

# Furthering the Case for Drama in the Second Language Classroom

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## Abstract

A case is made for the use and practice of drama and dramatic activities in the second language classroom. Secondary to this, by looking at what several scholars have to say on the subject, a consensus is reached on the definitions of such terms as drama, theatre, and dramatic activities such as role-play and simulation in an L2 classroom context. The evolution of drama in the classroom is also discussed, from Douglas Barnes's and Richard Via's separate works in the late 60's/early 70's to more contemporary manifestations of classroom theatre. This discussion, while looking at research in the field, will also take into consideration global trends and research into the use of drama in L2 classrooms. The case for theatre in the L2 classroom is furthered by looking at what the literature has to say about the advantages of drama, its effects on student motivation and efficacy, and how it fits into today's post-method, communication-based, learner-centered curriculum of L2 language learning.

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**Key terms:** drama, dramatic activities, L2 language teaching/learning, simulation, role-play

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## 1. Introduction

Do you think that to believe in the imaginative fiction of another person, and bring it to life, is a trifle? That is what we do to the work of the dramatist; we bring to life what is hidden under the words; we put our own thoughts into the author's lines, and we establish our own relationships to other characters in the play, and the conditions of our lives; we filter through ourselves all the materials that we receive . . . we work over them, supplementing them out of our own imagination. The material becomes part of us, spiritually, and even physically; our emotions are sincere, and as a final result we have truly productive activity. (Stanislavsky, 1936, p. 52)

At the heart of every teacher is an individual that yearns to engage their students in this *productive activity*—activity that breaches the standardized testing of No Child Left Behind, the cinder-block worlds of traditional pedagogy, and Method. It is for this reason that I am interested in drama as a resource in the language classroom as well as drama as a transformative, human-making activity (Zafeiriadou, 2009; Via, 1978), with the potential to affect our personalities, adjust our codes of behavior (Hismanoglu, 2005; Livingstone, 1983), and mold our autonomy as individuals (Barnes, 1968).

With this paper, my intent is to synthesize the differing opinions of scholars and show what is meant by such terms as drama, theatre, and dramatic activities such as role-play and simulation. This paper outlines the evolution of drama in the classroom from Douglas Barnes's and Richard Via's separate works in the late 60's/early 70's to more contemporary manifestations of classroom theatre, while also looking at research in the field. A case is then made for theatre in the L2 classroom by looking at what the literature has to say about the advantages of drama, its effects on student motivation and efficacy, and how it fits into today's post-method, communication-based, learner-centered curriculum of L2 language learning. According to Via (1987), "Few would disagree that drama has at last established itself as a means of helping people learn another language. A great deal of our everyday learning is acquired through experience, and in the language classroom drama fulfills that experiential need" (p.110).

Before defining some of the terms surrounding drama, I first want to peel back a few layers of pedagogical theory in order to give weight to the topic of drama as pedagogy in L2 learning. In answer to the question, why is drama relevant in today's classroom; I am influenced by Kumaravadivelu's writings on "postmethod" theory and Spada's exploration in the current trends in communicative language teaching in regards to L2 language teaching.

*Method* in the formal sense of the word has dominated the history of language teaching from the early appearances of the grammar-translation method to more recent accounts, i.e., the audio-lingual method, the direct approach, and the *Silent Way*, among other *Methods*. As one of the first scholars to point toward a *post-method* solution to L2 language pedagogy, Kumaravadivelu (1994), claims that pedagogy has made a shift from the conventional methods of classroom policy to a new world where “postmethod” is the norm. Teachers are no longer looking for an alternative method but rather an alternative to methods. This shift, as Kumaravadivelu puts it, “motivates a search for an open-ended, coherent framework based on current theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical insights” (p. 27) and he puts forth 10 macrostrategies for teachers to effect targeted learning outcomes: 1) maximize learning opportunities, 2) facilitate negotiated interaction, 3) minimize perceptual mismatches, 4) activate intuitive heuristics, 5) foster language awareness, 6) contextualize linguistic input, 7) integrate language skills, 8) promote learner autonomy, 9) raise sociocultural consciousness, and 10) ensure social relevance (See Appendix). While I have chosen not to organize my literature review along this framework, I will refer back to these macrostrategies to show how closely aligned drama as pedagogy in L2 learning is with Kumaravadivelu’s “postmethod” theory.

In accordance with Kumaravadivelu’s vision of post-method language pedagogy, Nina Spada’s (2007) definitive work on the anti-method, communicative approach to L2 teaching, also aligns with drama as pedagogy in the L2 classroom. According to Spada, communicative language teaching is “a meaning-based, learner-centered approach to L2 teaching where fluency is given priority over accuracy and the emphasis is on the comprehension and production of messages, *not* the teaching or correction of language form” (p. 272). The learner is now seen as an active participant in the process of language learning and teachers are expected to develop activities to promote self-learning, group interaction in real situations and peer-teaching (Sam, Wan Yee, 1990). This paper proposes *drama* as a means achieve this end.

Also central to Spada’s work is that “language proficiency is not a unitary concept but consists of several different components” (Spada, 2007, p. 273), including linguistic competence, pragmatic knowledge, information on the socio-linguistic appropriateness of language, and strategic competence or compensatory strategies with the recommendation that L2 pedagogy should include all components in its curriculum. That established, this paper will show that drama and its pedagogical implications do account for all components listed above as well as add further weight to its presence in the L2 classroom..

## 2. Definition of Key Terms

Drama, theatre, dramatic playing or activities—whatever the term used, most people have a sense of what is being referred to—a form of art that communicates feelings and emotions, thoughts and concerns through performance—the medium, the participant himself in front of a formal audience or not, originating from the very beginnings of human interaction. And yet, even with this consensus on *what is drama*, debates have been circulating for years over exact definitions.

For the purposes of this paper, it is necessary to create a working definition of a few terms (i.e. drama, theatre, etc.) both because the literature does not agree and because of a need for precision in my later discussion of several scholars on the forms that dramatic activities have taken in the classroom.

### 2.1 Drama

As defined by Via (1987), *drama* is “communication between people” (p. 110) that conveys meaning. According to Susan Holden (1981), drama is synonymous with the idea of ‘let’s pretend;’ “it asks the learner to project himself imaginatively into another situation, outside the classroom, or into the skin and persona of another person” (p. 1), where the focus is on “*doing* rather than on the presentation” (p. 8). She goes on to say that drama cannot be separated from interaction with other people and that it must include the communication of meaning. Usually drama is interaction between two or more participants without an audience, and most scholars agree that it is drama that most often makes an appearance in the classroom, as it is process rather than product, as opposed to other language pedagogies that place product over process, that is the focus of drama (Zafeiriadou, 2009).

## 2.2 Theatre

As opposed to drama, which lacks communication with an audience, theatre is just that; it is concerned with the audience's presence in mind (Holden, 1981; Via 1978). According to Via (1987), *theatre* is "communication between people for the benefit of other people, which includes play production" (p. 110). And, like drama, Via goes on to say that theatre must also convey meaning, "among the performers and between the performers and the audience (p. 110). As the literature review will show, scholars are divided on the function of drama versus theatre in the classroom. Much of the reason for this divide is due to the debate over what makes up a *dramatic activity*. Must it lead to the stage or can process as an end in itself be effective in the classroom?

## 2.3 Dramatic Activity

While Via (1987) is somewhat vague on the subject, he defines *dramatic activities* as "strategies to achieve either drama or theatre" (p. 110). Maley and Duff (1978), on the other hand, are very clear in what they mean by dramatic activities:

They are activities which give the student an opportunity to use his own personality in creating the material on which the language class is to be based. These activities draw on the natural ability of every person to imitate, mimic and express himself through gesture. They draw, too, on his imagination and memory. . . . They are dramatic because they arouse our interest, which they do by drawing on the unpredictable power generated when one person is brought together with others. Each student brings a different life, a different background into the class. (1978, p. 1)

They then go on to say what dramatic activities are *not*: putting on plays in front of a passive audience, rote memorization of lines which "lose their savor even before they are spoken" (p. 1), nor are they, according to Maley and Duff, the process that leads up to some final performance, claiming that the value of drama in the classroom lies in process above product. Via disagrees, claiming that the ownership that rehearsing and presenting a play is valuable for students: "a play can give students a reason to use language" (Via, 1976, p. 6) and "students with a definite, interesting goal progress faster and further" (p. 7).

Because of these two divergent opinions on drama progressing into a production, I have included in this review studies that look at both possibilities in the classroom.

Under the label of dramatic activities are a few techniques that are also valuable to define at this point: simulation and role-playing. While I find they are very closely related and can be defined in relation to each other, scholars again disagree, while some feel they shouldn't even be present in classroom drama at all.

### 2.3.1 Simulation

Simulations are dramatic, communicative activities that ask students to solve a problem. The setting and type of problem closely simulate an experience students may face in every day life or require them to ponder a larger issue as they work together to achieve a consensus or solve the central problem. In simulations, students bring their own opinions to the table and represent their own motivations and attitudes about the problem (Livingstone, 1983; Via, 1987). One such example that I have used in my L2 classroom involves students working together to design the perfect country. In groups, students had to create maps of their countries including the infrastructure, i.e., roads, facilities, ports, etc., create a list of freedoms and laws, write a credo, and decide the industry in which their country would engage. Teams then merged, presented their countries to the class, and discussed the possibilities of trade and even the prospect of war. In this example of a simulation, students' attitudes and opinions were their own as drama was created naturally within their groups.

### 2.3.2 Role-playing

On the other hand, role-playing is generally seen as an extension of simulation activities where students are asked to take on different personas other than themselves with motivations and attitudes matching those new personas. In role-playing, "each student would be given particular information about his role" (Livingstone, 1983, p. 1) in the form of a role-playing scenario. I used

examples of such scenarios in a recent L2 class I taught in a Japanese university. The content of the unit involved business and work related readings and vocabulary. In addition to the standard curriculum, I put students into groups and gave them the following role-playing scenarios where students were to take on attitudes and characterizations other than their own:

- You are in a business meeting. One of you is the boss, one of you is giving a presentation, and one of you is causing a problem—maybe several problems. What are the problems and how are they solved? (For example, sleeping, can't stop talking, getting a phone call, etc.)
- You are workers in a factory; one of you is the boss. The boss asks you to work overtime, but you cannot. What is your reason? Do you lie or will you be honest? How do you get out of work?
- You are sitting at work. Your boss announces that one of you will be promoted to a higher position. What is the job? Who will get promoted? One of you is a bully. Why are any of you better than the other workers?
- One of you is a customer service representative. The other members are customers with complaints or problems. What are the problems and how do you solve them? Are you rude or polite? Maybe one customer is VERY angry.

In addition to acting these scenarios, groups were also instructed to include ten or more vocabulary words in their scenes, practice so that delivery could be close to natural, and perform their scenes in front of the class.

It should be noted that these definitions are reversed according to Holden (1981), are upheld by Maley and Duff (1978), and rejected as not having value by Bolton (1992). Bolton, first, finds the terms, simulation and role-play, to be synonymous and, second, tells us that “[they have] little to do with dramatic art, where children take on roles in order to assimilate facts or develop behavior skills” (p. 111). He goes on to say that this is because the learner's focus is too much involved in the function of the language to be taken seriously as drama. In rejecting the terms under his definition, Bolton (1992) seems to make a case for why they, in fact, should be included as dramatic activities in L2 classrooms where language should be the focus. In agreement with Kumaravadivelu's sixth macrostrategy (1994) (See Appendix), contextualized linguistic input includes all of the above forms of dramatic activities, which, according to him, “promote syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic use of language (p. 32).

For the benefit of this paper, when I refer to *drama*, I am using it as an umbrella term to mean all aspects of dramatic activity that could be conceived in a classroom. The term *theatre* will be restricted to only mean drama that is performed in front of a formal audience.

### 3. Historical Perspective

Drama as a resource in the classroom has been around since the beginning of the last century but by many accounts most manifestations of it went undocumented (Zafeiriadou, 2009). It was in 1937, Britain, that the first case of government sponsored theatre in education appeared (Aita, 2010). As a resource in the language classroom, it is a much newer concept; however, the fact that drama in L2 pedagogy is new to the scene does not mean that it has not gone through a few changes since its introduction. Beginning with Douglas Barnes in 1968, this paper examines the state of drama in education as it was making the transition into the L2 classroom.

In his *Drama in the English Classroom*, Douglas Barnes (1968) first presents his readers with a manifesto calling for democracy in education with drama as an essential part of that egalitarian education. For Barnes, where democracy meets drama is a very natural place:

In twentieth century urban democracies a wide range of roles is open to each young adult. More than this, the diversity of our complex society tolerates a wide range of opinions, attitudes, and evaluations. That is, our society partakes of the nature of

drama: it speaks not with one voice but with many. . .inside each one of us. Each must learn to tolerate the many voices within himself...[and] choose. (p. 2)

It is this *ability to choose* that Barnes felt was paramount for the modern student. The ability to understand all the complexities of a situation, to fight against cultural stereotypes and prejudices, and to enter into the mind of the opposition and empathize accordingly was to Barnes what a democratic education must instill in its students, and it was through drama that his ideals could be achieved.

Barnes goes on to discuss drama in the English classroom. While not a theatre professional himself, he pushes for the incorporation of all dramatic activities from classroom drama to theatre, always highlighting along the way the need for student-student/student-teacher interaction where all parties have an open network to contribute to each others' successes. Here, I should state that this democratic function of Barnes' theory of drama in the classroom aligns with Kumaravadivelu's second macrostrategy, facilitate negotiated interaction (1994), as well as the communicative approach. In the end, Barnes' plea was that educators help their students broaden themselves and to use language to explore and develop the world they live in—"what they create and what [they] perceive" (1968, p. 47).

Just shy of a decade later, Richard Via entered onto the stage. What separated Via from his predecessor and most of his successors in making a case for drama was that he came from a professional theatre background. And with that in mind, it isn't a surprise that he was the first to carefully apply the "techniques of teaching acting and dramatization to the classroom teaching of English (Lester, M. in the forward to Via, 1976, p. xiii). Out of Via's work comes "four golden rules for language teaching through drama" (1987, p. 112): 1) *Self*, much like Barnes' development of the individual, refers to the creation of self-identity through an actor becoming comfortable with the expression of his emotions and individual feelings. 2) "*The magic if*," adapted from Stanislavski, is a technique that allows students to as ask, what if, and place themselves into any role or perspective. It is the origin of Livingstone's role-play (1983). 3) *Imagination*, closely related to *the magic if* is more concerned with *setting*. According to Via, *imagination* is the tool that allows a student to place himself into any environment, whether visited or not, invoking what later would become known as *simulation*. And 4) *The five senses*: sense of self, audience, relationship between self and audience, setting, and goal. For classroom application, Via submitted that being aware of ourselves, others, our surroundings, and our motivation to deliver meaning was the primary goal of language (1987).

In further discussion of Via's work and its alignment to Kumaravadivelu's post-method macrostrategies (1994) (See Appendix) and the communicative principles mentioned in Spada (2007), it is helpful to look at Via's contribution to theatre in the classroom as well. He not only pushed for play production but also was the first to talk about its dual role in the language classroom. For Via, theatre, like other pedagogies (i.e., task-based learning, etc.) has the double function of being both an end in itself and a topic for discussion and analysis, including it functioning as a vehicle for the authentic communication that must go on behind the scenes in preparation, rehearsing, and the business of production. He went on further to tell of the motivational benefits stemming from student ownership and leading to learner autonomy. In his words, theater is "real...language set in its appropriate cultural setting" (1987, p. 122), "it provides a good picture of language in its socio-cultural environment and shows us how the situation affects the language." (Via, 1976, p. 6). In that, "language becomes the tool it is intended to be...and [students] make the language 'theirs'" (p. 7). It is this concept that seems the prototype for both the communicative approach (Spada, 2007) and all Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategies, with particular focus on the first, second, fourth, sixth, eighth, ninth, and tenth (1994) (See Appendix).

In the post-Via world, language teachers were starting to become acquainted with drama techniques and applying them to their language teaching, yet not all agreed with him. As already mentioned, Alan Maley and Alan Duff (1978), for example, highly disagreed with the idea that drama should lead to theatre. According to them, "[dramatic activities'] value is not in what they lead up to but in what they *are*, in what they bring out *right now*" (p. 1).

Other contributions to the world of drama in the language classroom give way to a discussion of pragmatics in second language education and student motivation. Without ever using the term pragmatics, and piggy-backing on Via's work, it was Maley and Duff that first attempted to define and legitimize drama in the classroom through the need for pragmatics in language learning. They attempted to show that a gap existed between traditional methods of language teaching and how the language was actually used. They contended that drama be the device to fill that gap. They wrote that "many of the skills we most need when speaking a language, foreign or not, are those which are given least attention in the traditional text-book: adaptability, speed of reaction, sensitivity to tone, insight, anticipation; in short, *appropriacy*" (1978, p. 2). These days, while the term *appropriacy* would be replaced with *appropriateness*, by looking past the words of the language and focusing on their function, it places pragmatics at the forefront of L2 learning and sets the stage for authors such as Whiteson and Horovitz (2002) who focus on function in the organizational approach to their textbook, *The Play's the Thing*. This focus on function, in relation to the sociocultural implications on language, also promotes Kumaravadivelu's fifth and tenth macrostrategies (1994) (See Appendix).

Maley and Duff's views on motivation were also an advancement in the use of drama as pedagogy in the language classroom. They believed that the motivational potential of drama was inherent in it being unpredictable. Because drama "draws on the entire human resources of the class and that each technique, . . . [it] yields a different, a unique, result every time it is practiced" (p. 8). Also, they felt that because drama is a collaborative activity, the effect of students working together, interacting, and building on each other's individual successes in order to succeed as a group, it has the ability to even the playing field in a language classroom. Even if learners come with different needs at different levels, drama can unify students and create an environment for peer-to-peer modeling, as well as "strike a balance between fluency and accuracy" (1978, p. 9 & Sam, Wan Yee, 1990), characteristics of both the communicative approach and Kumaravadivelu's first, second, and third macrostrategies (1994) (See Appendix).

A few years later came Susan Holden's *Drama in Language Teaching* (1981). Like Maley and Duff's work, Holden also attempts to fill the gaps that she has identified between traditional language teaching and the actual needs of the learners:

Another aspect of oral communication overlooked in much classroom practice is the way in which the nature of that communication changes according to the role one is playing at any given moment. This in turn is affected by our feelings, the environment, and our relationship with the people or person we are communicating with. (p. 2)

Holden states that it is up to the teacher to provide authentic opportunities that prepare second language learners for authentic language situations in an attempt to bridge the gap between the classroom and the outside world where "learners are asked to communicate 'totally'" (p. 7). For Holden, dramatic activities with a focus on simulation work can provide these opportunities for learners. She also warns that teachers should not try to over-protect their students, stating that such protection from the "coughs and hesitations" of real language doesn't exist in reality. Involved in this warning is Holden's notable attempt to define and catalog the paralinguistic features of language, which, according to her, must be leaned in the same way as if they were vocabulary, in context and appropriate for the situation. At the core of Holden's work is a strong parallel to Kumaravadivelu's sixth, ninth, and tenth macrostrategies (1994) (See Appendix).

Another parallel to Holden's work comes out of the awareness that speakers take on a "role" when communicating with others, found in Carol Livingstone's *Role Play in Language Learning* (1983). As the definitive source on role-playing, Livingstone does a lot to modernize the discussion and presents a text that defines, situates, and models role-playing and its value to the teaching of pragmatics in L2 learning. She gives seven aspects of role-playing that can be transferred to authentic communication: 1) formality, 2) register (linguistic knowledge specific to unique situations such as *at a wedding* or *in an office*), 3) function, 4) attitude, 5) para-linguistic features (i.e., stress, rhythm, tone, speed, etc.), 6) extra-linguistic features (i.e., gestures, facial expressions, etc.), and 7) appropriateness. It is Livingstone's sections on the extra-linguistic features and appropriateness of language that open up to a

discussion on socio-cultural difference between a person's first and second languages. In researching this review, Livingstone seems to be the first to make this semantic connection, which aligns well with Kumaravadivelu's ninth and tenth macrostrategies (See Appendix) in their raising of cultural awareness and ensuring social relevance respectively (1994).

Livingstone (1983) goes further in her assertion that role-playing has its advantages in language learning. Three advantages that she discusses are: 1) its potential to maximize student activity, a direct correlation to Kumaravadivelu's first macrostrategy (1994), 2) a motivational advantage in the areas of content relevance and practicality, maintaining student interest, and class discipline, and 3) role-playing's ability to account for mixed ability groups, which she also relates to student motivation and discipline.

In regards to role-playing and its connection to the communicative approach to language teaching, Livingstone is cited by Wan Yee Sam (1990) and furthers her argument by directly connecting the advantages of what he has termed *role-simulation* to the strategies involved in the communicative approach in L2 learning.

Because of the contributions made by Barnes, Via, Maley and Duff, Holden, and Livingstone, drama, theatre, role-playing and simulation, in their many forms, can hardly be separated from the language classroom.

#### 4. Contemporary Research

This section examines the more contemporary research in the field. While most of the focus is on case studies and action research, some scholars go further in their quantitative and qualitative attempts at analysis. First, I would like to briefly look at some recent action research reports: the work of Matsuzaki (2005), Miccoli (2003), and Aita (2010). While none are supported by quantitative or qualitative analysis, the case-studies are valuable in that they demonstrate some of the manifestations of drama in the L2 classroom.

Matsuzaki's work (2005) focuses on adapting what she calls the drama method in an L2 class of upper grade elementary students in Japan. While hers is not so much research as it is a lesson plan supported by research, her work does draw on the social constructivist perspective (Vygotsky's idea that learning is constructed through interactions with others) in placing drama at the center of language learning. From this she is able to construct a lesson that combines the four skills while utilizing the drama technique *hot-seating*, a form of role-playing. What Matsuzaki does give in the way of analysis and lesson evaluation are the results of a post-lesson questionnaire. She found that using drama in her classroom enhanced student motivation for learning English and lead to greater sociocultural awareness, which is Kumaravadivelu's ninth strategy (1994) (See Appendix). As a side note, she insists that drama is also ideal in promoting peer interaction and collaboration.

Miccoli's work (2003) is similar to Matsuzaki's in scope, yet looks into action research in the classroom and provides feedback in the form of student's oral responses. What Miccoli presents are the results of an investigation into the value of using drama in a university classroom in Brazil. Drawing on the work of Via, among others, and implementing portfolios as a form of reflection and assessment, Miccoli encourages the use of drama for its transformative and emancipatory effects on language learning. Over the course of twice a week for 15 weeks, 37 students took part in the study and worked together toward the production of six one-act plays. In her discussion and conclusion she focuses on the transformative experiences recalled by her students, for example, she found that "the confrontation of fears, and the taking of risks, lead to an improvement in their oral skills, as a consequence of understanding the aspects that underlie oral communication, i.e., that speaking is not only about words and structure and pronunciation, but feelings, motivations, and meanings" (Miccoli, 2003). In short, language is nothing if not a sociocultural experience. Throughout Matsuzaki and Miccoli's work, there is direct correlation to Kumaravadivelu's ninth macrostrategy (See Appendix) and the communicative approach.

Next, while I found that large-scale analytical studies are rare and only have begun recently in the field of drama as pedagogy in L2 learning, they do, however, exist (Aita, 2010; Fortney, 2010). Below, this paper examines the work done by Gorjian, Moosavinia, and Japripour (2010), Ryan-Scheutz and Colangelo (2004), Bang (2003), and Raquel (2011).

Gorjian, Moosavinia, and Japripour's study (2010) out of Iran involved 60 intermediate EFL students enrolled in English drama II classes. Participants were 18 to 24 years old and randomly divided into an experimental and a control group. With the control group, the students were directed to read the literature; while the literature was presented in a traditional and explicit manner (PPP). The experimental group received the content indirectly through role-playing and dramatic activities. At the end of the course, a 30 multiple-choice question achievement test with a reliability score of .90 was administered to determine content retention. The experimental group's attitudes were also surveyed using a retrospective think-aloud technique during and after instruction. The question to be answered: "Will EFL students acquire a higher understanding of a play through traditional or performance-based approach to teaching drama" (p. 8)?

Their results showed a significant difference between the two groups' posttest scores with the experimental group scoring a mean of 9.5 points higher than that of the control group. As for the report protocol, it allowed the researchers to examine student attitudes about the classroom environment, their motivation, and how they enjoyed the activities. Overall, the feedback showed that the experimental group had much more positive attitudes toward class participation and activities, which lead to greater motivation throughout the instruction and assessment. They also showed that with dramatic activities, taking focus off the one and placing it on the many through group and communicative activities, there is a reduction in stress and pressure to perform. These results support the use of dramatic activities to enhance content and student performance and, in general, make a case for drama as a tool in L2 content-based classes.

The next study comes out of the University of Notre Dame. Ryan-Scheutz and Colangelo (2004) present a case study that explores the effectiveness of full-scale, theatre production on L2 learning. The authors of the study hypothesized that "the diverse communication tasks necessary for the project, and the motivation generated by a common and public goal, make foreign language theatre production particularly conducive to learning (p. 374) and lead to higher competence in interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes of communication as well as a reduction of students' inhibitions and great confidence.

In their study, 11 L2 learners were followed as they auditioned, were cast, and participated in an Italian theatre production over a 10-week period. Wanting to understand if the theatre experience was more effective for students at different levels of L2 proficiency, Participants with various levels of L2 proficiency were chosen for the study. Once chosen, the participants were assigned to cast or crew roles. They were actors, stage managers, or designers of sets, lighting, sound, costumes, or makeup and fulfilled these roles surrounded by native speakers of Italian. Immersed in the L2, they then went through the full process of play production including text analysis, preproduction, rehearsals, and performance. With the results of oral and written preproduction and postproduction tests completed by cast and crew, along with observations made by the researchers, the researchers found that there was a general trend of "improvement in oral proficiency, reading comprehension, knowledge of language structures and idioms, and writing proficiency" (p. 381). Along with the formal assessment, students were also asked to complete a perceptions survey, which showed that students generally agreed on the positive benefits of theatre in L2 learning.

Results showed improved accuracy, fluency, and confidence in L2 communication between participants across all L2 proficiency levels. Most notable may be the two areas that showed the most improvement: knowledge of cultural gestures and the use of vocabulary in speaking. It became apparent to the researchers that the physical and dynamic nature of theatre played a part in these improvements. Also according to the researchers, the fact that students were not directly learning the L2 but rather using it as a tool in an authentic environment to achieve a goal could have been the reason behind improved vocabulary use.

While I find it a valuable pilot study there were, however, some limitations and problems with the study. First, while all students showed a general improvement in the four skills, results were not broken down to show which students showed the most



improvement, for example, it is likely that the students who were cast as actors, who would have had the most interaction with the script, would have shown the most improvement in reading and perhaps writing; yet, because their oral communication focused on memorization of prewritten text, their speaking fluency and listening may not have improved.

Bang, in 2003, aimed to investigate how drama activities in the EFL classroom would improve college students' communicative ability in their L2 at Myongji University in Korea. The analysis was both quantitative and qualitative. Four research questions were posed: 1) Do drama activities in the L2 classroom lead to improvement in a learners communicative ability?; 2) What is the nature of classroom interaction between participants in drama activities?; 3) What are the students' attitudes towards their classroom experience?; and 4) How do the students perceive themselves in such an environment? Data was collected through pre- and post- oral proficiency tests as well as interviews and class observation.

Over the course of a semester, students, 12 male and 8 female of varying English proficiencies, were instructed in English through the use of dramatic activities. Results from the pre- and post- oral proficiency tests showed that there were improvements in speech clarity, amount of communication units, and production rate. The results of the quantitative analysis were the most interesting in that they showed that the students produced 94 individual attitudes towards drama activities, both positive and negative; which for this literature review, is the only time a study has suggested that drama activities can have a negative effect on motivation. Of the positive attitudes, 30% were cognitive, 26% affective, 24% sociocultural, and 20% linguistic. Of the negative attitudes, cognitive issues were also highest with 43%. According to Bang (2003), three negative responses to drama-oriented activities were discovered: "students were discouraged by other student's progress, skepticism in the benefits of 'playing', and lack of teacher feedback" (p. 29).

Bang's study is useful in that it provides a balanced feedback on not only the effectiveness of drama on L2 learning but also the attitudes and perceptions of the students in such classes.

More recently (2011), Michelle R. Raquel takes for granted the nature of drama to have a positive impact on L2 learning in various contexts. For this paper, I submit Raquel's work as an example of where I think the field of drama in L2 pedagogy is heading. No longer do teachers question the value of communicative tasks in the language classroom, no longer do they segregate drama to a stage; teachers today, instead, know that language learning cannot be separated from the learning of pragmatics, and they are comfortable with role-playing and other dramatic activities to get across both linguistic and sociolinguistic concepts (Aita, 2010; Fortney, 2010; Raquel, 2011). Raquel (2011) puts forth that "from a psychological perspective, language is a psychological and cultural tool that mediates thinking and learning through social interactions with others in an environment" (p. 94). From this, the motivation for her study lies in the idea that in each unique 'environment,' a learner's sociocultural background, will react differently with the impact of a full theatre production on their L2 learning. It is this sociocultural component that is the focus of Raquel's work. She argues that because sociocultural factors are shown to impact language learning in Hong Kong, sociocultural factors must also have a measureable impact on the use of drama as pedagogy in the L2 learning as well. Her study sets out to determine such impact by answering the following questions: 1) What sociocultural factors shape the experience of English theatre productions in Hong Kong as a language learning environment?; and 2) Are theatre productions good language learning environments in Hong Kong (Raquel, 2011)?

Raquel's study (2011) involved 42 participants. They were Hong Kong university students and held diverse roles in the production from actor to crew. The production lasted seven months including preparation and rehearsals. Rehearsals were held biweekly, three hours each, while the crew also met at the same times. Reflective journals and pre- and post- production interviews/questionnaires were used for assessment. For Raquel, the pre-production interviews showed correlation with established profiles of Hong Kong learners found in past research. Coupled with the post-production assessment, her work showed that the conditions and activities in the full theatre production environment offered students several opportunities: 1) the opportunity to develop oral skills of pronunciation, stress, and intonation (Miccoli, 2003); 2) the opportunity to realize connections between

language and thought and become aware of paralinguistic skills neglected in their education background (Maley & Duff, 2005); and 3) the opportunity to learn in an authentic environment (Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo, 2004). Results showed little evidence that the student's sociocultural environment played a part in their L2 learning through participation in a theater production and begs to that further research be done. Her conclusion highlights some of the limitations and problems with her work. She notes that the director has a monumental impact on the dynamics of a theatre production and that in such an L2 learning environment, a director would need be sensitive to the needs of L2 learners, and her research did not account for this variable. Also, because only six participants out of the original 42 kept journals throughout the process, most of the quantitative analysis was based on the questionnaires only. She suggests that while valuable, the effectiveness of journals in the collection of data would be more valuable if a greater number were surveyed.

Overall, Raquel's work is valuable because it places sociocultural context at the heart of drama, and even though not supported by her findings, her postulation that the sociocultural backgrounds of L2 learners do affect how they react to drama as pedagogy in L2 learning has merit. I believe that the future of the field lies in looking at different sociocultural contexts and their bearing on the use of drama as a language-learning tool. Although many teachers see the benefits of drama, many are unsure of how it could fit into their classrooms

## 5. Conclusion

Shown to be compatible with the communicative language approach as well as Kumaravadivelu's post-method macrostrategies for L2 teaching drama, as a tool in L2 learning, gives students

a virtual experience in functioning in extended, realistic discourse in the target language, learners are able to learn not only appropriate language use, but real communicative processes as well. Such activities as a whole stress the importance of providing language learners with more opportunities to interact directly with the target language—to acquire it by using it rather than to learn it by studying it. (Bang, 2003, p. 2)

It is the multidimensional aspects of the L2 classroom that begs for such a multidimensional approach to teaching; and it is drama that meets those requirements. Drama, with the early confusion surrounding its nature and debate over whether it should be confined to the classroom or allowed to flow onto a stage, is ready to be treated as a staple in L2 pedagogy.

Language teachers sometimes behave like the owners of large estates, putting up high walls round their territory and signs saying 'No Trespassing.' Drama is like the naughty child who climbs the high walls and ignores the 'No Trespassing' sign. It does not allow us to define our territory so exclusively—it forces us to take as our starting point *life* not language. [It] may involve music, history, painting, mathematics, skiing, photography, cooking—anything. It does not respect subject barriers. . . . Once students have discovered that there is another world, much closer and more real than that of the [the textbook], the problem of 'how to keep their interest' will gradually disappear. And, strangest of all, this other world does not need to be conjured up with expensive equipment—all that is needed is a roomful of human beings. (Maley & Duff, 1980)

## **Appendix**

Kumaravadivelu's 10 macrostrategies:

1. maximize learning opportunities
2. facilitate negotiated interaction
3. minimize perceptual mismatches
4. activate intuitive heuristics
5. foster language awareness
6. contextualize linguistic input
7. integrate language skills
8. promote learner autonomy
9. raise sociocultural consciousness
10. ensure social relevance

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