ENACTMENT OF THE EXPERT: Psychodynamic Pedagogy and the Role of Drama as a Learning Medium.

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The nature of Psychodynamic Enactment

This paper presents an innovative theoretical proposition of language development which argues that drama enactments can enhance the language learning of students if psychodynamic principles are implemented (Arnold, R., 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1995). As well evidence will be cited of current research in the field of drama as a learning medium. The psychodynamic approach to drama and language development postulated here, recognises the underpinnings of affect and its ability to enhance students' concept of self and hence learning. The nature of the research undertaken, in two of educational settings, determined that the principles underlying this research were explored in action, and reflected upon in writing by participants.

Drama in education has at its core the experience of an imagined existence; it is the process of enacting feelings and events which may have happened, or may be imagined to have happened. The literature reveals a tacit understanding that drama involved the underlying intra-subjective monologue with its conscious components and unconscious underpinnings so that some shift of appraisal gives meaning a different value.

The intra-subjective monologue when it extends to a dynamic text involving imagined other allows for the integration of text with external action, context, reference and the concept of self, and this further encourages developmental enactment. Early theorists and practitioners in drama in education inspired by the British 'Newcastle' school, have not fully explored this dynamic.

An example of Bolton's will illuminate this:

"Picture a 4 year old boy playing in the garden, distributing on various flat surfaces a number of seaside buckets which he keeps rushing to fill from the water-tap in the garage. "What are you doing?" asks his mother. "Cooking", he replies and disappears for more water. Had she pressed further, the mother might have been told that he was a hotel chef, getting ready for a birthday party. 'Cooking' was the title of the experience. The 'setting' was a hotel kitchen. And it also has a plot, a story line... the title, plot and setting

(Arnold: 1991a). The parent who responds to role, by enacting role reinforces the child as expert. The internalised role of expert is thus expanded via mirroring and as a result further external physicalisation will reshape the intra-subjective monologue and the spiral of growth begins.

Enactment is therefore a psychodynamic concept which refines and elaborates the early terms such as: roleplay, simulation, curriculum drama or creative dramatics. In this theory psychodynamic enactment is a process of physicalisation and expression of an intrasubjective monologue which becomes externalised in intersubjective dialogue. The theory has its genesis in the work of Vygotsky (1988), Kohut (1985), and Bruner (1986) and is given a pedagogical focus in Arnold (1991). Language development is also a psychodynamic process involving: psychological influences, cognition, enabling relationships and the differentiation of affectivity in social contexts. It is active, expressive, student centred, creative and imaginative, and may involve other symbolic activities like drawing, movement, model-making and play.

Ideally, this approach should be in evidence throughout all stages of education to encourage the development of both creative and analytic abilities. In a dynamic and interactive learning classroom the teacher will encourage exploration and self-expression through reading, writing, speaking and listening in the belief that students have the ability and the need to make sense of their world through experiences in a range of discourses and expressive modes. At the same time the

teacher will have a well-developed working model of what constitutes development in literacy and will be able to structure language tasks in ways which promote that development. The teacher will also be a model of a well-integrated, creative and analytic mind.

It is acknowledged in this work that the interactive classroom can provide the teacher, as well as the students, with opportunities for imaginative explorations of texts and human interactions, together with opportunities for self-reflection and cognitive development. The teacher's responsibility is to structure developmental language activities which increase the students' language awareness and language use, to provide an adult, responsive, constructive audience for their language work, along with the audiences provided by their peers, and to

the role of expert. It was possible therefore differentiate between prediction in role, and predictive set as an aid to reading comprehension.

Prediction plays a major role in reading for the beginning and fluent reader; in fact many psycholinguists maintain that `reading is impossible without prediction' (Smith, F. 1983 : 26). The more interesting question is how to implement effective pre-reading strategies, or predictive sets, to aid students in comprehending text? Enactment of the expert is one such approach.

The Sample, the approach and the text

Two groups of students were tested. Group one were primary school students, ages ten to eleven, at a Sydney school for the performing arts. Group two consisted of senior high school students ages fifteen to sixteen in year eleven at a suburban comprehensive school.

The text selected for the primary students was `The Twa Corbies' and for the secondary students Robert Browning's `My Last Duchess' was used. Both texts are known to be difficult for the particular age groups to read and understand. The texts contain a story-line and for the purpose of this study it was decided to explore whether the students could comprehend the essential narrative units, known as These include such elements as : Who is speaking? Where is narremes. the speaker? To whom is the speaker speaking? (the interlocutor) What happens? To whom does it happen? Clearly there are interpretive areas which could also be analysed, and in a larger study currently underway we are probing at a more delicate level; but for the purpose of this study the narreme level of analysis was seen as significant because it is a starting point and without this level of understanding it is difficult to proceed further in appreciating a text. The narremes understood were analysed from students' written recalls of the text.

The Primary School Case Study

The twenty seven students were in year five and six and the process was implemented by the researcher and the class teacher. The students, by virtue of the fact that they were at a performing arts school, were used to role-play. The students were divided into three groups, each with nine students. The composition of each group was carefully considered by the class teacher to reflect a similar distribution of ability in English, and likewise the groups were balanced for boys and girls.

The text chosen was The Twa Corbies (see Appendix 1).



The Method

Group A. These nine students were given a copy of the poem and listened to a reading of it. Copies of the poem were then removed and

each student was asked to write all they could recall of the text via the peer writing technique. That is, the student writes to an imaginary friend who was absent from the session (Arnold, R. 1991 : 12).

Group B. This group of students was given a pre-dictive set before listening to and reading the text. They were given the following extracts from the poem and asked to predict the full story.

The Twa Corbies

- ... As I was walking
- ... twa corbies making a mane
- ... where sall we gang.
- ... new slain knight
- ... lady's ta'en another mate
- ... pike out his bonny blue een

Following the reading of the complete text, students in group B undertook the same written recall task as group A.

Group C. This group was facilitated into the drama activity, enactment of the expert, via teacher-in-role (Morgan, N. and Saxton, J. 1987 : Chapter 3). The students became expert professors of English and the first task was to draw a map of their university, locate the English department and tell the teacher, in the role of a reporter, why their university was the best in the world. The `professors' then undertook the same predictive set as group B and the same written recall task as A and B.

Analysis of the students' written responses

Each student's piece of writing was analysed to ascertain how many narremes were recalled; that is, was the student able to recall that there is a human narrator, a crow/raven speaker, an interlocutor (another crow) and certain events, for example, plucking out the eye of the knight? We were generous in our interpretation of the young students recall. For example, if the student wrote `There is a dead man' we granted this as a narreme and did not insist on the use of the term `knight'.

The following tables indicate the narremes recalled by students in group A, B and C.



The Secondary School Case Study

This study was undertaken by teachers at the selected comprehensive school. Robert Browning's poem `My Last Duchess' was the text used. (see Appendix 2).

THE SAMPLE

The sample of forty two year eleven students was divided into three groups, A, B and C, balanced for boys and girls and mixed to reflect a similar distribution of ability in English based on the students' Year Ten School Certificate grade in English and their trial examination (modified) results. The student composition of each group was also carefully considered by the class teachers who were able to provide an overall judgement based on their knowledge of the students. The particular issue of NESB (Non-English Speaking Background) students was considered. The students had only limited experience of role-play.

THE METHOD

Group A

All fourteen students were given a copy of the poem. They then listened to a recording of the poem and followed the text. All copies of the poem were then removed, and the students were asked to write all that they could recall of the text, in answer to the question `What do you think the story is about? Recall as much of the story as you can.' Students discussed the poem neither with the teacher nor among

themselves.

Group B

This group of fourteen students was divided into three groups (consisting of 4, 5, 5). Each group was given a predictive set of extracts to discuss before reading the poem and had ten minutes to discuss these and report its findings to the question: `What do you think the full story is about?'

Extracts

*`That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,'

*`So, not the first Are you to turn and ask thus.' *`She had a heart too soon made glad,'

*`Sir, `twas all one! My favour at her breast, The dropping of the daylight in the West,'

*`My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name With anybody's gift.'

*`This grew; I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together.'



Following the predictive exercise the `professors' were told the full text had been found and were given a copy of it. They all listened to a recording of it. All copies were taken and the `professors' were asked individually to write down all they could recall of the story. No further discussion was allowed.

Analysis of the Secondary Students' Written Responses

Each student's piece of writing was analysed to ascertain how many narremes were recalled. The following tables indicate what narremes students recalled.

Table 5

Group A Student N1234567891011121314

Narremes: The Speaker..... Man....11..11..1. Nobleman..... Interest in the Arts..... Interlocutor..... Context1211.111..1.11 What happens.23.1...211..1

Total 14412211322022

Table 6

Group B Student 1234567891011121314

Narremes: The Speaker..... Man111111111111

Nobleman++ Interest in the Arts++++++ Interlocutor.111.1...1.1. Context1.1111...111. What happens443143112241..

Total 66646632346421

Table 7

Group C

III - III

many of these students were negative in their response and revealed that the text was quite meaningless for them. They wrote, for example:

`I don't understand the poem and I think mainly why is because of the way it was written in old English...'.

`It is hard to understand but it is about a man that misses his duchess...'.

`I didn't understand the poem too much as the way it was written and the words used were different. Maybe if I was concentrating I could have understood it...'.

`I think that the poem is about a painting of a dog, a show dog perhaps... `the last Duchess' as the poem is called was probably either the dog's name or they were just referring to how lovely the dog was...'.

By contrast the secondary students in group C the enactment group displayed strong engagement with the text, the majority wrote a page or more of comments and were confident about their own ability to gain meaning. They also tended to write in a more academic register which, we hypothesize, is a result of their assumed high status role. For example:

The story is about a marriage. The husband is still alive and he is looking at a painting on the wall and telling his friend about his life-time experiences with his wife...'.

`Pertaining to `My Last Duchess' this extract is a nobleman's account of what happened to his last marriage...'.

`A duchess, since dead, is being discussed. She was very popular at the time she lived but she was too easily pleased. She had, by marriage, inherited a 900 year old name...'.

The primary school students reflected the same engagement within respective groups. Typical of primary Group A's response is the following:

`I think it's about a man walking down the street and he hears a funny sound, it's these funny looking insects that are called the twa corbies and they like humans and eat their brains or something like that, then that makes them bigger'.

`I thought the story was about two birds (corbies) who were quiet friendly chaps that wanted to go for dinner. They were flying down the street. They found a nice restaurant and had dinner there. P.S. I didn't really understand what it is about so I just tried my best'.

Primary group C students displayed not only more engagement but more confidence in their approach. For example:

`I think it's about two Ravens wondering what to have for dinner. And there is a knight who hides and they are thinking about ripping out his golden hair and eat him up and see his bones white and ganging up on him. A man is watching and telling the story. One of the birds is a female and the other a male'.

`There was a man walking along and he heard two ravens talking. One said `where shall we go and eat tonight?' The other one said `behind a barn a knight that has been killed lies and that the only people that know he is there are his dog, his lady (wife I think) and the person who killed him.' The same raven says that when their nests have no food in them they can feast on the knight. Also the raven says that they can poke his guts out, and when there is no more flesh or anything on the knight his bones will be white'.

For these particular primary and secondary students, there seems evidence that drama as a learning medium is a strong strategy for aiding reading comprehension of narrative poetic text. These results give support for replication studies and such are underway at the



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APPENDIX 1

The Text The Twa CorbiesRavens

As I was walking all alane, I heard twa corbies making a mane; The tane unto the t'other say, The one `Where sall we gang and dine to-day?'

`In behint yon auld fail dyke, turf I wot there lies a new-slain knight; And nae body kens that he lies there, But his hawk, his hound, and lady fair.

`His hound is to the hunting gane, His hawk to fetch the wild-fowl hame, His lady's ta'en another mate, So we may make our dinner sweet.

Ye'll sit on his white hause bane, neck And I'll pike out his bonny blue een: Wi' ae lock o' his gowden hair, We'll theek our nest when it grows bare.thatch

`Mony a one for him makes mane, But nane sall ken whare he is gane: O'er his white banes, when they are bare, The wind sall blaw for evermair.'

APPENDIX 2

MY LAST DUCHESS FERRARA

That's my Duchess painted on the wall, Looking as if she were alive. I call That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands Worked busily a day, and there she stands. Will't please, you sit and look at her? I said `Frà Pandolf by design, for never read Strangers like you that pictured countenance, The depth and passion of its earnest glance, But to myself they turned (since none puts by The curtain I have drawn for you, but I) And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst, How such a glance came there; so, not the first Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, `twas not Her husband's presence only, called that spot

Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps Frà Pandolf chanced to say `Her mantle laps Over my lady's wrist too much', or `Paint Must never hope to reproduce the faint Half-flush that dies along her throat: ' such stuff Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough For calling up that spot of joy. She had A heart - how shall I say? - too soon made glad, Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er She looked on, and her looks went everywhere. Sir, `twas all one! My favour at her breast, The dropping of the daylight in the West, The bough of cherries some officious fool Broke in the orchard for her, the while mule She rode with round the terrace - all and each Would draw from her alike the approving speek, Or blush, at least. She thanked men - good! but thanked Somehow - I know not how - a"stepping into another's shoes", the adoption of an imagined role which may or may not occur in fictional contexts. However, the limitations of this simplistic metaphor were ENACTMENT OF THE EXPERT: Psychodynamic Pedagogy and the Role of Drama as a Learning Medium.

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Drama in education has at its core the experience of an imagined existence; it is the process of enacting feelings and events which may have happened, or may be imagined to have happened. The literature reveals a tacit understanding that drama involved "stepping into another's shoes", the adoption of an imagined role which may or may not occur in fictional contexts. However, the limitations of this simplistic metaphor were first explored by Bolton (1979) when he stated that the good drama teacher does not want children or adults to escape from who they are - rather the opposite. He or she wants a quality of hyper-awareness that is generated by the "very ambivalence of being oneself but adopting an attitude, not necessarily one's own, relevant to some imagined context." (Bolton, 1979-64).

In later writings Bolton (1984) has developed his concern for the social/performance context. He finds mimesis, which is usually interpreted as imitation, a limited basis for understanding drama in education. His focus has turned to imperative tension, the outside world, the descriptive and existential phase which he sees as two separate dynamics. In this we see Bolton and others in the Heathcote

inspired drama in education world rightly defending drama as a learning medium against the performance art form emphasis by acknowledging that implicit in the educative value of drama are theatre/ performance principles and practice. However, their attempts to conceptualise a process drama and theatre continuum does not analyse at a delicate level the psychodynamic force of enactment. Role, dramatic engagements and ultimately performance rely on this dynamic, and the process of enacting: a physicalisation (including gesture, movement, voice, body in space), emerges from introspection in interaction with external stimuli.

Psychodynamic enactment is an externalisation of an intra-subjective monologue which become manifest in an inter-subjective dialogue. Ιn this process the monologue and dialogue are energised by affective and aesthetic understandings and will be realised and expressed through thought, language and action. Further in the process of realisation and expression there is the potential for enactment to energise and reshape both the inter-subjective dialogue ands if she ranked My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame This sort of trifling? Even had you skill In speech - (which I have not) - to make your will Quite clear to such an one, and say, `Just this Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss, Or there exceed the mark' - and if she let Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse, - E' en then would be some stooping; and I choose Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt, Whene'er, I passed her; but who passed without

Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet The company below, then. I repeat, The Count your master's known munificence Is ample warrant that no just pretence Of mine for dowry will be disallowed; Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though, Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity, Which Claus of Innsbruck case in bronze for me!

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