

## **Drama in Education: Learning Development through Drama**

Part of a professional training requirement was fulfilled by, *Drama in Education*, an introductory 30-hour course coached by Jeffrey Tan in 2003 at Townsville, Singapore. This interesting course offered the opportunity to create dramatic license to play and experience the roles of many characters within a short time span in each lesson. Before work on scenes members participated in warm-ups in the form of vocal-cum-kinesthetic expressions. Human architectures of various scenes, both static and animate, and verbal exchanges were improvised in split seconds, complemented with (in)appropriate facial expressions. Scripts were created in some of the sessions, and imagination went loose in many scenes. (I remembered how I kissed the hand of a ‘collaborator’ to annoy my ‘former spouse’ in a particular drama exercise on *outside the cinema*). This report describes the fruition of a Malay drama education experience in a Mother Tongue Camp on 3 June 2004.

The opportunity for drama education appeared in 2003 when the idea of Mother Tongue Camp for the June vacation in 2004 was proposed. A 2.5-hour slot of enrichment for the Malay camp participants was made available. A Drama in Education session was the natural outcome. Drama was preferred to mind mapping because of the spontaneity that was paramount in learning about thinking (Sew 2006a, 2006b, 2006c).

Theatre and drama are conducive to creating conversations (Sew 2004). The creative synergy in improvisation is similar to various daily structures in life, which offer no opportunity for rehearsal. The first half of the session was made up of the following:

1. 7 minutes of aerobics, further broken into a 3 minute fast paced work-out and 4 minutes of stretching exercises.

The participants were apprehensive in the first exercise but seemed to enjoy the second slower regime as they tilted their necks and bent arms, which is necessary to facilitate their psychomotor functions.

2. 10 minutes of vocal expression in a circle

The participants expressed themselves with the word “hey,” accompanied by a movement or animation. The practice was immediately followed by another round of vocal expression of each participant’s name, coupled with gestures.



[Hey!] Calling in unison

3. 10 minutes of identifying friends’ drama

Following from the vocal expressions, the participants identified a friend by imitating her gestures and calling her name. The accurate attempt prompted the target to react in a similar manner for a new dramatic identification. This one seemed to be enjoyable for most participants.

After the break, the 12 participants were divided into 3 groups.

4. 25 minutes of Picture Postcard

Each group was asked to portray a scene from *American Idol*, *Titanic*, or *Smallville*. The preparation time was 2 minutes for each dramatisation. Each group was asked to comment on the scene performed by the other group. This segment derived most laughter and learning noises. Appreciation of each group’s effort was accorded with applause.

5. 20 minutes of Dramatising a Poem

The participants were given a copy of the poem by Usman Awang (1986) entitled *Hadiah Anakku* (My Son's Gift). I recited the poem as they followed silently. The content of the poem was explained and its significance was elaborated with current examples. Each group was instructed to act out a favourite stanza. After the process from each group the audience applauded to show appreciation followed by casual comment on the emotions of the actors, the amount of gesture and the choice of strategies pertaining to positioning, character distribution, and eye contact.



Welcome to my son's birthday

#### 6. 15 minutes of blending and remaking of the *Hadiah Anakku*

The scenes of each group were rearranged and acted according to the order of the stanzas in the poem. One overlapping scene was removed and a new scene based on a neglected stanza was introduced. Using the existing scenes, the instructor fused the act together, attempting to plot a coherent play. The last scene incorporated all actors by deploying the remaining actors as small innocent children that formed the foreground for the narrator to end the poem in her narration (Sew 2005).



A hope for world peace

At the end of the session, the participants were given paper and pencil to reflect upon their experience. They seemed tired and disinterested when it came to the paper and pencil exercise. The comments comprised general remarks such as “fun,” an “enjoyable activity,” although one disliked the background music. One suggested using a radio channel for the aerobic workout, but she wanted the English popular song station, which would defeat the purpose of a Mother Camp. Nonetheless, drama in education played a complimentary role as enrichment and co-curricular activity in my workshop.

#### References

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*MRL, CHIJ ST Theresa's Convent, Singapore.*