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## Process drama in the classroom

### A case study of developing participation for advanced EAL learners in an international school

Dearbhla McDonnell, Aisling O'Boyle

*This paper reports on a study of the use of process drama in an international primary school in the Netherlands. The research investigated the extent to which using process drama could develop participation for advanced EAL learners. In addition, we sought to understand pupils' perspectives. Using a qualitative methodology, we undertook a case study approach focusing on six advanced EAL learner pupils (9-10-year-olds). We implemented the process drama approach during a series of nine science lessons. We collated and analysed Video recording of lessons, the class teacher's written observations, a research journal, two interviews and a focus group with the case study participants using an arts-based framework of participation, previously employed by Pérez-Moreno (2018). We deployed embodied research methods. The findings suggest that using process drama as a teaching methodology increased participation, but not immediately. In addition, pupils who had not previously spoken out in lessons began to volunteer their ideas. All case study pupils reported that they considered that their participation increased.*

#### 1 Introduction

As multiple studies in the Scenario research archives demonstrate, drama is a unique teaching tool, vital for language development and invaluable as a method to explore a range of subject areas. The area of enquiry considered in this paper examines the extent to which the use of process drama in the classroom affects the participation of advanced English as additional language learners (EAL learners). To be precise, the primary interest is not on second language acquisition or the attainment of subject knowledge but rather it focused on the educational opportunities of students for whom English is not their first or mother language. Often for reasons of funding rather than proficiency, EAL students who are considered 'advanced' no longer receive language support in school, under the assumption that students will 'fit into' regular classroom instruction. However, decades of studies of classroom discourse highlight the passivity of those in the role of 'pupil' or 'learner' and the arguments and evidence for opening-up more active oral spaces (e.g., Hardman, 2008). Situated within this context, this paper reports on a study designed to examine 1) the use of process drama pedagogy to engage participation of advanced English as additional language learners (EAL learners) and 2) the

pupils' perspectives on their experience of a process drama pedagogy in the context of a science class.

## 2 Literature review

Lee et al. (2015) in their meta-analysis of 47 studies between 1985 and 2012 illustrate the breadth of research on the use of drama as a teaching tool and the need for research to investigate educational outcomes other than those focused on achievement. The area of enquiry considered in this paper responds to that need and examines the extent to which the use of process drama in the classroom affects the participation of advanced EAL learners. This section will define process drama and participation before exploring relevant literature on this topic - particularly in relation to additional language learners.

Process drama has been an influential classroom tool and is associated with the work of the Irish playwright Cecily O'Neill. The term was first used by O'Toole (1990) in a conference, and first appeared in press in a short magazine article by Haseman (1991). The first scholarly publication on process drama is by O'Toole (1992). Process drama has at times been used interchangeably with drama in education (Bolton, 1979), theatre games (Spolin, 1986), theatre in education (Jackson & Vine, 2013) and drama-based pedagogy (Lee et al., 2015). However, we use the term process drama in this research as it gives a focus to learning through drama (Karavoltsov & O'Sullivan, 2011), rather than rehearsed performance (O'Neill, 1995). The definition used within this research is taken from the work of Wells and Sandretto (2017) who stated, process drama is "used to describe a model of drama in education in which the students work within a variety of drama conventions and improvised roles alongside their teacher, who also often works in role to guide and structure the lesson" (p. 182). Drama conventions are a reference to specific techniques or strategies employed such as: freeze frame, tableaux, dramatisation, puppetry, depiction, slow motion, hot seating, open and close, seven levels of tension, still image, teacher monologue and dialogue (Farmer, 2012). They are tools used by a drama teacher to help develop enquiry skills, to encourage negotiation, understanding and creativity. Improvised roles refer to an unrehearsed performance. Freebody (2010) explains that improvisation incorporates spontaneous speech and movement. *In role* means the teacher or pupils are pretending to be a different character and delivering instructions as that person. Freebody (2010) discusses how the "students belong to (at least) three memberships simultaneously: student, drama creator and character" (p. 213) when they are in role.

In its generic use, participation refers to the action of taking part in something and can refer to talking, listening or involvement (Bozyigit et al., 2014; Mercer et al., 2017). Literature highlights the benefits of participation in school contexts (Varis et al., 2018). This applied

research context on classroom interaction is therefore more open to the application of process drama. Indeed, O'Sullivan (2018) outlines that within research studies, it is "beginning to feature as a key teaching, learning and assessment strategy in many publications across a diverse range of academic and professional disciplines" (p. 623).

Mercer et al. (2017) suggest students need oracy skills to participate effectively in classroom life and in wider society. With regard to drama in education, this is evident in research foci such as speaking and drama in preschool education (Tombak, 2014), drama and English in foreign language learning (Hulse & Owens 2019; Reed et al., 2014), reducing EAL speaking anxiety through drama (Atas, 2015) and improving oral communication through drama (Nfor, 2020). These studies highlight the connectedness between speaking, listening and participation. They demonstrate alongside the work on oracy (Mercer et al., 2017), how talking is closely linked to the concept of listening and both are jointly required to constitute effective participation (McCarthy, 2010; O'Boyle, 2014). Indeed, from a practitioner perspective, Walqui and Heritage (2018) reflect this view on speaking and listening in their discussion on the role of the teacher who aims for "effective participation". They suggested that the practitioners' role is to make classroom talk or substantive oral practice meaningful. In order for it to be considered "effective" participation, teachers must create a trusting classroom culture in which students feel that whatever level of language they can produce, their contributions will be valued in relation to their talking and listening.

### 3 Methodology

This research investigated the extent to which using process drama could develop participation for advanced English as additional language learners (EAL learners). We exploited a case study approach. The study focused on six children in a Year 5 class (aged 9-10). They are advanced EAL learners attending an International School in the Netherlands, which is spread across several campuses. The school has an intake of 97% EAL pupils and classes run with a maximum of twenty-four students. The school enjoys specialist EAL teachers who work alongside class teachers. Although International Schools attract a transient population, this particular campus population has little movement and most of the students in this Year 5 class had been learning through English for around six years. The sampling was purposive. Case study participants were chosen by the EAL specialists and included students who were advanced EAL learners but those that still received individual English teaching.

The research questions investigated were: 1) "To what extent does process drama affect the participation of advanced EAL learners in lessons?" and 2) "What are pupils' perspectives on their participation during lessons that adopt a process drama pedagogy?" In order to answer

these questions, methods employed included: a research journal, videoed observations, class teacher observations, pupil interviews and a focus group.

The focus of this study was the experiences of six case study participants within nine science lessons conducted through a process drama pedagogy. Therefore, in order to gain a detailed account of their experiences, we considered a qualitative case study methodology most apt. The key learning outcomes in the science lessons included reproduction in plants and describing the differences in the life cycles of mammals including humans, amphibians, insects and birds. The drama conventions included: teacher in role, hot seating, marking the moment, conscience alley, mantle of the expert, spotlight, thought tracking, still images, narration and role play (Farmer, 2010). The former device 'teacher in role' was the device met with most enthusiasm. The English educator Dorothy Heathcote (1926-2011) constructed this device.

The roles used in this research included the character "Philomena Plant' who owned a Botanical Gardens and needed the assistance of scientists to help plan an investigation into the lifecycle of a flower; a gameshow host interviewing a class of children on the quiz show 'are you smarter than a 5<sup>th</sup> grader;' an agony aunt who received letters from various insects curious about their life cycle; a detective and her team trying to distinguish the differences between complete and incomplete metamorphosis; a TV presenter with her assistants doing a voiceover of the stages of the lifecycle of a bird and the musical director of 'Lifecycles the Musical' with the successful auditionees. We wrote this research from an interpretivist viewpoint through an overarching qualitative case study methodology.

In this International School children are assessed by the EAL specialist team annually and twenty-two pupils within the chosen class were EAL learners. Through these assessments, the EAL team chose the students they felt would benefit most from one-to-one English lessons throughout the year. Ten children in this class were chosen to receive this additional attention and the six that were seen to need the most support were the six students we chose as a sample for this study. We reference below the observations articulated by the class teacher on the behaviour and attitudes of the subject pupils prior to this project.

Lee et al. (2012) elaborate that drama is more closely related to language arts due to its narrative subject matter. Although positive effects such as knowledge, critical thinking ability, confidence and communication can be seen by pairing science and drama (Braund et al., 2015; Dorion, 2009; McEwen et al., 2014; Sloman and Thompson, 2010), Piazzoli (2018) explains that this integrated learning approach within the science curriculum is uncommon and is not customary practice in primary years. Piazzoli's project evaluated the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) with 6-8-year-olds in Italy. The project took

place over 20 weeks and involved 150 children with minimal English learning through teacher in role. Over time their language ability and motivation increased.

Pupil	General Behaviour
Pupil 1	When feeling confident in a subject contributes regularly. This is mostly apparent in English and History lessons. Enjoys group work and sharing her work.
Pupil 2	Doesn’t participate greatly. Relies on adults (LSA). Has dyslexia and dyscalculia, also suspect processing difficulties. Participation is always minimal.
Pupil 3	Doesn’t join in with class discussions. Sits quietly in lessons.
Pupil 4	Sometimes objects to joining in.
Pupil 5	Concentration is usually weak and she relies heavily on her friends for clues for how to progress. She gazes around a lot and accessing the curriculum can be difficult. She is usually hesitant and waits for others before committing herself.
Pupil 6	Strong contributor in all subject areas.

*Table 1: Overview of pupil behaviour*

To answer the research question, “To what extent does process drama affect the participation of advanced EAL learners in lessons?”, we used triangulation. This data included class teacher observations, observations of video recordings and a research journal. In order to address our second research question “What are pupils’ perspectives on their participation during lessons that adopt a process drama pedagogy?”, we formed a focus group. The audio recorded individual interviews took place with the six case study participants after the first four science lessons that deployed process drama and again after the next four lessons, delivered within a ten-week period. Following on from the ninth and final lesson, we introduced a one-hour video recorded focus group with all six case study participants using drama activities.

In seeking to address the extent to which using process drama in an international primary classroom context could develop participation, Pérez-Moreno’s (2018) framework, grounded in a combination of developmental psychology and anthropology, was applied to the class teachers’ observations, the video recorded material, and the research journal as follows:

- **Active audience role** was designated if students’ facial expressions or body language suggested participation by awarding attention to the actions of others.
- **Performer pointer** was attributed when partial involvement was observed but participation was not fully consistent or involvement was manifest but not necessarily by speaking or listening but copying the actions of others.

## McDonnell, O’Boyle: Process drama in the classroom

- Explicit actions in conjunction with an adult were referred to and coded as **performer pointer with an expert**. This was determined by the three observable concepts of participation: speaking, listening and involvement.
- **Performer proof without an expert** – when students were carrying out activities independently.

In addition, a modified version of Pérez-Moreno’s (2018) horizontal analysis system was used to examine the video recordings in relation to: time, context, drama convention or activity, and participants:

Time	Drama Convention	Observations
		Pupil 1:
Context	Participants	Pupil 2:
		Pupil 3:
Description		Pupil 4:
		Pupil 5:
		Pupil 6:

*Table 2: Analysis table template used to summarise video recorded observations*

During the nine lessons, Dearbhla McDonnell taught the lessons and the pupils’ class teacher (not the researchers) attended in the role of observer and was asked to complete live observations. The class teacher had extensive knowledge of the pupils through the lessons and was very familiar to them. Prior to the nine science classes, we conducted a training session using pre-recorded video material in order to familiarise the class teacher with the types of participation and the analysis template to be used in the observation. An example of the template used in these observations can be found below (see table 3).

Discuss the participation of x during these activities	Compare to general behaviour
Slide 1 – Welcome slide	
Slide 2 – Teacher in role	
Slide 3 – Role play	
Slide 4 – Mime	
Slide 5 – Hot seating	
Slide 6 – Mantle of the expert	
Slide 7 - Narration	

*Table 3: An example of the class teacher’s observation template*

The structure of the research journal that later added to the information gathered in the tables above included: general comments, drama conventions and games, case study observations, talk and speaking opportunities, type and examples of participation, interview reflections,

summaries on perspectives, links between participation and drama activities. Using the data sources and analyses, we wrote a narrative summary for each of the six case study participants. We discuss these case study narratives in the following section with extracts included for illustration. Two of the six narratives are included in full at the end of the paper (Appendix A and B).

In order to gain the pupil's perspectives on their experience of a process drama pedagogy, we completed two sets of pupil interviews with each of the case study participants and one focus group in which all six case study participants were present. The purpose of this was to ensure that the case study participants fully understood the meaning of participation and could consequently reflect on the lessons. Face to face individual, semi structured interviews took place on two occasions – once after the first four lessons and the next after completing another four. We used a performative embodied research approach (Piazzoli, 2018). This involved a focus group where we used drama conventions and games to address the research questions in the hope of overcoming any language difficulties and extrapolating reflections that were more accurate. O'Sullivan (2018) stated that role play can help explore meanings and the ways in which people understand things and it can be controlled by participants as they can stop, pause or extend the activity at will. Consequently, we exploited role play in the focus group setting. They began with a drama game called 'Where do you stand'? They were invited to stand in a position determined by their viewpoint. The terms strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree or strongly disagree were displayed along the line to guide participants but it was explained that it was permissible to stand between these terms. To simplify the challenge, statements such as 'I prefer cats to dogs' and 'chocolate ice cream is the best flavour' were used to ensure children understood the task. When understanding was met, they debated statements such as 'using drama in lessons helps me join in more'.

The next part of the focus group involved participants being asked to use the drama convention freeze frame followed by thought tracking to show what their understanding of participation was. In order to ascertain pupils' opinions on the different participatory roles (active audience, performer pointer, performer proof with an expert and performer proof without an expert) four teddy bears were introduced to represent these types (Winnie the watcher, Connor the copier, Pat the performer and independent Ian). These types of participation were explored and explained through drama conventions such as role play and still images. To finish the session, we played the drama game "Who's who?" - giving pupils the opportunity to reflect on their type of participation in each of the nine lessons by choosing and justifying the teddy that they thought most represented them in the lesson. The pupils also compared the type of participation they felt they displayed in other lessons compared

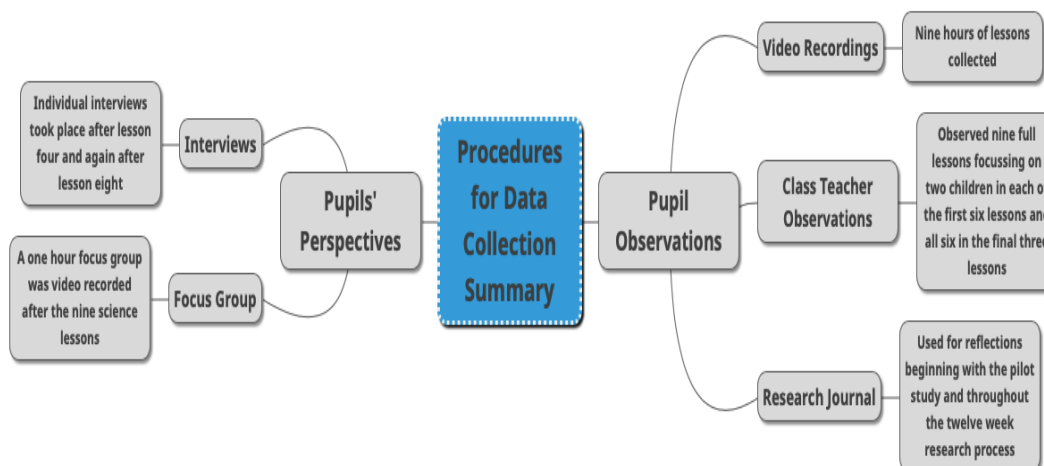


with the main type they adopted in these drama lessons. These were then noted on the table below.

	<b>Pupil 1</b>	<b>Pupil 2</b>	<b>Pupil 3</b>	<b>Pupil 4</b>	<b>Pupil 5</b>	<b>Pupil 6</b>
<b>Active audience</b>						
<b>Performer pointer</b>						
<b>Performer proof with an expert</b>						
<b>Performer proof without an expert</b>						

*Table 4: Analysis table template of type of participation identified by the case study group*

A summary of the procedures for data collection, to answer both questions is presented in Figure 1. This focussed on both pupil observations and pupil perspectives.



*Figure 1: Procedures for data collection summary*

We employed content analysis in this research (Lune & Berg, 2017). Miles and Huberman (2002) aimed to reduce complexity in analysing qualitative data and divided it into three phases which were used throughout this research: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. After the nine science lessons were taught, they were transcribed and analysed using an adapted version of Pérez-Moreno’s (2018) horizontal analysis system to unpick the transcripts. Therefore, to summarise the analysis of the video recordings, the steps that took place were:

1. We transcribed the videos transcribed after each lesson and added timings.
2. We made additional notes or observations from the video and added to the research journal’s spider diagram of each of the six case study participants.
3. Coding on transcript, labelling the type of participation taking place throughout the lesson. These were colour coded for each of the six individuals.

4. Coding - labelling the drama convention or activity taking place throughout the lesson.
5. Coding - labelling the activity as paired, individual, whole class or group.
6. We produced a table based on the work of Pérez-Moreno (2018) that summarised the following information: time, context, drama conventions, materials, participants and description.
7. We watched the video again, pausing for no more than 5 minutes at any particular point to note observations on the six case study participants which we colour coded and included gestures and contributions.
8. WE added the information gathered to the individual case study narrative summaries.

An example of the analysis table adopted from the work of Pérez-Moreno (2018) can be seen below (see table 5).

<b>Time</b>	<b>Drama Game</b>	<b>Observations</b>
Ends 8.55	Fruit Bowl	<b>Pupil 1: Joins in enthusiastically, understands game and vocabulary.</b>
<b>Talk</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Pupil 2: Joins in immediately, moves to be closer to friends.</b>
Teacher led introducing new scientific vocab	Teacher assigns parts of the flower to each individual	<b>Pupil 3: Absent.</b>
<b>Description</b>		<b>Pupil 4: Wins competition, talking in the beginning but later answers questions and joins in with game.</b>
Children sit on a cushion. They're given a name: anther, filament or stamen. Once they have practised, a pillow is removed, the child is out if their assigned plant part is called and they don't manage to swop places.		<b>Pupil 5: Plays game and when put out moves closer to the circle to continue watching.</b>
		<b>Pupil 6: Talks a little to peer but then answers teachers question and plays game successfully.</b>

*Table 5: Analysis table used to summarise video recorded observations of a drama game*

During the lesson, the class teacher made notes on two of the six case study participants. She was also encouraged to add any particularly interesting observations of the other case study participants if applicable. This way she observed all of them twice in detail by the end of lesson six and for the three remaining lessons she observed all six throughout the sessions as she felt that this would be useful towards the end of the process. Therefore five steps were carried out to analyse the class teacher's observations:

1. The class teacher familiarised herself with the template.
2. Made live observations drawing on her prior knowledge of the children.
3. We coded observations using the preselected categories.

4. We created a summary of each individual using the class teacher's observations in the research journal.
5. We gathered additional information which added to the narrative summary on each individual in terms of their participation in the lesson.

We utilised the research journal to provide an overview of case study observations as each of the six case study participants' observations were noted in each of the nine lessons. Step one involved initial observations made immediately after the lesson. Step two then saw the addition of the class teacher's observations. Step three used the video recorded lessons to add any additional observations from the video on each of the individuals which may have included direct quotes, movements or gestures. We added an analysis of each convention to every lesson, noting what type of participation (if any) was most apparent during the activity.

The focus group aimed to ensure children understood what participation was and what different types of participation looked like. Through a series of drama activities responses were video recorded, transcribed and consequently were able to be analysed in order to gain pupils' perspectives on their own participation. The interviews and focus group took place in English. The language used was child friendly and allowed opportunities for further clarification. An example of the transcription can be found below.

**Researcher:** I want to introduce you to my friends. This is my first friend 'Winnie the Watcher'. Winnie likes to watch the teacher, she listens to the teacher and nods along...So sometimes when I'm at the front I think she is joining in because although she's not saying anything, she is going like this or this. Winnie is making different expressions that show me she is joining in. I'm going to be the teacher and you're all going to be Winnie the Watcher (puts jacket on). Ok class, thank you for coming here today, we're going to have a science lesson. Today we will be learning about...Well done that was perfect. I saw lots of nodding and I got lots of eye contact. Who'd like to be the teacher now?

**Pupil 5:** Hello children thank you for coming...

The next platform we deployed to analyse the pupils' perspectives was the transcribing of audio recorded interviews. Each case study participant took part in two interviews that used between seven and ten semi structured questions and they were transcribed chronologically. Each reread the transcript a number of times to ensure understanding. We made notes about potentially significant issues or experiences, in the aspiration of identifying patterns, themes or categories within the collected data. These we coded into the preselected following categories: type of participation e.g. active audience, performer proof, performer proof with an expert and performer proof without an expert. We additionally coded the engagement,

knowledge, speaking opportunities and scientific vocabulary as they came up frequently in the interviews. We noted these on the original transcript as they appeared or surfaced in the individual interviews.

After we had completed the transcriptions and accompanying notes made using the coding system, we conducted a cross case analysis. Ponelis (2015) explains “rich descriptions in the form of case narratives allow the reader to judge the transferability of the interpretation and also the results, thereby also increasing dependability” (p. 542). We compiled a case study narrative in the research journal after the first set of interviews and again after the second. We used a content analysis approach to the group was to compare ideas from the focus group and interviews. The three case study narratives per person (based on the two interviews and a focus group) were both chronological and thematic, in that they told the ‘story’ of how each participant felt they participated in the lessons but also focused on issues that seemed to relate to personal learning, development and enjoyment. In relation to participation, these narratives looked at the types of participation discussed: active audience, performer pointer, performer proof with an expert and performer proof without an expert (Pérez-Moreno, 2018). After the creation of the narratives, they were read to and with the case study sample, to ensure what was written had been interpreted correctly. Afterwards, one narrative per person was created based on the three groups of data: interview one, interview two and the focus group.

## 4 Results

This section will highlight the results of this investigation, answering the two research questions:

1. To what extent does process drama affect the participation of advanced EAL learners in lessons?
2. What are pupils’ perspectives on their participation during lessons that adopt a process drama pedagogy?

The discussion is structured around three themes: increased participation, encouraged engagement and students’ perspectives. Below, we explore each theme separately.

### 4.1 Increase in participation

Drawing on the classroom observation, analysis of lesson recordings and research journal the recurring feature of the case study narratives is that over the course of the nine lessons conducted using a process drama pedagogy, participation increased, but not immediately.

Rather, it increased over the period of nine lessons. This is illustrated in the narrative extract of Pupil 1 below:

Pupil 1 displayed the four different types of participation in lesson one in the course of the disparate activities. During the drama convention known as 'teacher in role', she became an 'active audience' member by following the researcher physically and responding to instructions. Throughout the 'mime' activity, she displayed copying traits, demonstrating 'performer pointer' attributes. Examples of 'performer proof with an expert' were evident during 'role play' activities and 'hot seating', when she introduced some of her own ideas after questioning. The final type of participation, 'performer proof without an expert' was recognisable during the 'mantle of the expert' activity when she worked independently on her script and assisted her peers, spontaneously reacting to others contributions. However, the class teacher concluded that although these different types of participation were evident in the lesson, there was not necessarily an overall increase in her participation when compared to her contribution in other lessons. While she evidently enjoyed the group work, it took her quite some time before she was sufficiently confident to volunteer. She appeared self-conscious. (Pupil 1 Narrative, Extract 1, App A)

When familiarised with the concepts, the level of participation of these six case study participants increased over the period of the nine lessons. As Extract 2 from the narrative of later lessons highlights, over time a process drama pedagogy which involves treating children as responsible experts can indeed offer opportunities for more participation (Farmer, 2010).

Pupil 1 was demonstrably an 'active audience' member in lesson four. This was particularly palpable during the 'teacher in role' convention and during the 'two truths and a lie' activity when she voted without hesitation having listened to the statements and digested the content. She laughed spontaneously during the rapping activity when she imitated the teacher showing 'performer pointer' participation. Throughout the lesson, she interjected in class discussions and entered into activities. She expressed interest in a variety of drama conventions and activities including mantle of the expert, pass the story, quiz show and jumping frogs. During this lesson, according to the class teacher, she participated in a similar degree at least and sometimes to a greater degree. Pupil 1 exhibited three distinct types of participation in lesson five. She was an 'active audience' member during the 'freeze frame', 'performer pointer' during the 'rap' and 'performer proof with an expert' during the 'narration' and 'hula hoop story telling'. In the final activity, 'agony aunt' Pupil 1 did not immerse herself fully. Perhaps her comprehension was constrained but, in any event, this was later addressed in lesson seven when she demonstrated understanding in her responses. As

## McDonnell, O'Boyle: Process drama in the classroom

with the previous lesson, Pupil 1 joined in more in lesson five with the exception of the final activity. (Pupil 1 Narrative, Extract 2, App A)

Conducting a multiple-approach case study allowed for both the depth of focus on the individual within their own circumstances and a comparison of pupils' experiences of process drama pedagogy. Throughout the sessions, the opportunities for quieter pupils to become more active became more noticeable as they were selected to speak more regularly in a combination of group and whole class games and speaking activities. This echoes the results of Atas (2015) who found that "students who were always abstaining from speaking English and acting, started to raise their hands when asked for a volunteer" (p. 962). Likewise, mantle of the expert had the same effect as puppets in the study by Arts (2020), when she expressed that using puppets can help shy or anxious students, or students that are not used to expressing their opinions, open up and speak more. In the extract below from Pupil 2's case study narrative, as with Pupil 1, there is increased participation over time.

Pupil 2 suffers [sic] from learning difficulties. Consequently, two weeks prior to this research commencing, she was provided with a Learning Support Assistant (LSA). The class teacher affirmed that the assistant had helped her learning and confidence but that she relies heavily upon her support in lessons to repeat instructions and explain tasks. She displayed three different types of participation in the course of disparate activities in lesson one. During the drama convention known as 'teacher in role', like Pupil 1, she became an 'active audience' member by laughing at the researcher's jokes and following any instructions outlined on the board. She also embraced this type of participation during the 'mantle of the expert' activity when she watched her peers instructing her on where to stand in the video. Throughout the 'role play' and 'mime' activity, she displayed copying traits, demonstrating 'performer pointer' behaviour. Examples of 'performer proof with an expert' were evident during the 'hot seating', when she nominated herself to play the role of the statistician early in the lesson. Her LSA was unavailable for this lesson and she relied on her peers for reassurance. (Pupil 2 Narrative, Extract 1)

### 4.2 Encouraged engagement

Wells and Sandretto (2017) showed evidence that process drama resulted in higher levels of engagement when working with children aged five to eight. The increased participation shown in this analysis of the advanced EAL learners aligns to these and other studies which found positive experiences through drama and foreign language learning (Even, 2008; Bournot-Trites et al., 2007).

Lesson six was a turning point for Pupil 3: she volunteered to read, asked for help from the class teacher, joined in during the 'counting game' and 'narration' and followed the action throughout. This improved her security in confidently demonstrating 'active audience', 'performer pointer' and 'performer proof with an expert' within the lesson. The class teacher volunteered that this was a quantum leap in comparison to the behaviour she had witnessed throughout the academic year and that she was surprised and impressed by this sudden involvement and contribution to speaking opportunities. The double lesson (seven and eight) was the first one in which Pupil 3 demonstrated all four types of participation. She also had the opportunity to work as a whole class, in a group, in a pair and individually in this lesson. Her contributions were maximised by paired activities. During the instructions she was an 'active audience' member: nodding, smiling and following instructions. The singing, although achieved quietly, allowed her to become a 'performer pointer'. She took on the 'expert' role herself in her paired activity during 'Who am I?' and worked well in groups and independently in the insect, bird and amphibian tasks. Certain tasks were difficult as noted by the class teacher, she stated that the words of the songs were tricky, but she had a go and copied from the sheet. She also noted that she was very enthusiastic. The final lesson consolidated Pupil 3's increased confidence, public speaking and participation. She quickly followed instructions even when they differed from the written script. She readily assumed new responsibilities e.g. playing an instrument, followed movements and helped a peer find their place. (Pupil 3 Narrative, Extract 1)

As illustrated in the narrative of Pupil 3 above, the increase in pupils' participation was best achieved in paired and group work as opposed to individual and whole class activities, pointing to the need for encouraged cooperation (Bozyigit et al., 2014).

### 4.3 Pupil perspectives

In order to understand the pupils' own experiences of the process drama pedagogy which framed the nine science lessons, we analysed the data from case study participant interviews and a focus group. We deployed a content analysis approach to compare ideas from the focus group and interviews.

During these semi-structured interviews participants were asked about their experiences using up to ten questions and were asked to rate their experiences. All of the participants stated that they strongly agreed that 'using drama in lesson helps me join in more.'

The pupils were asked to consider the type of participation (using teddy bears to represent each type), they felt they demonstrated most frequently over the course of the nine lessons. Lesson 7 and 8 had distinct activities and were therefore broken into lesson 7a, 7b, 8a and 8b.

Students sometimes chose not to pick a dominant type of participation if they could not identify one in the particular lesson.

	Pupil 1	Pupil 2	Pupil 3	Pupil 4	Pupil 5	Pupil 6
<b>Winnie</b>		2, 4		4	4 and 5	
<b>Connor</b>	3	3	6, 7a, 7b, 8b		3, 6, 7a, 7b, 8b	8a
<b>Pat</b>	1, 2, 4, 6, 7a, 7b, 9	1, 9	1, 4, 9	8b, 9	1 and 9	3, 8b, 9
<b>Ian</b>	5, 8a, 8b	6, 7a, 7b, 8a, 8b	5, 8a	1, 5, 6, 7a, 7b, 8a	2, 8a	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7a, 7b

Table 6: Type of participation identified for each lesson in the focus group by each pupil

The idea that process drama helps engagement was brought to the fore by the case study participants. In interview one, Pupil 5 said *“I like drama”* and in interview two she added *“because I love drama”* while Pupil 4 stated *“yeh it’s fun”*. Pupil 2 claimed *“it’s funner [sic] when we do different activities”* and Pupil 3 also reflected *“because it’s funner [sic]”*. They all claimed that this enjoyment helped their engagement.

Piazzoli (2018) noticed an improvement in motivation throughout her project, as children became physically involved, in this case playing the role of the detectives. The movement during these activities did not go unnoticed by the children in our research and was seen as a positive concept. Pupil 1 articulated *“because you don’t sit in your chair the whole time and then I think I can concentrate better”* and in her follow up interview *“you’re not always sitting in your chair, you also work together and do some drama with it and I think that helps learning”*. Pupil 2 reflected *“you make more activities”* and *“it’s funner [sic] when we do it in the circle”*. Pupil 3 also celebrated this *“because you can move around”* as did Pupil 6 *“you get to learn and be active and I don’t like sitting on my chair, I like to be active all the time”*. Furthermore, this movement allowed for collaboration between individuals, groups and the class, as Pupil 1 celebrated *“you also work together”*.

## 5 Discussion

Murphy et al. (2013) highlighted the decline in children’s engagement with science in upper primary and lower secondary school. This influenced the decision to pair process drama with science as Piazzoli (2018) suggested was not customary practice in primary years. Furthermore, with beginning language learners, drama has been exploited as a teaching strategy (Even, 2008) and evidences an innovative and desirable approach to foreign and



second language learning (Hulse & Owens, 2019; Reed et al., 2014;). However, this research focussed on the gap of an analysis on process drama's efficacy with a cohort of advanced EAL learners in the upper primary school ages. Although we exploited the existing analysis tools created by Pérez-Moreno (2018), this study was unique in its application of them in a contrasting area.

Although the children were extremely engaged and excited by the device teacher in role, paired and group work resulted in more focussed participation. Examples of this could be seen during the mantle of the expert activity when the children prepared a video presentation in teams creating an experiment to explore how conditions affect the lifecycle of a plant; during freeze frames created to display parts of the flower and hotseating activities when they quizzed each other in role as animals about their lifecycles.

Drawing on the multiple data sources, the recurring feature of the case study narratives was that over the course of the nine lessons conducted using a process drama pedagogy, participation increased, but not immediately. For all pupils by the third lesson they began to participate more, but initially seemed more reserved in the previous lessons. Pupil three was absent for lesson two and three and like the trend of the other case study participants, her participation didn't increase until lesson five, which was the third lesson she took part in. The students required time to adjust to the new type of teaching methodology, which involved an imagined world created by and for the participants themselves (O'Neill, 1995).

There were limitations to this research and the small sample size was an obvious constraint. This data represents a particular group at a specific time and could potentially have delivered different results had the research been conducted at a different time and with a different group. Time constraints precluded a more extensive collaboration with the class teacher and vicariously restricted the available data. Although it was a conscious decision to adopt both the researcher and practitioner roles, managing both was intrinsically problematic. Whilst it allowed valuable insight into the planning and delivery, decisions were made as actor, director, playwright and teacher simultaneously when delivering the lessons (Bowell & Heap, 2017). Despite these limitations, a case study qualitative approach to address the research aim was the most apt.

## 6 Conclusion

Our investigation to what extent process drama can promote participation for advanced EAL learners in an International School has led to a number of conclusions relevant to those in the field of drama in education. Whilst process drama pedagogy may not have delivered immediate amelioration, the six case study pupils' participation did increase with the passage

of time. We reached this conclusion through a cross-referenced analysis of the class teacher's observations and an analysis of the research journal and video observations. The nature of the participation differed – depending on the type of drama activity taking place. Paired and group work resulted in more focussed participation than whole class activities during which the children would sometimes get distracted. These findings were similar to existing literature on participation (Bozyigit et al., 2014; Even, 2008; Geneuss et al., 2020; Pérez-Moreno, 2018; Weber, 2019;).

By using a case study approach, the experiences of the participants could be explored (Ponelis, 2015). Conversations with the research participants in the natural setting of their classroom environment took place (Creswell, 2014), building up a rapport and supporting the expression of their perspectives. For the pupils in this study, they themselves considered that their participation had increased during process drama lessons (Arts, 2020; Geneuss et al., 2020; Nfor, 2020). Therefore, using a case study approach and existing analytical framework created by Pérez-Moreno (2018), this enabled the creation of a distinct contribution to the contemporary debate on drama in education by voicing the experiences of advanced EAL learners in process drama pedagogy.

More broadly, the study demonstrates how process drama can be applied to science lessons in primary curriculum in order to encourage EAL learner participation in classrooms. In the context of an International School where levels of proficiency and language support may vary within one class, it highlights the use of drama as a teaching tool and as a means of opening up more active oral spaces for learners. In line with the current debates this study evidences the role that drama in education plays in contemporary approaches to teaching and learning, and to studies in education which seek to look beyond achievement only outcomes.

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