). For beginners, like these students in educational drama, this consequently became an exciting introduction to further educational drama activities. Moreover, considering these students’ ideas of learning the language was limited. This way of integrating body movements into learning the language was innovative and motivating.

7.1.6 Different expectations of Drama focused learning

Expectations in the Drama-English class differed from the ones that these Japanese students had in their daily classes. Winston and Tandy (2001) stress the success of educational drama in the classroom depends on students “knowing what is expected of them” (p. x). Considering that these students’ and teachers’ impressions of drama was limited to TV drama, it was a natural reaction for the students to be confused in their

45 See 7.1.3: The case of a primary school in Fukuoka: students’ voice on learning the English language, in this chapter, Chapter Seven, p. 190.
expectations of this type of learning. I constantly reminded them that their initiative and active participation were fundamental to the Drama-English classes: it differed from TV drama and other academic classes in their school that involved passive participation.

A minority of people mention drama activities as the cause of “embarrassment, fear, or even terror…[and] these anxieties can be seen to relate…to their experiences as children at the hands of insensitive teachers…of drama” (Winston and Tandy, 2001, p. v). Reflecting upon my emotional stages in the early lessons with the Year Six students, I was very nervous and unsure about how these students would respond to educational drama and how well the project would be accepted by both the school and teachers. Perhaps, my feelings of anxiety and uncertainty may have been sensed by these participants.

My experience of having a Japanese education up until the age of eighteen did not help to ease my anxiety. The lack of previous meetings with teachers or students and minimum visits to the school beforehand also increased my concerns. My experience of living in Australia for the last ten years, away from Japan, contributed to my becoming less sensitive to Japanese educational ethics and less effective in dealing with the structured educational setting of Japan. Dealing with Mr. Tanaka’s question about recommended ways to organise the students’ seating positions in the first class was an example of my insensitivity towards the structured Japanese way

7.1.7 Summary of the Phase One Analysis

Due to their hesitation and concerns about the unfamiliar learning style, the Year Six students in Phase One showed some resistance. Within the chaotic situation at the early stages of the project, all the participants including myself put much effort into trying to understand each other and to meet each other’s expectations so that we could reach an amicable and comfortable position.

46 See 5.1.1: The first meeting with class, 6-B, in Chapter Five, p. 116.
7.2 Phase Two Analysis: Drama activities as challenge

The Year Six students and teachers started to slowly show their understanding of learning the English language through educational drama in Phase Two. They still hesitated and felt awkward about some activities, however they seemed quicker to move on to other tasks and more confident in seeking help when they needed it. In the phase two analysis, I will focus on how the students and teachers responded to some educational drama activities. Analytical and critical explanations of their responses will be presented.

7.2.1 The students’ level of understanding

As the teacher of the Drama-English classes, it was a difficult task to know how to measure the students’ understanding of English and their concepts of drama. From the answers in the written questionnaires, I was able to ascertain that the English language levels of the majority of these students were at the beginners level, although a few students in each class had a more advanced level of language understanding because of their prior experience and knowledge gained from living in English speaking countries.

Another challenging task was to understand how much these students would comprehend and accept the concept of drama, given that both students and teachers had never experienced this type of learning before. Their ages, between eleven and twelve, were also a crucial factor to consider, as they required clear explanations and reasons for tasks and activities. Just telling them to enjoy moving their bodies, participating in drama activities, and having fun with unexpected outcomes, did not satisfy their needs. They needed an explanation about why they were required to participate in the activities, where they would go after the activity, what they were expected to do, and how they would be evaluated. They were not used to taking initiatives in their learning. In other words, many students were not ready for ‘surprises’ in drama. Winston (2004) says students

47 See Appendix 7 for students’ answer to the first questionnaire, p. 265.
enjoy drama because they meet various surprises throughout the journey, however the participants in this project took a while to be ready for these surprises.

### 7.2.2 Games in drama

The use of games in the Drama-English project played an important role. Games helped the students to prepare for learning the English language and for engaging with the drama activities. Through observing their behaviour in the games, I was able to see the nature of these students. Their participation in the games highlighted how they interacted with other students and how they constructed small groups. This was an opportunity to observe their level of negotiation skills. Winston and Tandy (2001) indicate that games can help students “develop group sensitivity, encourage social coherence, [and] enhance speaking and listening skills” (p. 1). Both games and drama share common characteristics. They are both based on “the human potential for play”, are structured around “rules and conventions”, and “forms of emotion and physical engagement” (p. 2). According to Winston and Tandy (2001), the most important common element is that “space, time, people and actions gain symbolic meaning in games and in drama” (Winston and Tandy, 2001, p. 2).

The Numbers Game that I used in the project incorporated many of the characteristics mentioned above\(^{48}\). This game was an enjoyable activity that students participated in with excitement\(^{49}\). The rules and procedures of the game were fully explained to the students beforehand. Each student was given a number from one to ten and their number represented a role that they had to take in the game. They acted according to the number given, in order to find their own number group at the end: each given number became the individual student’s identity while they were participating in the game. The game also involved the students’ doing physical movements such as walking around the room, being in a frozen position when they heard the sound of the tambourine, and using the

\(^{48}\) See 5.2.1: The numbers game, for the reactions of the students, in Chapter Five, p. 133.
\(^{49}\) See Appendix 10 for students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.
appropriate body language when meeting others. The emotional engagement in the game was for the students to deal with rejection and acceptance from others when they tried to find an appropriate number group. Thus, this numbers game was an appropriate introductory activity to educational drama.

7.2.3 Bullying and social problems in the classroom

Winston and Tandy characterise a game in drama as a tool to encourage “social coherence”; the numbers game with the Year Six students revealed their level of social interaction. These students were at a sensitive age with regards to the opposite gender and they showed some resistance in cooperating with the opposite gender groups while playing the game. This resistance was seen from the beginning of the project, and the division between the different genders in the classroom was clearly shown in this activity. As these students developed more understanding of the concept of game, they realised that they required cooperation from each individual and the whole class. They eventually began to interact with others of the opposite gender.

Another social problem arose during the numbers game in 6-C where a couple of students were excluded from the game. The classroom teacher of the 6-C class, Mrs. Noda, explained class bullying had occurred towards these particular students since the beginning of the year and her class had discussions on several occasions about this problem. In particular, class bullying towards a boy with a mild learning problem, Shiitano-kun, became a serious class problem. He was also one of the students who was excluded from the game.

Morita and Kiyonaga (1997), Asahishinbun Shakaibu (1999), Kawamura (1999), Maejima (2003), and Usui, Ito, and Morita (2004) report that serious situations of bullying have been seen in Japanese schools. Maejima (2003) suggests several reasons for the increased bullying in the Japanese school setting; these include pressures from society and parents to perform well academically; decreased play-time and safe
playgrounds after school hours; and the lack of adequate strategies for preventing bullying. Hendry (2003) focuses on a myth in Japan that giving too much free time for children is thought “to be dangerous” (p. 83). Hendry (2003) fails to explain in what regard giving free time is ‘dangerous’ and how much free time is considered ‘too much’. However, it is true that there are less children playing outside and more students spending their after school hours attending Juku (supplementary schools) in order to study more (Kawamura, 1999). Usui, Ito, and Morita (2004) believe that the causes and nature of bullying in Japanese schools vary in that each bullying case is individual. As a result, it is problematic to clearly identify the main cause or solution for this complex social issue.

Bullying in Japanese schools represents a serious social problem (Maejima, 2003). Recently, increased unemployment rates and decreased quality of working conditions have become a serious social problem in Japan. As a consequence, there have been changes to family lifestyles and financial situations in many households. The well being of children in Japan is, at times, under threat. Stress and frustration in children also tend to appear in the form of bullying, school refusal, and distracting the class in school (Morita and Kiyonaga, 1997; Kawamura, 1999; Maejima, 2003; and Usui, Ito, and Morita, 2004). Lewis (1995), Morita and Kiyonaga (1997), and Maejima (2003) state that exclusion and bullying by classmates can trigger a motivation for desperate acts including, suicide and harming classmates and teachers.

The students who participated in the project were in Year 6, which is a very sensitive age as it is the final year of primary school. This is a crucial year in which some students feel extra pressure to pass entrance exams for entry into the private junior high schools, and many students have concerns about entering junior high school. The uncertainty of entering junior high school can bring additional stress to students and can result in a higher incidence of bullying at this grade level (Asahishinnbun Shakaibu, 2001). In their study of bullying situations in three nations including Japan, England, and Holland, Usui, Ito, and Morita (2004) conclude that the number of students in Year Six who try to stop bullying in Japanese schools drops dramatically, and a majority of students become silent observers of bullying. The Year Six students that I worked with also shared similar
situations. Most classmates recognised that a particular boy was ignored and bullied but there were no students in the class who tried to stop what was happening. The majority of the class became silent observers of the bullying incident.\(^{50}\)

After the incident of exclusion towards a few classmates, bullying in the 6-C class became less obvious and students’ efforts to cooperate with each other more in the drama activities were often seen. This was most likely because the 6-C teacher, Mrs. Noda, spent time with the students discussing the problem in her classroom. Mrs. Noda and I discussed and evaluated the incident and realised the need for more sensitive ways to organise groups for activities. In future activities, we decided to control the structuring of the groups until the students became more independent and supportive towards each other.

### 7.2.4 Making jungle posters

Another preparatory activity, jungle poster making, was introduced. Miller and Saxton (2004) say these ‘non-drama bits’ are necessary to construct a fictional world (p. 8). Making jungle posters from an animal’s perspective was a challenging task for the students. Asking participants to draw a poster ‘in role’ is one of the common warm-up activities that drama educators use, as this is an effective way for the participants to enter into an imaginary world. Since the poster making activity is used as a warm-up activity, it usually takes about ten to fifteen minutes, or up to one lesson for all participants to complete the task.

In the public primary school in Japan where I conducted the project, it was unexpected that the Year Six students would take three whole lessons to complete the posters in their small groups. The paper for the poster was a large piece of ‘butcher’s paper’. Mr. Tanaka, the teacher of the 6-B class, suggested afterwards that the paper was perhaps too

\(^{50}\) See Class bullying in 6-C in 5.2.1: The numbers game, in Chapter Five, p. 133.
large for the students to draw on. However, I felt that the size of the paper was a very minor factor.

The cautious nature of the students was noted on many occasions throughout the project. In the poster making, almost everyone grabbed only pencils, not the supplied thick coloured pens. They were used to making very neat posters in other class activities and always starting the first draft with just pencils. For the jungle poster activity, the students all started drawing the poster title, ‘Jungle’, and started filling in the edges of the poster\(^{51}\). Peer pressure from classmates seemed to play an important role among these students. Until someone started to draw on the paper, most students talked with each other or waited for others to start doing something. A few groups in each class expressed their concern about not knowing how to draw the poster in role. Some students in these groups said that they did not know what was expected of them in this particular activity. Others were not willing to share their imagination and ideas because they felt embarrassed revealing their inner thoughts with others in the group.

Although I made a list of the objects and animals that were related to the jungle with the students, it was not enough to provide a strong image or ‘common belief’ to assist them in starting to draw their posters confidently. Perhaps, I could have taken more time to build up their belief in class. O’Toole and Dunn (2002) believe that building belief takes time through the students participating in dramatic and non-dramatic activities. “It is a curious condition of drama that the ‘dramatic’ section may not actually take nearly as long as the essential building of belief that precedes it” (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 6). The jungle poster making activity was considered part of the building belief process for the later drama activities; however a smaller scale ‘building belief’\(^{52}\) was required to enable the students to complete the poster making activity.

\(^{51}\) See Appendix 8 for the photos of their posters at the early stages, p. 269.
\(^{52}\) This means that the participants need to build a common belief in the dramatic context; “all the participants need to suspend their disbelief, simultaneously, for the game of drama even to happen” (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 4).
7.2.5 The use of the Japanese small group system (Han)

The structure of small groups that I used for the poster making is one of the key characteristics of the Japanese education system (Lewis, 1995; Stevenson, 1998; White, 1998; and Hendry, 2003). Japanese educational principles allow “much of the discipline of the group to be generated by the pressure of the peer group” (Hendry, 2003, p. 54). Cummings (1980) who wrote about Japanese primary schools explains that Japanese teachers’ main aim is to “develop whole people, rather than some narrow aspect of individual potential” (p. 104). This educational principle led to the construction of small group systems within the classroom. The structure of the small group system is called han\(^{53}\). Stevenson (1998, p. 109) describes the han system in this way:

> Han are constituted to represent the full range of achievement in the classroom and are purposely constructed to include fast learners as well as slow learners. Other characteristics, such as the number of boys and girls and the shyness and outgoingness of children, may at times guide the formation of the han, but the central criterion is that each [han] includes children with diverse rates of learning…Members of the han engage in special activities – such as serving lunch to their classmates – they eat together, and they work or study together on certain assignments or problems. This close interaction with other classmates strengthens each child’s sense of group membership.

Lewis (1995) points out a negative outcome of this sub-group system. If some members of a han group are unfriendly and uncooperative, the experience of the sub-group can easily be associated with negative outcomes both academically and socially. Another negative outcome comes from respecting group harmony to the point where certain individual differences are not welcome; innovative ideas and individual opinions are not admired and might be individually suppressed. This peer group pressure can work both in a positive and negative way depending on the group dynamics and individual situation.

Considering the Year Six students’ sensitive nature and this peer group system, their hesitant reactions towards the poster making activity were understandable. If I used the same han group as the students’ groups in their own classroom, it might have been less

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\(^{53}\) See 2.1.4: Japanese primary school education, in Chapter Two, p. 24.
awkward because they would have been used to the other members of their group through already participating in school activities together. However, for the poster making activity, I created new groups by asking them to draw animal cards from a box.

After the project Mr. Tanaka shared his concerns in his final interview (25/12/03). He was very worried about the way I constructed the poster-making groups by randomly drawing animal cards. His concern was that some students who were bullied previously ended up with the bullies in the same group. “I would never put these students together in the same group but they surprisingly began talking to each other again while they were participating in the poster-making activity”\textsuperscript{54}. Due to my ignorance of the class dynamics, and Mr. Tanaka’s reluctance to share this knowledge with me, I divided the class into new and interesting han groups that were both productive and constructive to the students and the teacher. I believe, however, it was only luck that the outcome was positive. This was why I felt a strong need for exchanging more detailed information about students prior to the project, in order to prevent unnecessary problems.

7.2.6 Action research cycles as a guide for the poster making activity

Another reason for the Year Six students not being able to comprehend the task for the poster making activity was that they had to draw the jungle poster in the role of animals. My struggle in trying to teach the students to comprehend the main task, to draw from the animals’ points of view, was described in Chapter Five\textsuperscript{55}. In this section, I described my trial of different teaching approaches that allowed the students to understand that objects such as trees and pen cases could be seen very differently based on dimensional relationship. My aim was for the students to understand the concept of different visual perspectives in objects and incidents.

\textsuperscript{54} From the interview with Mr. Tanaka, December 25, 2003.
\textsuperscript{55} See 5.2.3: Reflective action within action research cycle, in Chapter Five, p. 141.
In order to introduce a new way of teaching the concept of special and dimensional relationships in drama, an action research cycle was used in the sequential order of: planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating. However, in the middle of the process of applying this cycle, many questions arose regarding the action research method that I never thought of before. I found that an action research cycle is not as neat as it is often claimed in the literature. Taylor (1998) explains that “what action research doesn’t provide…is an understanding of the intricate and messy happenings that occur at the moment in which action research is being carried out” (p. 217-8). As a guideline the action research model was practical, however this method was much more complicated when I actually used it for the project with the Year Six students in Japan.

One of the complexities was “[w]hile action research provides a useful model for how to reflect on action, it says little about how to reflect in action” (Taylor, 1998, p. 218). Taking two roles: as a teacher and researcher, I recognised myself constantly reflecting and evaluating my actions, words, and approaches to the students while I was actually in action. Liu (2002) summarises Kao’s teacher-researcher study (1994) that used drama in a second language classroom in Taiwan as requiring “thorough preparation before, careful observation during, and constant evaluation after the practice” (p. 63).

In the Drama-English project with the Japanese Year Six students, my mind was always busy because I was involved in this project as a participatory researcher. The characteristics of an action researcher as a teacher-researcher can be advantageous in many ways because insiders can directly influence the process, however there is a danger that you can lose yourself within the action. Your position of being an insider does not provide you with much distance to reflect and analyse while you are in the action. McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003, p. 12) stress the importance of monitoring your own actions by watching previous lessons recorded on audio and video tapes, keeping your own records in writing afterwards, and asking other teachers to make notes as well. In other words, logical and critical reflections happen after the action, not during. Through actually implementing the action research, I felt a need to reflect on actions while the action was happening.
When action research is used as a research methodology, it is often recommended to have co-researchers who also share similar concerns. I had three teachers in Year Six who observed the lessons throughout the project and gave critical feedback for each lesson in their written notes. However, before I became an insider researcher, I was an outsider to this school community. I came in to the school as a guest teacher to teach English as a foreign language using educational drama. Consequently, it was a little difficult to receive open and honest critique from the teachers. Another problematic element was that these teachers did not have any concept of educational drama particularly as a method of language learning. Although these teachers and I shared the same concerns that English language education in Japanese primary schools needed improvement, particularly in its teaching methodology, I felt that I did not have any co-teacher-researchers, who could exchange ideas and reflect on actions thoroughly and critically with me on a daily basis at the school.

7.2.7 Communicating using bodies

The next drama activity after the game and poster making was mime. Most Year Six students engaged in these mime activities for the first time. They made mimes of jungle animals in pairs and small groups. Ewing and Simons define mime as “a more disciplined, exaggerated form of movement with the specific intention of conveying meaning to an outside observer…[It] is best understood as the use of the body to explore or communicate an idea, concept, emotion or story” (2004, p. 25).

The students in Year Six carefully discussed the various ways of using their bodies for the mime in order to create their image of the animal I had given to them. They also closely observed how others put their ideas together, and then they complemented on and also borrowed some of the ideas used by other groups to improve their own mime. Through discussing possibilities and observing others’ mime, it was clear that they were exploring how they could communicate nonverbally. “It gives opportunities for representing actions or emotions precisely and imaginatively, with the stress either on
exploring or communicating them” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 26). By this stage in the project, the students seemed less embarrassed about participating in the activities with other classmates who were of the opposite gender and/or with whom they did not get on well before. They became more aware of the importance of cooperation with each other to create a successful drama work.

Although their awareness was increasing, the mime activity with the 6-A class was not very successful because of their lower engagement with the task than the other two classes. The key feature of a successful mime activity “requires both actors and audience to suspend their belief and accept the illusion being created” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 27). In the audience of 6-A, a group of boys decided not to accept or participate in the imaginary world created by the other classmates. As a result, the actors slowly started losing their focus. Drama activities can reflect the state of students’ minds, the class dynamics, and their level of engagement at a particular moment in time.

7.2.8 Summary of the Phase Two Analysis

Most students gradually started to understand the concept of educational drama activities through participating in introductory activities such as games, poster making, and mime activities. This helped them to enjoy the new learning experience more fully. Emotional conflicts and hierarchical relationships among classmates also rose to the surface in each class. The hidden dynamics of the three classes differed from my first impression of each class.

Phase Two was a testing period for all the participants, including myself. In other words, this was an opportunity for the students to show their Ura side (hidden face/true feeling) after they had only shown their Omote side (front face/public feeling) in the beginning of the project. For the teachers, it was also an opportunity to see how I dealt with the students’ Ura side in the classroom, especially when problems arose. I felt that I demonstrated my abilities as a teacher and drew out the potential of these students by
trying various ways to introduce new tasks and giving them opportunities to discuss their ideas with me as well as with other classmates. Through this phase, I felt the students, myself, and the teachers became closer.

7.3 Phase Three Analysis: Exploring the ‘Waterhole’

Phase Three was, in a sense, a real starting point for all the participants to fully express themselves in drama. They enjoyed creating drama work and experienced the English language being used in the meaningful contexts that educational drama offered. In the previous phases, the students had a mental block about participating freely and independently, and they also felt a little awkward with the unfamiliar learning style. These obstacles seemed to have been overcome. Hence, I started witnessing the individual characteristics of each class and the students. The summer break between Phase Two and Three also gave an opportunity for all the participants to reflect on and evaluate the first half of the project.

7.3.1 Outside the Drama-English class

Students and teachers who were in the project showed a different face outside the Drama-English class. During the summer holidays and lunchtimes at the school with each class, I was able to observe and interact with the students on a more personal level. This personal interaction helped me to build up a more solid trust with the students and teachers.

7.3.2 Classroom management in a Japanese school

There were about thirty-five students in each Year Six class. All thirty-five students had their own desk and chair that was a suitable size according to their height. Hendry (2003)
describes the characteristic of Japanese classroom as follows. “A ‘homeroom’ class is perceived as a group of equals throughout the system, with duties and privileges being shared out as fairly as possible” (p. 85). Many authors like Hendry (2003) and White (1998) agree that Japanese primary schools are based on the idea of equality and harmony, rather than on individuals’ self-interests. Individuality and differences in abilities are accepted as long as these factors do not interrupt the harmony of a class or the small groups called han. The ideal management of the Japanese class for teachers is stated below using a metaphor of a Japanese bird:

Teachers often describe their work by telling the story of the cormorants, long-necked black birds that can be trained to dive for fish. Traditional cormorant fishermen owned flocks of such birds. Each bird was tied by a long cord held by the fisherman. If he had ten or fifteen birds, his handful of leashes would be hard to manage. While carefully keeping the leashes from tangling up, he had to handle each bird separately, even while minding the whole flock. This is the ideal classroom management mode: inducing harmony and paying close attention to the individual child (White, 1998, p. 90).

All the Year Six teachers had various ways to manage their classes. Mrs. Noda in the 6-C class was rather strict in her management skills and seemed to hold high expectations of her students in terms of their attitude towards learning, self-growth, and self-discipline. She seemed to expect maximum improvement in each individual student while the class harmony was also kept in order. Her management style could be considered as the traditional Japanese approach.

Mrs. Abe in 6-A took the opposite approach in that she seemed to respect the individual’s interests more, rather than strictly disciplining her students and keeping equality in the class. Therefore, Mrs. Abe’s and Mrs. Noda’s approaches were opposite to each other and seemed extreme in both ways. In comparison with these two female teachers, the third teacher, Mr. Tanaka, seemed to keep appropriate control and distance with the students.

56 See Invitation to school lunch in 6.1.1: Outside the Drama-English classes, in Chapter Six, p. 159.
7.3.3 The system of a daily helper

Having a daily helper in Japanese class is part of a well-organised system designed to manage such a large class. It is used in almost every primary school in Japan. The system had been used since my childhood as well as my parents’ childhood. The daily helper is one of the monitors in the Toban (monitor) system. In the 6-C class, Yamano-san was the daily helper on the day that I was invited to have lunch with the class. White (1998) explains the Toban (monitor) system: the daily helper is the leader of the class. “The method of selection and the length of the term vary greatly from school to school. The children chosen to be [a daily helper] and other class officers are often given [preferential treatment] by virtue of their academic ranking, meaning that social responsibility and personal success are strongly connected…[The daily helper] helps organize class outings, skits, and other events” (White, 1998, p. 100). Some classes take different approaches in choosing the helper, for example, some simply select them in alphabetical order. Other jobs for a daily helper include leading meetings and class discussions, evaluating other classmates’ behaviours, keeping the class quiet, and discussing class problems with the teacher (Lewis, 1995, p. 106). The existence of monitors, particularly the daily helper seems to help Japanese teachers to manage a large class more efficiently. This system also teaches students both the pleasure and hardship of responsibility, and provides an opportunity to develop their skills in leadership.

7.3.4 School lunch

School lunches are provided daily in most of the public primary schools throughout Japan. According to the school principal where I was teaching, the lunch costs about 200 yen per day. It was about AU $2.40 (AU $1 = 80 yen). A monthly amount of 4,000 yen was collected from the parents. The monitor system was also used for organising the
school lunch and using the lunchtime effectively. In the school, each *han* (monitor group) took the role of lunch monitors for a week. During the lunch monitor week, all the members of the allocated *han* group wore white hats and aprons that were supplied by the school. They also had to wear a cotton mask to cover their mouths. Each student brought the cotton masks from home for the lunch monitor week. On the Friday of the monitor week, all the lunch monitors took their hats and aprons home to be washed and then they passed them on to members of the next lunch monitor group the following Monday.

The lunch monitors’ job was to line up and to go to the school kitchen to pick up the lunches for their class. When I had lunch with the 6-C class, the lunch monitors carried one large sized container of rice, one large soup pot, one small salad bowl, lunch plates in an aluminium basket, and a large tray of small individual milk cartons to share among the class. Once they arrived in their classroom, some members started to serve out the lunch onto the plates and bowls and others started to take the lunches to each student’s table. Their jobs did not finish at this point. Their last job was to take all the empty containers, pots, and plates back to the school kitchen after all the students and the teacher had finished eating their lunch. One of the members was left behind to clean the serving table in the classroom. Then, all the lunch monitors were allowed to go outside and play.

These students did not seem to complain about doing all the work at lunchtime. All the students in the class took their weekly turn to do the lunch monitoring duty, “not because they were well behaved or able [to] but simply because they were members of the class” (Lewis, 1995, p. 105). Cummings’ (1980)58 explanation of the monitor system in Japanese schools is that participation in the monitor system is part of moral education. The educational principles behind this are that everyone in the school community must equally share responsibilities to maintain the school well. The equal responsibilities include lunch monitoring as well as the dirty work of daily cleaning the classrooms and the school corridors.

58 Cited by Hendry (2003).
7.3.5 Drama as a motivational tool for language learning

The teachers and I noted the students’ eagerness to learn in the Drama-English classes. The trust among the students had also grown. Both the students and myself were ready to move onto another level of learning. Through observing the students’ positive responses and the excitement on their faces when they participated in the various activities, I came to the conclusion that educational drama could motivate their English language learning.

Throughout the project, I found that ‘dramatic tension’ was one of the key structural elements in drama, which assisted in motivating the students in their learning of the English language. Dramatic tension occurred in the project through drawing a poster of the current jungle from an animal’s perspectives; presenting the poster in the annual animal international meeting; being invited to a media conference with Dr. Science to discuss the polluted water in the waterhole; or finding out the cause of and the solution to the water pollution. Tension emerged from me asking a question to the students or setting a new problem for them. A boy commented in his second written questionnaire that he liked the project because he did not only learn the English language, but he also studied environmental issues through the contamination of the waterhole. His comments suggested that he enjoyed the dramatic tension of the mystery about the water contamination.

Tension “arises as much from what is known as from what is unknown” (Kao and O’Neill, 1998, p. 28). Each time a new tension was introduced in drama, these students experienced the gap between ‘what is known and unknown’. This experience also involved them emotionally. As Kao and O’Neill (1998) say, this is why dramatic tension “keeps any play, game or dramatic interaction alive” (p. 28). The Year Six students had not experienced any dramatic tension before in their learning, especially in the English language curriculum. However, these students were immediately captivated by the dramatic tension which involved the participants emotionally.

59 See Appendix 10 for students’ answers for the second questionnaire, p. 273.
Many language teachers tend to follow a particular learning style which they themselves had experienced as a learner. This includes traditional learning styles such as ‘sitting on a chair all the time to tackle repetitive workbooks’ and ‘being serious and quiet’. “Many teachers (and also students) share the belief that serious learning is supposed to be hard work and if it is enjoyable, it is doubtful that it is serious or significant” (Dornyei, 2001, p. 72). In order to make second/foreign language learning more interesting and stimulating, Dornyei (2001) suggests three types of strategies in the classroom: breaking the monotony of learning; making the tasks more interesting; and increasing the involvement of the students. These three strategies seem to share the same characteristics that the project provided for the participants of the Drama-English classes.

7.3.6 The first strategy for motivating second/foreign language learners

The first strategy for creating a motivational language classroom is “breaking the monotony of learning” (Dornyei, 2001, p. 73). This implies that it is important to break routines in the language classroom as many teachers and students tend to settle into a set pattern of learning, although some teachers use a mixed teaching approach. “Monotony is inversely related to variety. In order to break monotony, we need to vary as many aspects of the learning process as possible” (Dornyei, 2001, p. 73). Dornyei (2001) suggests language teachers should pay attention to applying variety in “linguistic focus of the tasks”, “main language skills [and] the tasks activate”, “channel of communication” and “organisational format” of the class activities (p. 74). Furthermore, teachers should be concerned with other aspects including “[their] presentation style; the learning materials; the extent of students involvement (e.g. occasionally students lead some of the activities); [and] the classroom’s spatial organization (e.g. how the tables and chairs are arranged)” (Dornyei, 2001, p. 74). Drama activities that the Japanese primary students participated in provided these extra aspects suggested by Dornyei (2001) for creating a motivational learning environment. In the case of educational drama, it offers alternative presentation styles.
In drama activities, the form of presenting the students’ work varies from the typical presentation style of the second/foreign language classroom. The most common form of presentation in the language classroom is of a student standing by their chair or in front of the class to show their work. Teachers often stand in front of the class to present materials or explain tasks. Drama activities are concerned with different approaches to presentation. One of the interesting strategies for presentation in educational drama is ‘Teacher and Students in Role’60: “a complex game of improvisation, involving ‘offers’ by both teacher and students” (Ewing and Simons, 2004, p. 36). There are certain steps for employing this technique. Liu (2002) and Ewing and Simons (2004) agree that the first step for the teacher is to carefully plan lessons using this technique. At this stage of planning, it is important to take the following elements into account: the students’ linguistic levels, their socio-economic background, their understanding of a specific topic, their level of interests, and the nature of the students.

With the Year Six students, this method was applied on two separate occasions: the first one was the ‘International Animal Meeting’61 and the second was ‘Interviewing Dr. Science’62. In the second activity, all the participants were in the role of either scientists or news media reporters. The linguistic focus of the activity was on listening comprehension, but these students did not just sit and listen to unknown linguistic terms. Importantly, they were learning the language in a meaningful and purposeful context. Being in the role of Japanese reporters, they were observing and interpreting the body language and facial expressions of Dr. Science, paying particular attention to the tone and intonation of his voice, and gathering as much non-verbal information as possible. They were making accurate guesses about the presentation with the help of his body language and his facial expressions and the help of visual images from the pictures that were presented by Dr. Science.

60 See 3.2.4: Roles for whole class and teachers, in Chapter Three, p. 64.
61 See 5.2.5: International Animal Meeting, in Chapter Five, p. 149.
62 See 6.1.3: Interviewing Dr. Science, in Chapter Six, p. 164.
Taking note of anything that they recognised was also an interesting task as media reporters. The task and drama tension stimulated their motivation for listening in a meaningful context. The students were so busy putting all the puzzle pieces together to make meaning of the speech, not just listening and understanding the linguistic terms of English language. “When the teacher takes a role, the students are immediately drawn together in listening, thinking, and building the event with speculation and anticipation as they look for clues to the emerging dramatic world in which they participate” (Liu, 2002, p. 60). Using a role was a much more exciting way of presenting as well as receiving new information. Once a teacher takes on a role, the traditional power relationship between the teacher and student changes. This change of class dynamic and the teacher-student power relationship support Dornyei’s (2001) idea of breaking the monotony of learning.

7.3.7 The second strategy for motivating second/foreign language learners

The second strategy according to Dornyei (2001) is “making the tasks more interesting” (p. 75) for language learners. Writers of educational drama like Winston and Tandy (1998) believe that boredom is “the cardinal sin as far as drama is concerned” (p. 5). Winston and Tandy (1998) explain what they consider is a boring task for students in educational drama:

If there is no variety in pace or emotional pitch, if there is no tension or suspense, no contrast between one scene and the next, then we are just likely to get bored as if we find the characters and their preoccupations uninteresting. Similarly, in classroom drama, if the subject matter is inappropriate, or if the children are kept seated on the floor for too long, or if talk is emphasised at the expense of other activities, or the sequence of tasks are disconnected unfocussed, then interest will quickly wane and the experience will fail to engage the children dramatically (p. 15).

There are many interesting educational drama activities that can be easily adapted to teaching second/foreign language classes.
One of the interesting tasks used in Drama-English class at this Japanese public primary school, which participants had not experienced before, was the jungle poster activity. Mr. Tanaka and Mrs. Abe, showed their interest in the task of drawing a jungle poster from the animals’ perspectives, instead of the students’ perspectives, as they usually asked their students to do in their regular classes. Mr. Tanaka said;

The poster making activity was not the ordinary way of making a poster. This way was more interesting. It was a challenging task for most of them, but because it was challenging, the activity became interesting. Each poster was totally different and the objects that they drew were also very individual according to different animals. They also had to name each object in English on the poster. This was a very good way of motivating them to learn the language. I even learnt many English words that I did not know before as I helped some students find the English words for their jungle poster” (25/12/05).

Making tasks challenging is regarded as one of the vital elements for interesting tasks (Dornyei, 2001, p. 77). Mrs. Noda suggested another drama activity that she found most interesting, which was Interviewing with Dr. Science using the drama technique of Teacher and Students in Role63. She liked the idea of students being in the role of media reporters while the assistant language teacher was in the role of a scientist from an English speaking country. Instead of these students just listening to a speech in English, they became the active audience with the role of reporters and the purpose of interviewing a famous scientist from another country to find out the current situation of contamination in waterholes around the world.

Dornyei (2001) does not deny the current practices used in second/foreign language classes and understands that language teachers are required to follow a set curriculum and official course syllabus; many end up with no time left for a trial of innovative and interesting activities. All the Year Six teachers were in a similar situation. These Year Six teachers were expected to strictly follow the official coursework along with official textbooks for each academic subject provided to them by the Ministry of Education. They also had other duties such as managing events in class and school. Before this

63 From the interview with Mrs. Noda, December 25, 2003.
project, they were used to using activities such as singing songs and playing games in the English language for teaching the English language at school.

Dornyei (2001) points out that the systematic teaching style often used in language classes fails to produce a long-term positive affect in language learning. “Boring but systematic teaching can be effective in getting short-term results, but rarely does it inspire a life-long commitment to the subject matter” (Dornyei, 2001, p. 75). Primary school students in Australia who learnt Japanese in their Language Other Then English (LOTE) subject experienced educational drama in their Japanese classes and still remembered many Japanese words and phrases from this enjoyable experience years after when they were in secondary school (Araki-Metcalfe, 2001). As a conclusion, unlike the systematic teaching style, an educational drama approach in second/foreign language classrooms can create a long-term positive affect on language students.

7.3.8 The third strategy for motivating second/foreign language learners

The third strategy suggested by Dornyei (2001) is to increase students’ involvements in learning the target language. There are different types of involvement in classrooms: passive and active involvement. The Year Six students’ involvement in a typical learning environment at the primary school in Japan is categorised as passive involvement. They spent most of their school hours sitting on their chairs, except for their physical education and music classes. Activities at desks can physically and cognitively limit students’ learning, and this systematic teaching style was still heavily instilled in the Japanese educational setting. These students were expected only to absorb information given to them by the teachers. Togo (2001) explains that this learning style is very convenient for Japanese teachers and requires the students to consume a set curriculum.

The Drama-English classes however provided these students with active involvement. Although some students were confused with the idea of active participation at the beginning of the project, they eventually understood and soon realised how vital their
active involvement was in the Drama-English classes. Dornyei (2001) argues that for the language learners to become active participants it is necessary to have both mental and physical involvement. Educational drama is referred to as “the process of enactment” (Cusworth and Simons, 1997). Thus, the Year Six students from the project engaged with drama activities at a physical, emotional, and cognitive level. Their engagement and commitment to the drama activities were required whether they were in role or not, in order to create an imaginary world together. In educational drama, providing roles and personalised tasks for all the learners is imperative, in this project the drama activities offered all this to these students.

7.3.9 Responsibilities of the teachers

All three strategies that Dornyei (2001) suggests to motivate students’ language learning are dependent upon the language teachers’ contributions and responsibilities. Falout and Maruyama (2004) conclude that ‘teachers’ are one of the factors that contribute towards ‘demotivation’ in second/foreign language learners. “There is not much we can do to change the [second/foreign language] itself, but a teacher certainly can shape the perception of it. Likewise, a teacher can sway the attitude of group members as well as modify a student’s own self-confidence” (Falout and Maruyama, 2004, p. 8).

The participants in the research done by Falout and Maruyama (2004) were 164 university students in Japan who were learning English as their foreign language. These university students’ experience of English language teachers were mainly negative: “rather than English, they learned more about autocracy, sarcasm, and nitpicking. Others got on bad terms with their [native Japanese] teachers simply because they asked questions about English. Their reward was humiliation. A common report: teachers responded with ridicule and blame, remarking only upon the ignorance of the questioner” (Falout and Maruyama, 2004, p. 8). Amongst these research participants students with lower language proficiency stated that they started losing interest in learning English from the second year of junior high school. I am sure that not all of the English language
teachers in Japan are like these negative teachers in this research, however the attitudes of language teachers in the classroom can greatly influence their students’ impressions and understanding of second/foreign language learning. It seems that teachers have more responsibility than they actually recognise in students’ motivation towards the current and future learning of the English language.

As discussed in Chapter Three, projecting a teacher’s passion and enthusiasm for teaching a particular area of study can greatly influence their students’ motivation in class. It seemed that the Year Six students recognised my passion for using drama as a pedagogical tool. They also sensed my enthusiasm towards developing a specialised curriculum for the English language education in Japanese primary schools. Consequently, the Drama-English project became one of the more memorable events in these students’ schooling, and it helped them experience the joy of using the language in a meaningful context for communication.

7.3.10 Summary of the Phase Three Analysis

The strategies for motivating second/foreign language learners suggested by Dornyei (2001) seem to be common sense. However, it seems so difficult to implement, considering the heavily scheduled timetables, strict official guidelines, and other school duties and responsibilities of many teachers in Japanese schools. There are many reasons for teachers not to take the extra steps to create more interesting learning tasks for students. Dornyei (2001) says “all we need to make sure is that we don’t serve exactly the same meal every day. And, to top it off, we may want, from time to time, to do the unexpected” (p. 74). Implementing dramatic tension in class is an appropriate way of doing something unexpected as it involves students emotionally – a rare occurrence in a typical second/foreign language classroom in Japan.

64 See 3.3.4: Three crucial conditions for motivation and educational drama, in Chapter Three, p. 77.
The experience of the Drama-English class was an extraordinary event for these students as well as the teachers, where they experienced alternative ways of learning. This study demonstrates that when a significant element of active participation in learning is embraced by Japanese teachers, their students can benefit from experiencing a variety of pedagogical styles. The ideal educational situation, I realised through the project, would be for teachers to be able to manipulate both active and passive ways of involving their students in class. Educational drama can be looked on as one example of students actively participating in their learning.

7.4 Phase Four Analysis: We are in charge!!

The participants showed individual growth, and some learnt more about themselves and others throughout this project. Mental obstacles, such as embarrassment and self-consciousness, which prevented them from fully participating in the activities in the earlier stages of the project were removed. Through engaging physically, emotionally, and cognitively with educational drama activities, these students exposed both their Omote (public faces) and Ura (personal/inner feelings) sides to each other. This occurred in discussions in class; creating drama work; presenting their creative work; sharing ideas; building up a story together; resolving disagreements; and finding solutions to problems together. “Once [students] have adjusted to an unfamiliar method, it will be possible to extend the range of contexts to include more imaginative approaches” (Kao and O’Neill, 1998, p. 4).

In Phase Four, the participants of the project completed their journey by creating and presenting a role-play. The final part of this section will share the participants’ thoughts and reflections on this challenging journey. Their reflections were documented six months after the last Drama-English class was held.
7.4.1 The final piece of drama work

Role-play was the favourite activity among the students. Allowing the students to create a role-play by themselves stimulated their curiosity and interest towards learning. A boy in 6-B commented in the class discussion, “I never made a play before and I didn’t know how to do it in the beginning, but we put lots of ideas together to make a funny play” (14/10/03). His teacher, Mr. Tanaka, was impressed with his progress and his attitude towards learning during the role-play, as this student usually became bored with learning tasks in other subjects. In the Drama-English class, he was able to maintain his focus for a longer period of time with enthusiasm. Other students’ positive comments are as follows: “Many groups made funny plays but we learnt a lot from these plays which is amazing” (a girl from 6-A); “I was surprised that each play was very individual” (a boy from 6-B); and “It didn’t feel like ‘studying’ English” (a boy from 6-A).

The Year Six students surprised me in that they created stories and roles with a rich quality of imagination. It was an exciting moment to witness some students, who were unsociable and less confident in themselves at the beginning of the project, now confidently speaking about their ideas, carefully listening to others’ opinions, and creating an original piece of drama work that involved working happily together with some of the opposite gender in their groups.

7.4.2 Creating role-play

As I described in Chapter Six, the students were very excited with the idea of creating their own plays. Booth (1998) suggests that the primary aim of educational drama is “to help students extract new meaning from their experiences and to communicate those meanings in the form of efficient, coherent responses. Because drama is a social process, the students are concerned with the ideas of others, with fitting their own thoughts and

65 See Appendix 10 for the students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.
66 See 6.2.1: Creating their first role-play, in Chapter Six, p. 175.
feelings into the group effort” (p. 72). In the group discussions for creating the plays, I witnessed the Year Six students negotiating their meanings and clarifying others’ ideas without being asked to do so. This process occurred naturally to work together towards the common goal of making a play.

Another exciting element for the students was to be in a role. They were thrilled with the idea of becoming someone or something else. Some students could not help shouting out their ideal role for themselves. The reason for ‘role’ holding such strong influence on students is explained by Hertzberg (2004): drama offers students “a role to speak” (p. 93). In other words, they can take risks by being in a role. Hertzberg (2004) explains that taking risks is crucial for learning, especially for second/foreign language students.

Both Liu (2002) and Hertzberg (2004) agree with the significant differences between role-play in a typical language classroom and role-play in educational drama. In a typical second/foreign language classroom, role-play is usually organised by teachers for students: teachers have control of the scene, characters, and the use of language in order to practice specific language structures and functions. Role-play in educational drama, however, allows students to take charge: teachers become a helper or guide. This type of role-play is “more creative and spontaneous in nature, [and it] encourages students to use their own imagination by utilizing both linguistic and non-linguistic expressions” (Liu, 2002, p. 59). Some students commented on the joy of using their own words in English: “I really enjoyed speaking my own words in English in the play because they were my words” (a girl in 6-C from the class discussion, 14/10/03).

A role-play in a typical second/foreign language classroom does not require much time but a role-play in educational drama does take longer, as it needs to be created from the skeleton of ideas and discussions by the participants. According to Hertzberg (2004), role-play in educational drama is a time consuming activity, and this is considered a positive rather than a negative element because learning cannot be measured only against how long the lesson takes for students to complete it. It should be measured by “whether they are learning anything substantial” (Hertzberg, 2004, p. 108). Creating a play was
such a meaningful event for these Year Six students. Individually, they learnt something valuable about themselves.

7.4.3 Writing

In the process of creating a role-play, each small group was asked to write a plan for their play including titles, story lines, characters, stage props, and the use of the English language for each character. This writing process was designed for students to summarise and clarify their ideas for creating a play. Booth (1998) emphasises the importance of writing for role-play saying that writing “out of role or as a result of having being in role lets them enter a new sphere of attitudes and feelings” (p. 73). A boy in the 6-B class wrote in his answers for the second questionnaire that he liked creating the play because he enjoyed freely writing a scenario with other students in the same group. Although they were given a task for the play in that they had to consider either ‘What happened to the waterhole?’ or ‘How do we clean the waterhole?’, there were no other regulations or restrictions. They seemed to fully enjoy the freedom of scenario writing and the classroom was filled with their cheerful voices.

I observed during the writing process that the Year Six students came up with questions asking for some specific words in English to use in their dialogue, or questions about ideas for their story lines and performances. I remembered them not asking many questions at all in the beginning of the project; questions that the students used to ask were mainly to do with instructions such as what they would use for drawing pictures and which way the poster paper should be used, vertical or horizontal. I realised how much the quality of these students’ questions had improved; they had become more original, innovative, and self-discovering, and learning had started to occur more naturally from their questions. This positive outcome relates to the spontaneous discoveries of taking on a role. “It is this quality that constantly surprises individuals into discovery of their own

67 See Appendix 10 for students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.
competencies” (Kao and O’Neill, 1998, p. 24). New discoveries about themselves as well as other classmates continued in the presentation of their plays.

7.4.4 Presenting role-play

A noteworthy outcome of the students participating in creating a role-play was that each group produced an individual and unique piece of work. Their presentation reflected all the group members’ ideas, life-experiences, and understanding of the world. Kao and O’Neill (1998) agree with the reflection of individual spirit in group roles:

The role each group creates gradually differs from those generated by other groups in characteristics, personal background, talents, attitudes to society, experience in the past, perspectives towards the future and consequences in life as the drama unfolds. This group role provides tremendous support for [second/foreign language] students to overcome insecurities as well as their incompetence in using the target language (p. 25).

The Year Six students overcome their insecurities and incompetence about using English; this was clearly seen in one of the groups’ presentations in the 6-B class, in which a particular group in this class challenged their linguistic and non-linguistic limitations by only using English with clear use of body language to communicate their message to the audience68. All the students were allowed to use both the Japanese and English language, considering that their English language proficiency was at the beginners’ level. However, the members of this particular group agreed to take this opportunity to extend their language competency. As a consequence, through individual and group commitment they produced an effective and rewarding piece of work. The role-play activity brought a strong sense of achievement to these students. A student’s answer in the second questionnaire said that everyone had fun; these students experienced a sense of togetherness through creating and presenting their play69.

68 See The use of English language in their play in 6.2.2: Presenting their first role-play, in Chapter Six, p. 178.
69 See Appendix 10 for students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.


7.4.5 Changes in the participants

Throughout the project, all the participants including myself had learnt and gained better understanding; we had re-discovered aspects of ourselves, improved educational practices of the English language curriculum, and learnt about others. On each student’s face, I could see their individual development by the end of the project. They all looked as though they had gained some sense of satisfaction and achievement. I was sure that the journey was not easy for all of the participants. Some drama activities and/or some English words were quite challenging to these students. The teachers felt, at times, difficulty in comprehending the concept of educational drama: they felt some drama activities were very confronting and overwhelming because they differed from the teaching styles that they preferred to use. All the participants, however, put great effort into trying hard to make this project successful all throughout the project by clarifying unclear points, discussing and evaluating a particular incident, and most of all showing respect and appreciation towards each other. Therefore, it was possible to finally conquer the mountain together. In this sense, there were noticeable improvements in all the participants in this study.

7.4.6 After the journey: Students’ views

Almost every student answered that they had a most enjoyable experience in the Drama-English classes; these classes totally differed from other types of English language classes they had experienced inside and outside of the school. For example, a girl in the 6-C class said in the class discussion that she was more motivated to learn the English language with drama than her after school English language class, where she only repeatedly wrote the same set of vocabulary down in English in her notebook70. Another student in a different class said:

70 From the class discussion with the 6-C class, December 24, 2003.
I used to learn English after school but I don’t remember any English words at all that I had learnt at that time, so I really thought that I am not good with learning English language. But doing lots of games and drama helped me to realise the enjoyment of learning the language again, and I still remember some English words that I learnt in drama. I think it is good to use drama (from the final class discussion. 19/12/03).

Particular activities like role-play, mime, and poster making were very popular among these students. One student wrote in his answers for the final questionnaire that the most interesting part was to think being in a role and to see ordinary things and events from a different perspective. Many students definitely preferred the educational drama approach in comparison to the other ways of learning because educational drama requires physical movement. Some students’ comments were “Instead of just listening to the teacher, we physically moved around the room. I liked that” (a student from 6-A); “I enjoyed expressing myself through body movement” (a boy from 6-B); and “This is much more fun than just writing things down” (a girl from 6-C). The fact that educational drama engaged these students physically, emotionally, and cognitively allowed them find the joy of learning through drama.

Another student expressed his amazement about the power of drama. “There were all sorts of possibilities to be explored from one story, just one story!! I learnt a lot throughout the waterhole story, and I think that the learning happened naturally which was the amazing part” (from the answer in the second written questionnaire). It was unexpected to hear such thoughtful opinions from this student as I felt that he was a quiet student during the project. I was grateful to know that he understood the message that I wanted to pass onto these students.

In the final class discussion with each Year Six class (24/12/03), the students shared their understanding of drama. Particularly with the 6-C class, a new discovery was made in their understanding of the different forms of drama. As I had explained prior the students’ common impression of drama was limited only to the drama on TV. As I spent more time with these students and gained their trust throughout the project, I decided to

71 See Appendix 10 for students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.
72 See Appendix 10 for students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.
challenge their thinking in the final discussion. The 6-C class responded to my challenge very well and even Mrs. Noda was surprised at the deep discussions that her students had. The first challenging question that I asked was whether the traditional Japanese theatre like Kabuki was considered as a form of drama. These students looked confused with the question about the sudden mention of Kabuki, but some students put their hands up to express their opinions. The major consensus was that Kabuki was not a form of drama. Their reasons varied greatly. One student said that it was not drama because it was usually performed on stage. Another interesting answer was that Kabuki was performed for only two hours and did not continue the next week like a TV drama. Finally, a boy said it was not drama because it was not fun when he went to see it at the kabuki theatre.

I asked whether they considered their role-play was a form of drama because most students said it was a most enjoyable activity. Their common response was that their performances were not a form of drama. The following reasons were presented from these students: “it was too short to be drama”, “it was not on TV”, “we made it so it does not count as drama”, and “I don’t know the reason but I think it is not drama” (24/12/03). From their responses, it seemed that the form of drama on TV was definitely the main source that these students used to measure against other forms of drama. After listening to their interesting opinions, I decided to talk about the qualities of educational drama based on role, time, and space. I also talked about how it provides physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Then, I asked the same two questions to these students again. Half of the class started to realise that I was trying to introduce the idea that there were different forms of drama, not only TV drama. I had such a meaningful discussion with these students; and I witnessed how these students came to reach a new conclusion about their concept of drama.

7.4.7 After the journey: Teachers’ views

All three teachers gained a better understanding of the different learning styles of educational drama. They all agreed that providing a meaningful context for the students
to work in was a particularly effective way of learning. Mr. Tanaka recognised the importance of taking a role. He felt his students responded better to a given task being in role. He also saw the benefit of role taking throughout the project including the animal mime activity and role-play. He was looking at the overall concept and purpose of educational drama in evaluating this teaching method. Mrs. Noda specifically focused only on role-play: “role-play was beneficial, but not mime”\textsuperscript{73}. She felt that she could not see any benefits in her students doing mime in a small group, considering that this was an English language class. She had the impression of mime activity as being too childish for these students as she preferred more systematic and strict teaching practices in her classroom:

\begin{quote}
I liked the role-play the best among the other drama activities because my students were spontaneously putting great effort into using English. I would like to use role-play in the future, and then I want students to use English as well as gestures to cover their linguistic limitation” (in the final interview with Mrs. Noda, 25/12/03).
\end{quote}

Her body language in the interview was reserved and she appeared to be only looking at the linguistic benefits, not at the whole picture of the learning process.

Mrs. Abe had a different opinion and it was close to Mr. Tanaka’s. Her favourite activity was the jungle poster activity as she felt that her students’ impression of learning the English vocabulary had changed from just remembering new vocabulary to using them in a meaningful context. The students’ answers in the second questionnaire showed that thirty one out of ninety eight students expressed ‘the jungle poster making’ as their favourite activity\textsuperscript{74}. A girl in the 6-B class wrote, “\textit{I liked using my imagination to draw a jungle that I have never seen before}”. Another student from 6-C commented, “\textit{I enjoyed looking at jungle posters from the different perspectives of the animals}”. These written responses reflected the freedom they had to explore in this learning environment, in comparison to the typical drawing activities in class that were often strictly controlled by their teachers. These students chose this activity as their favourite one because “we

\textsuperscript{73} From the interview with Mrs. Noda, December 25, 2003.
\textsuperscript{74} See Appendix 10 for students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.
were able to draw freely” (a girl in the 6-C class). This student’s comment showed her excitement at being able to express her personal thoughts and feelings without boundaries laid down by the teacher, which is the norm in the Japanese school setting.

Mrs. Abe also felt that the role-play had a strong influence on the students in ‘the international animal meeting’; this activity helped a simple poster presentation become a more stimulating activity for everyone, as all the audience and the presenters played a part and were given a role.

This project provided an opportunity for these teachers to observe and experience a totally different teaching style from their own. Some activities did not appeal to them as being effective for their students’ learning. However, they patiently observed how I incorporated educational drama into teaching the English language. They also witnessed how much their students changed and learnt throughout the project. Mrs. Noda particularly could not stop talking about how a group of female students changed dramatically during and after the project. These students used to be very shy and were not willing to take any risks in learning, on the other hand, throughout the project they learnt to voice their own opinions, which Mrs. Noda always wanted them to do in her classroom. One of the female students wrote in her second written questionnaire:

I was not good at doing and saying things in front of others, but participating in the project I found myself getting used to sharing my opinions with others in other classes like Math and Japanese. Most importantly, I really enjoyed acting out in front of my classmates. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

When Mrs. Noda talked about these female students, I was surprised that they had been shy before, as my impressions of these students were that they had strong opinions.

In summary, the teachers felt this was a successful trial for improving educational practices of the English language curriculum in this public primary school. Whether

75 See Appendix 10 for students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.
these teachers would apply the educational drama approach in their own teaching is a different matter. 76

7.4.8 After the journey: My view

The journey of conducting the Drama-English project in Japan did not go smoothly, especially at the beginning of the project. Personally, the most arduous factor was to read both the students’ and teachers’ emotions, body language, and facial expressions in a culturally appropriate way. It was very ironic that I struggled with interpreting their feelings and responses appropriately, considering that I am native to Japan. It was likely that living in Australia for ten years and being totally immersed in the Western culture influenced me to the effect of losing my capacity to interpret certain behaviours in the Japanese way.

Although it was a fulfilling teaching and research experience overall, this project made me recognise, again, the importance of understanding a language - both its linguistic and non-linguistic components. Moreover, this project provided me with a great opportunity to see and experience how strongly culture influences both body language and communication.

Prior to conducting the project in Japan, my ideal drama class would have been one where the students were active, self-expressive, independent, and individual. It took a while for me to throw away that particular image of the ideal drama class, and instead I began to focus on the nature of the participants within their particular cultural context. Before I gave up my previous image of an ideal drama class, I felt a sense of uncertainty and frustration. After I gained more understanding of the nature of these students and teachers, I then adjusted myself accordingly and appropriately to the new environment.

76 Further discussion on this issue will be presented in the conclusion chapter, Chapter Eight.
7.4.9 Summary of the Phase Four Analysis

In Phase Four, the participants showed individual growth and shared their honest opinions in class discussions. The creation and presentation of the students’ role-play was an appropriate activity to help summarise the project and to demonstrate their improvement. The final class discussion was also invaluable in finding out how these students perceived the project, understood the concept of drama, and approached the English language as a foreign language.

7.5 Conclusion

The students and teachers experienced different stages of growth throughout the project. These stages were: experiencing cultural differences in learning; comprehending unfamiliar tasks; the struggles of a different learning approach; finding out hidden potential in themselves and others; feeling resistance towards unfamiliar concepts and the foreign language, English; and improving their personal and social skills.

Most students stated that they liked the drama approach. It was understandable that a very few students responded that they did not like the drama approach much. Even these dissenting students started showing some improvement in that they were able to express their personal preferences for some activities in class, rather than blindly completing the given tasks. I saw this as an achievement and a personal development in itself. I felt that this learning experience became a source of motivation for future changes in educational practices in this school.

77 See Appendix 10 for students’ answers to the second questionnaire, p. 273.
8. Introduction

This Drama-English language project in a Japanese public school investigated the 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, p. 2) in their classroom. Winston and Tandy (1998) describe such experiences as “a great source of delight” (p. 2). 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.

8.1 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 of the Year Six students 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 given that they did not have any concept of educational drama and they did not fully understand my expectations. O’Toole and Dunn (2002) 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” (p. 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. Thus, my lack of understanding their expectations was the first issue.

The second issue relates to the concept of improvisation in educational drama. The main element of educational drama is improvisation:

> 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” (Rushworth and Simons, 1997, p. 18).

I felt that the students I worked with were not used to ‘spontaneity’ at all. I used the word ‘surprise’ in this thesis 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 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 not required.

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 with 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 (1997) suggest, it is necessary for some students to have “a class discussion and pooling of ideas before improvising” (p. 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 successful participating 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. The case of some shy and quiet students in 6-C becoming more expressive in the Drama-English classes was an example of this. It was such a fulfilling and rewarding experience for me as a teacher to share in a phase of these students’ personal growth.

8.2 Reflecting on the teachers’ responses

The second key research question was to investigate the applicability of an educational drama approach to Japanese teachers. 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 be 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 these teachers. 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 they were not ready to relinquish the authority and control that they had established. The study indicated that this dilemma seemed far greater in Mrs. Noda’s case compared to the other teachers, as Mrs. Noda believed in strictly controlled classes
and strong discipline in her teaching. Winston and Tandy (1998) 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 (p. 2).

Winston and Tandy’s (1998) 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 enjoyed 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 (1998) 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 (1998) 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” (p. 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 reflects their tatemae attitudes (surface side not the true feelings); 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 honne (true feeling) 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 needed to understand other aspects of teachers and changes, including their personalities, preferred teaching styles, their educational background, teacher-training courses that they have attended, cultural and social background, and their 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 these teachers was divided into two groups. Some teachers felt that they lacked confidence in using drama in their class, and they requested me to 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 they 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 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 accepted by a wider group of Japanese teachers and students.

8.3 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. The number of research studies conducted on drama and second/foreign language teaching has been increasing in the last
two decades. However, only a few studies have been conducted at schools in Asian countries, including the one written by Kao and O’Neill (1998) about a group of Taiwanese university students and their research findings mention little about the cultural issues and appropriateness to the local culture in Taiwan.

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) and the English language curriculum were introduced in 2002 into the primary school program by the 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 they do not have a choice (Kizuka, 2005). I believe that teachers cannot keep teaching the English language just by using games and songs. 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 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.

8.4 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 the participants’ responses. Action research allowed me as a researcher to include all the participants’ voices which became a valuable source 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.

8.5 Conclusion

This thesis 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 was not yet introduced as an academic subject: authorised textbooks and teaching manuals were not supplied by the Ministry of Education like all other academic subjects. I was able to design the curriculum without strict requirements from both the school and the ministry. If this were an official subject, it would have been very difficult for me to conduct this study in Japan. The project with the Year Six students and their three teachers was a reflective process, which was an effective way of understanding the data and the
participants during the project. 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. This project offered an opportunity for all participants, including myself, to reflect on our teaching and learning process.

In March, 2006, the Ministry of Education announced it will be increasing the weekly lessons for the English language curriculum in the primary schools in the near future. The aim of the ministry is to make the English language curriculum compulsory within the next few years. This requires classroom teachers to develop the skills to be able to design the curriculum and teach the language. The next ten years in Japan could offer opportunities to introduce educational drama as a pedagogical tool for teaching the English language in a more holistic and effective way.
I wish I could learn English with drama once more.

(a girl’s last comment in the 6-C class)
Bibliography

Picture book


Website


References


Appendices
Appendix 1 – Weekly Lesson Plans for ‘The Waterhole’

<Phase One and Two>

Each lesson started in the following class order 6-B, 6-A, 6-C

Lesson 1 (June 3)
- Introducing the rules of Drama with movements (Freeze, 3-2-1 Freeze, Space, Sit down, Stand up, Stage Please, and Repeat after me) <Educational Drama>
- Reading ‘Waterhole’ to them and introducing the names of the animals from the book
- Narration
- Picturing the jungle in their mind (students closed their eyes.)
- Making a big jungle list as a class
The first written questionnaire to students was handed out.

Lesson 2 (June 10)
- Teaching numbers from one to ten and self-introduction in English
- Numbers game (Making number groups; into groups of ten students each) <Educational Drama>
- Presenting and reviewing the words (written in both English and Japanese) on the Jungle list on the white board

Lesson 3 (June 17)
- Reviewing the words on the jungle poster
- Making jungle posters <Educational Drama>

Lesson 4 (June 24)
- Experimenting different perceptions as animals
- Making jungle posters <Educational Drama>

Lesson 5 (July 1)
- Making jungle posters <Educational Drama>

Lesson 6 (July 8)
- Mime – Making shapes of jungle animals using bodies. <Educational Drama>
- Preparation of jungle poster presentation

Lesson 7 (July 15)
- International Animal meeting – Presenting students’ jungle posters
  (Teacher-in-role and Class-in-role: all teachers and students being in role of the animals)
  <Educational Drama>

The first written questionnaire to three teachers was handed out.
The first informal interview with students- class discussion on learning English through Educational drama
<Phase Three and Four>

Summer Holiday for six weeks

Lesson 8 (September 9)  Having School Lunch with 6-C

- Reading the book, ‘The Waterhole’, again to the students
- Find out where each animal in ‘The Waterhole’ is from on the world map
- Animal Distribution game using animal cards and the world map

Lesson 9 (September 16)  Having School Lunch with 6-B

- *Interviewing Dr. Science—Presenting a new issue, the contamination of waterholes in the world*
  (Teacher-in-role and Class-in-role: teachers being in role of Dr. Science and his assistant and the students being in the role of news reporters)
  <Educational Drama>

Lesson 10 (September 30)  Having School Lunch with 6-A

- *Animal mime and Thought tracking* <Educational Drama>

Lesson 11 (October 7)

- *Role-play (rehearsal)* <Educational Drama>
  ‘What happened to the waterhole?’ and ‘How are we going to clean the water?’

Lesson 12 (October 14)

- *Presenting the role-play* <Educational Drama>

The second written questionnaire to students and teachers was handed out.

The final class discussions with each class (December 24)

The informal interview for the teachers (December 25)
Appendix 2 – The First Questionnaire

Questionnaire for Students 1

Class: ___________________ Name: ____________________________________________

1. Are you studying English or have you studied English after school hours? (Yes / No)

If Yes, how long have you studied English?

( )

How often did/do you study?

( every day / a few times a week / once a week / others: ____________________________ )

2. Have you been to English speaking countries before? (Yes / No)

If Yes, which country(s) did you go?

( )

For how long?

( )

3. Do you speak English at home or after school hours? (Yes / No)

If Yes, where do you usually speak English?

( )

4. Write what you know about the English language.

5. Write what you want to know about the English language.

6. Write what you know about other cultures.

7. Write what you want to know about other cultures.

8. Why do you think you learn English at school?
Questionnaire for Teachers 1

Name:____________________________________________

Years of teaching:_______________________________________________

1. How long and where have you learnt the English language before?

2. How fluent do you think you can speak English?

3. Are you confident with using the English language for reading, writing, listening, and speaking?
   Reading:
   Writing:
   Listening:
   Speaking:

4. Have you been to other countries for a visit or to live?
   Can you write down the countries that you have visited and the duration of your stay?

5. What is your opinion on the introduction of the English language education in primary schools in Japan?

6. What do you think of you actually teaching English to your students?

7. Have you ever attended workshops or seminars for professional development regarding teaching English in primary schools? (Yes / No)
   If Yes, please write the number, the duration, and the content of workshops/seminars.

8. In your school, you have already started the English language curriculum last year in 2002.
   What did you do last year and how many hours did you spent on teaching English?

9. What would you like to know about the English language curriculum in primary schools now?

10. Please write what you thought of the educational drama activities so far.
Appendix 3 – The Second Questionnaire and interview questions for teachers

Questionnaire for Students 2
Class:___________________   Name:______________________________________

1. Which activities were the most enjoyable? Why?

2. Which activities were the least favourite? Why?

3. What do you think of using educational drama in the English language class?
   (You can compare the Drama-English class to other English language classes that you experienced.)

4. Write your comments.

Questionnaire for Teachers 2

Name:____________________________________________

1. Which activities did you like the most? Why?

2. If you are going to use educational drama activities, which activities would you choose? Why?

3. Which activities would you rather not use? Why?

4. What do you think of educational drama as a teaching method over all?

5. What do you think of this teaching methodology for an additional method in the future?

6. If you decide to use educational drama in your teaching, what would you like to know more about?
Additional questions for Teachers in informal interview

1. What do you picture in your mind when you hear the word ‘drama’?

2. What is your opinion about Japanese traditional theatre performances like No, Kabuki, and Bunraku?

3. What is your opinion about TV drama? What influence does TV drama have on your students?

4. What is your understanding of educational drama?

5. What do you think of educational drama as a teaching methodology?

6. How was your students’ response towards educational drama?
Appendix 4 – Mr. Tanaka’s answers to the first questionnaire

Years of teaching: 26 years

1. How long and where have you learnt the English language before?
   8 years (three years in a junior high school, three years in a high school, and two years at university)

2. How fluent do you think you can speak English?
   Not fluent at all.

3. Are you confident with using the English language for reading, writing, listening, and speaking?
   Reading: Not confident (I can read a little bit with help from a dictionary).
   Writing: Not confident.
   Listening: Not confident.
   Speaking: Not confident.

4. Have you been to other countries for a visit or to live?
   Can you write down the countries that you have visited and the duration of your stay?
   None

5. What is your opinion on the introduction of the English language education in primary schools in Japan?
   It is necessary to learn English. I wish for students to start learning English from younger grades and naturally become familiar with the language.

6. What do you think of you actually teaching English to your students?
   It is difficult to teach but I am willing to do it, however we need a language assistant who is a native speaker of English.

7. Have you ever attended workshops or seminars for professional development regarding teaching English in primary schools? (Yes / No)
   If Yes, please write the number, the duration, and the content of workshops/seminars.

8. In your school, you have already started the English language curriculum last year in 2002.
   What did you do last year and how many hours did you spent on teaching English?
   I didn’t have time to teach English last year, 2002.

9. What would you like to know about the English language curriculum in primary schools now?
   • How do we teach English so that students can become familiar with the language?
   • What topics do we have to teach?
   • What sort of teaching methodologies are there to increase students’ understanding of foreign cultures?

10. Please write what you thought of the educational drama activities so far.
    I think that my students really enjoyed themselves. I was more concerned about how they interacted with each other because they had some social issues in this class last year.
Appendix 5 – Mrs. Abe’s answers to the first questionnaire

Years of teaching: **26 years**

1. How long and where have you learnt the English language before?

   *10 years (three years in a junior high school, three years in a high school, and four years at university)*

2. How fluent do you think you can speak English?

   *I can do greeting in English.*

3. Are you confident with using the English language for reading, writing, listening, and speaking?

   - Reading: *Not confident.*
   - Writing: *Not confident.*
   - Listening: *Not confident.*
   - Speaking: *Not confident.*

4. Have you been to other countries for a visit or to live?

   Can you write down the countries that you have visited and the duration of your stay?

   *Singapore (one week)*

5. What is your opinion on the introduction of the English language education in primary schools in Japan?

   *It is a good idea to start teaching because they are at a level where they can learn English through playing which is an effective way to learn.*

6. What do you think of you actually teaching English to your students?

   *I feel uneasy with the fact that these is no set curriculum given to us.*

7. Have you ever attended workshops or seminars for professional development regarding teaching English in primary schools? (Yes / No)

   If Yes, please write the number, the duration, and the content of workshops/seminars.

8. In your school, you have already started the English language curriculum last year in 2002.

   What did you do last year and how many hours did you spent on teaching English?

   *15 hours per year (Singing songs in English, playing simple language games, focusing on the following topics: greeting words, colours, numbers, animals, and fruits).*

9. What would you like to know about the English language curriculum in primary schools now?

   *How to design a language curriculum.*

10. Please write what you thought of educational drama activities so far.

   *I didn’t think that students knew where they were going when they were participating in Drama-English class. I wish I knew the full lesson plans beforehand.*
Appendix 6 – Mrs. Noda’s answers to the first questionnaire

Years of teaching: 16 years

1. How long and where have you learnt the English language before?
   10 years (three years in a junior high school, three years in a high school, and four years at university)

2. How fluent do you think you can speak English?
   I can do greeting in English.

3. Are you confident with using the English language for reading, writing, listening, and speaking?
   Reading: Not confident.
   Writing: Not confident.
   Listening: Not confident.
   Speaking: Not confident.
   I am not so confident but I can communicate in English a little bit. My pronunciation is very bad though.

4. Have you been to other countries for a visit or to live?
   Can you write down the countries that you have visited and the duration of your stay?
   Canada (10 days, 10 days, 6 days, 6 days), The United States of America (10 days), Northern Europe (10 days), Australia (8 days), Europe (8 days, 10 days), Hong Kong (4 days), South Korea (3 days), Singapore and Malaysia (six days)

5. What is your opinion on the introduction of the English language education in primary schools in Japan?
   It is a good idea but it is difficult to decide what to teach.

6. What do you think of you actually teaching English to your students?
   It is an impossible thing for me to do. I decided to become a primary school teacher because English was not the academic subject for my university entrance examination. I am concerned with my incorrect pronunciations.

7. Have you ever attended workshops or seminars for professional development regarding teaching English in primary schools? (Yes / No)
   If Yes, please write the number, the duration, and the content of workshops/seminars.
   I attended professional development twice. The first one included four workshops and the second one offered two workshops. We did games and songs in English.

8. In your school, you have already started the English language curriculum last year in 2002.
   What did you do last year and how many hours did you spent on teaching English?
   14 hours per year (simple language games and songs in English).

9. What would you like to know about the English language curriculum in primary schools now?
   I want to know what and how schools should teach.

10. Please write what you thought of educational drama activities so far.
    I think that the students’ pronunciations are getting better. The international animal meeting activity was very different from their impression of ‘an international meeting’ would be. This was unexpected but overall their interest towards learning English is increasing.
Appendix 7 – Students’ answers to the first questionnaire

100 students answered the questionnaire.
(31 students in 6-A, 34 students in 6-B, 35 students in 6-C)

1. Are you studying English or have you studied English after school hours? (Yes / No)
   Yes: 65 students
   No: 35 students

   If Yes, how long have you studied English?
   From: 2 years old, 3 years old, 5 years old, Year 1 (6 years old), Year 2 (7 years old),
   Year 4 (9 years old), Year 5 (10 years old), and Year 6 (11 years old)
   To: Now

   Previous experiences:
   From Year 4 to 5, from Year 1 to 5, from 5 years old to Year 5, from Year 1 to 2,
   from 4 years old to Year 4, and from Year 1 to 3

   How often did/do you study?
   (every day / a few times a week / once a week / others:_______________________________)

   Everyday: 1 student
   A few times a week: 12 students
   Once a week: 52 students
   Others: none

2. Have you been to English speaking countries before? (Yes / No)
   Yes: 46 students
   No: 54 students

   If Yes, which country(s) did you go?
   • The United States of America (57 students)
   • Australia (5 students)
   • Canada (3 students)
   • England (1 student)
   • Singapore (1 student)
   • Bali (1 student)
   • Thailand (1 student)
   • South Korea (1 student)
   • Malaysia (1 student)
   • New Zealand (1 student)

   *Some students visited more than one country.

   For how long?
   • 3-5 days (18 students)
   • 1 week (4 students)
   • 2-3 weeks (9 students)
   • 1 month (3 students)
   • 6 months (1 student)
• 1-3 years (6 students) – England and The United States of America
• More than 3 years (1 student) - The United States of America

3. Do you speak English at home or after school hours? (Yes / No)
   Yes: 30 students  No: 70 students

If Yes, where do you usually speak English?
• At home with mother or father
• Morning and afternoon daily assembly in class
• At a relative’s house
• When my grandmother’s Canadian friend visits my house

4. Write what you know about English language.
• Nothing
• Some English words
• Alphabets
• ABC song
• Greeting words
• Numbers in English
• Daily conversation in English
• Pronunciation is important in English.
• ‘L’ and ‘R’ sounds are very similar in English.
• English is spoken in the United States and Australia.
• I know how to ask questions in English.
• I know how to introduce myself.
• You need to put ‘s’ when you count more than one thing.
• English is a foreign language.
• Chinese people can speak English fluently these days.

5. Write what you want to know about English language.
• How to pronounce English words
• How to speak English
• English words for objects
• Daily conversation
• How to speak fluently
• The history of English language
• The common features of both English and Japanese languages
• How to write
• How to say a sentence like ‘I am ~’

6. Write what you know about other cultures.
• If you don’t look into other person’s eyes when you talk, the person might think that you are hiding something.
• In America, schools finish much earlier and a parent comes to pick up the children.
• People eat bread all the time.
• It is not polite to physically point a finger at someone.
• People in other countries eat food with their hands.
• In America, schools start in September.
• Baseball, soccer, American football are popular sports.
• Foreigners are friendly.
• Foreigners like having parties.
• Foreigners eat a lot.
• England is the strongest soccer team.
• Foreigners are very good at cheering up people and the atmosphere in a room.
• America is a ‘free’ country.
• Foreigners don’t take their shoes off inside the house.
• It is common to see the ‘lady first’ manner.

7. Write what you want to know about other cultures.

• Egypt
• American culture
• Hawaiian culture and Australian culture
• Different words for greeting
• Different meals
• Songs
• Life style
• Sports
• Types of clothes
• Dance, desserts, juice
• Play and games
• Schools
• Politics
• Rules and regulations
• The population of America
• World treasure and famous places
• Geography
• Annual events and festivals
• American movies
• Sports in England
• I want to know manners that are impolite in other countries but they are acceptable in Japan.
• The differences between Japan and other countries
• What do foreigners do in a party?
• Why do schools in America start in September?
• How many countries speak English, except America and England?
• Why does America become a ‘free’ country?
• Why there are so many different languages in the world?
• What was the old English language like?

8. Why do you think you learn English at school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication purposes</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>You can communicate with non-Japanese people. If you don’t know English, you cannot communicate in other places. I want to become friends with people in other countries. It is important to do international cultural exchange. If I go to America, I should speak English. We need to be able to speak with many people. We should be keeping an eye on the world. I want to be able to speak people in the world. To communicate with foreigners because it is an international language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficial for future</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>It is necessary for the future. It will be useful when we grow up. It will be useful in the future because people in many countries speak English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I want to become an interpreter for the Major Baseball League in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Beneficial for work | 8     | America.  
|     |       | You cannot get a better job if you cannot speak English.  
|     |       | It will be useful when you do a business with non-Japanese people. |
| Useful for studies in junior high school | 6     | Mum said I have to study English for entering the junior high school next year.  
|     |       | We have to prepare for the junior high school. |
| Others |       | America is the greatest international trading country.  
|     |       | You will not get into a trouble when you grow up.  
|     |       | I can live in other country in the future.  
|     |       | I like studying English.  
|     |       | I need to know different ways of speaking in comparison to Japanese language.  
|     |       | The world is becoming international.  
|     |       | English is spoken a lot in the world.  
|     |       | This is a matter of how powerful economic in your country is.  
|     |       | I study English at Juku (a supplement school). |
Appendix 8 – Making Jungle posters, the early stage

These groups of students were unsure about drawing in the poster making activity.

They decided to use pencils first because they did not want to make mistakes.

This group is not working together and again decided to use coloured pencils not thick markers.
Appendix 9 – Jungle posters

**Ants**  (Different groups of students drew jungle posters from an ants’ perspectives).

The group A (left) included other ants because ants usually move around in a group.

The group B drew the ants’ world on a huge leaf.
**Birds**

Group A drew a frog and snake by the pond. This poster shows a view of jungle while a bird is flying above the waterhole.

Group B included the bird’s favourite food, fish, in the poster and other two birds are also targeting the same fish.
Other animals

A giraffe

A monkey

A monkey looking around the jungle from the top of a tree.
Appendix 10 – Students’ answers to the second questionnaire

98 students answered the questionnaire.  
(34 students in 6-A, 34 students in 6-B, 30 students in 6-C)

1. Which activities were the most enjoyable? Why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Role-play                        | 59                 | • I want to do role-play again.  
• Many groups made funny ones, but we learnt a lot from funny plays which is amazing.  
• I enjoyed using my imagination.  
• Everyone was using different English words.  
• It was good to think what English words and what plots we used for the play.  
• Our team spirit improved.  
• I enjoyed writing scenarios.  
• I was able to think of appropriate English words and use them in the play.  
• We laughed but we remembered.  
• We all enjoyed it.  
• Each play was very individual.  
• I was able to see different plays.  
• We were allowed to use all sorts of plots.  
• Instead of just creating and watching a play, I learnt when and how we use specific English words by watching the plays.  
• I was impressed with the ideas of the other groups.  
• I learnt that English is enjoyably.  
• I didn’t feel like ‘studying’.  
• Everyone had fun. |
| Jungle Poster And Animal Meeting | 31                 | • I enjoyed using my imagination to draw a jungle that I have never seen before.  
• I liked looking at the jungle from the different perspectives of each animal.  
• I was able to draw freely.  
• We were able to see different views of the jungle according to the different animals. |
| Numbers game                     | 10                 | • I spoke English to others (boys) whom I never talked to before.  
• I did not feel like I was actually ‘studying’ English. |
| Mime                             | 8                  | • I enjoyed making animal shapes with our bodies.  
• We really cooperated with each other in the group. |
| Speaking English                 | 1                  | •                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Reading the book for the second time | 1             | • I was able to recognize and understand more English words in the book. |
| None                             | 3                  | •                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
2. Which activities were the least favourite? Why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>• I absolutely enjoyed everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I liked them all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jungle Poster</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>• It was difficult to imagine what a jungle looked like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mime</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>• It was difficult to make shapes within a limited time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I was embarrassed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-Play</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>• I felt embarrassed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I made a mistake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• It was difficult to summarise everyone’s ideas in my group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We didn’t have enough time for practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to speech in</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>• I didn’t like Dr. Science speaking English because I didn’t know what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>he was saying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking English to the</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>• I didn’t like presenting our poster to the class in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>• I didn’t like it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. What do you think of using educational drama in English language class?
(You can compare the Drama-English class to other English language classes that you experienced.)

| Much more Fun             | 90                 | • It was good because I didn’t have to read and write all the time.   |
|                           |                    | • I actually used English so I experienced a satisfied feeling that I   |
|                           |                    |   was able to use English.                                            |
|                           |                    | • It was very easy to understand.                                     |
|                           |                    | • Instead of just listening to the teacher, we physically moved a lot  |
|                           |                    |   in class.                                                           |
|                           |                    | • I was able to use my limited English.                               |
|                           |                    | • This class was full of imagination.                                 |
|                           |                    | • We shared ideas a lot and we also learnt English.                   |
|                           |                    | • I was able to remember new English words because I used them in my  |
|                           |                    |   play.                                                               |
|                           |                    | • As we put more and more ideas together, we created many interesting  |
|                           |                    |   things.                                                             |
|                           |                    | • I really believed if I learnt English this way, my level of English  |
|                           |                    |   would have improved more.                                           |
|                           |                    | • I enjoyed expressing myself through body movement.                   |
|                           |                    | • I learnt English while I was having fun.                            |
|                           |                    | • I just liked this better than others.                               |
|                           |                    | • More fun.                                                           |
|                           |                    | • I studied English and also studied environmental issues (the        |
|                           |                    |   contamination of the waterhole).                                   |
|                           |                    | • There were all sorts of possibilities to be explored from one story,|
|                           |                    |   just one story!! I learnt a lot throughout the waterhole story, and  |
|                           |                    |   I think that learning happened naturally which was an amazing part. |
|                           |                    | • This is much more fun than just writing things down.                |
|                           |                    | • I was not good at doing things in front of others, but I started    |
|                           |                    |   getting used to it through the drama activities. I now put up my   |
|                           |                    |   hand a lot to share my ideas in the Mathematic and Japanese classes.|
|                           |                    | • In the role-play, I found myself fully enjoying acting in front of  |
|                           |                    |   the class.                                                         |
4. Write your comments.

- Thank you for teaching us. I started to use greeting words in English with my friends.
- Thank you for putting in lots of effort to make the class interesting.
- I want you to do this more often and other English language classes should use more drama.
- I used to hate learning English, but I like it now.
- I want to learn more English because of drama.
- I wish I could learn English with drama once more…
Appendix 11 – Teachers’ answers to the second questionnaire

1. Which activities did you like the most? Why?

Mrs. Noda:
I liked the idea of using English in the role-play.

Mr. Tanaka:
Jungle poster making was my favorite because it was a very different teaching approach to English language learning. I am sure that my students had a strong impression of English language learning as memorizing new vocabularies, but the poster making activity taught new vocabulary and also required the students to use them meaningfully. This gave them a sense of satisfaction.

Mrs. Abe:
Mime was my favourite because my students were fully enjoying themselves.

2. If you are going to use educational drama activities, which activities would you choose? Why?

Mrs. Noda:
• Role-play
  (I felt that students were trying their best to use English to express themselves in appropriate situations.)
• The pronunciation exercises (breaking a word into a syllabus)
  (The students understood and pronounced English words well by using rhythm and breaking a word into pieces.)
• Reading picture books to the students
  (It was a brilliant way for students to use their imagination to guess a meaning.)

Mr. Tanaka:
• Jungle poster making
• Using a game to introducing themselves to each other
• Using roles like in the International Animal Meeting

Mrs. Abe:
• Mime
• Role-play using lots of props and costumes

3. Which activities would you rather not to use? Why?

Mrs. Noda:
• Mime (I didn’t see any point of doing that activity and I felt that it was not necessary.)
• Poster making

Mr. Tanaka:
• None

Mrs. Abe:
• None
4. What do you think of educational drama as a teaching method over all?

Mrs. Noda:
- I didn’t see the purpose of educational drama clearly. I guessed from the word ‘drama’ that it was something to do with a play.
- Some activities like poster making, role-play, games were easy to accept because they were straightforward, but I think that students and I were confused with the Jungle meeting (International Animal Meeting) because there was a huge gap between the impression that we got from the title and the actual content of the activity.

Mr. Tanaka:
- I think that it was great. My students were immersed into various roles and situations, which they had to build through putting ideas together by negotiating and discussing. This was deep.

Mrs. Abe:
- I found that it was a very interesting approach to put the students into a fictional world that is totally different from their real world.

5. What do you think of this teaching methodology for an additional method in the future?

Mrs. Noda:
- I honestly think that it is difficult. If you have a native speaker as an assistant who is preferably more animated and full of enthusiasm, maybe it is possible.
- I didn’t fully understand what educational drama was about. I think that some students felt the same because acceptable answers were not clear which made us feel nervous.

Mr. Tanaka:
- It is possible to use this approach however we have to consider other issues including the number of available hours, topics, the connection to other learning areas. I wish that I could have more time for students to learn with enjoyment.

Mrs. Abe:
- I would love to include this method in my teaching. I think that once students know what their tasks and roles are clearly, they can enjoy the activities fully.

6. If you decide to use educational drama in your teaching, what would you like to know more about this method?

Mrs. Noda:
- I need more information about what exactly educational drama is.
  (I am sorry that this is the way of Japanese thinking but it would have been easier to understand if you have shown detailed purposes, learning outcomes, teaching tips, assessment points of each activity that you just did.)
- What other things you can do except the unit of The Waterhole?

Mr. Tanaka:
- I am not at a level where I fully understand what educational drama is so I don’t have many questions to ask.

Mrs. Abe:
- None
Mrs. Noda:

I thought that my comments were a little harsh but I wanted to express my honest feelings. I didn’t think that educational drama was bad. I felt a possibility in this teaching methodology but I didn’t have a chance to understand it fully. It is probably my fault that my students felt uneasy about unknown outcomes in drama instead of feeling excited about it because I was not used to dealing with unknown outcomes in learning. However, I witnessed them adapting into the new learning environment and they started to enjoy the ‘surprises’. I was very impressed with that.
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Title: The waterhole: using educational drama as apedagogical tool in a foreign language class at a public primary school in Japan

Date: 2006-07

Citation: Araki-Metcalfe, Naoko (2006) The waterhole: using educational drama as apedagogical tool in a foreign language class at a public primary school in Japan, PhD thesis, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne.

Publication Status: Unpublished

Persistent Link: http://hdl.handle.net/11343/39293

File Description: The waterhole: using educational drama as apedagogical tool in a foreign language class at a public primary school in Japan

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