

# Effective Practice of Role Play and Dramatization in Foreign Language Education

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## 1. Introduction

The need for communicative skills in English has been increasing, both for business and in private life. Tanaka (2002) asserts that dramatization meets a need of the times in which students' desires to practice English in the classroom and to express themselves are increasing. Raz (1985) also demonstrates that role play is the most effective method in foreign language education, because it has beneficial effects on the learner's communicative competence and motivation.

At the same time, the necessity of learner-centered education in language classes has been proclaimed. Oyabu (1999) asserts that the activity of drama is suitable for making an environment in which students do not remain silent but rather can naturally speak in and listen to the target language.

This article claims that activities of role play and dramas are the best and most appropriate methods to improve one's communicative skills while cultivating awareness of grammatical accuracy. We also assert that such activities can foster the personal growth of students as they participate in creative and cooperative assignments.

### **1.1. Background of Role Play and Dramatization in Foreign Language Education**

According to Ueda (2003), speech and theatre were taught together, as important communicative activities, in the same department in American universities until the 1980s. He explains it was not until recently that attention began to be paid to dramatization as a communicative education method. However, the

practice of drama in foreign languages has been conducted for over hundred years at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, as will be presented in 4.1.

Some studies were conducted in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of drama activities in foreign language classes. For example, Schellin (2006) stresses the importance of simulation, role play and drama in foreign language classes. Scarcella and Crookall (1990) point out three major merits of learning through simulations: (1) learners are exposed to large quantities of comprehensive input; (2) learners are actively involved; and (3) learners have positive affect.

Furthermore, Kendall (1998) admires the practicality of drama exercises as a rehearsal for real situations as follows:

Drama provides a much needed direct experience that can revolutionise a student's attitude to, and ability in, the spoken language—in some instances making the “world blaze up” in even less than fifteen seconds.

## 1.2. Definition

Schellin (2006) claims that simulation, role play and drama are three very useful EFL / ESL learning tools. According to him, simulation is longer than role play, and students keep their own identities instead of playing a role. In role play, on the other hand, students assume a role and play a part in a specific situation. In drama, students are supposed to act out exactly what is written in a script.

Schellin (2006) also illustrates how the three tools can be combined, and demonstrates a model for a teaching method in which students practice simulation, role play, and drama in combination. Kakita (1979) similarly points out that role play as a teaching method has many points in common with dramatization, such as aims and procedures. He indicates, therefore, that it is preferable if teachers use the two synthetically. Even though there are some differences in length, creativity, and flexibility, all of these techniques can serve beneficially for learners as a rehearsal for real life, and inspire learners to acquire the target language in a comprehensive manner.

In this article, we regard role play as one kind of drama. The

difference can be the length of the play, as well as the time needed to prepare, but they have many characteristics in common at the fundamental level: role play and dramatization can be practiced with almost the same procedure and they have similar effects on developing language skills. A very simple role play of a prepared dialogue and a creative drama might not be aimed to the same level of learners. However, we will show in 4.1. that even beginners can play a drama with appropriate help from teachers and references.

Accordingly, we use the term 'role play' for a short sketch based on prepared scripts, 'short drama' for a drama which is inventive and contains just one scene, and 'creative drama' for a long, creative, and comprehensive<sup>1</sup> type of drama. We use the term 'dramatization' as a category which embraces both 'short drama' and 'creative drama'.

### 1.3. Problems and Assumptions

Although role play and dramatization have numerous merits, as is shown in 1.1 and further will be discussed in Section 5, some students feel difficulty with those activities. Sano (1989) points out one of major difficulties with conducting the activity of drama in a class. He claims that psychological pressure is a burden for students who are introverted. Moreover, some students feel nervous when making an oral presentation in front of an audience, even though they are not introverted or shy. Sano proposes picture-story shows and puppet plays as solutions for these problems. However, they would not be fundamental solutions if students feel uncomfortable in the first place to speak in front of many people. Furthermore, one of the advantages of drama activities, reciting with natural gesture and facial expressions, would be ignored in picture-story shows and puppet plays.

In this article, we assume that habituation to oral presentation in front of the class would be the best method to handle the anxiety of speaking in public. This kind of accustomation permits students to fight against the fear of oral presentation and may serve them in their future experiences as well as in their drama activities in the class.

Although several studies have been done to demonstrate the effectiveness of dramatization, few have been done to dem-

onstrate the effect of the everyday practice of oral presentation on the creation of new dramas. Moreover, few studies have been conducted to identify beneficial factors evaluated by students. This article, in contrast, aims to reveal the relationship between the everyday practice of role play and the inventive activity of creating dramas. We will also illustrate in detail which factors students paid attention to when writing and acting out a short drama, and in which points they found the activity beneficial for further study and practice.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 will describe an outline of the study conducted at a private Japanese university in order to clarify the effects of role play and dramatization in foreign language classes. The data and the results of questionnaires will be analyzed in Section 3. In Section 4, the activities of short dramas and creative dramas at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies are introduced. The discussion based on the observation of these class activities will be conducted in Section 5, and finally the conclusion will be presented in Section 6.

## 2. Study Conducted at a University to Clarify Effects of Role Play and Dramatization in Foreign Language Classes

In order to verify the above assumption, a study was carried out at a private Japanese university to investigate the potential effects of the everyday use of role plays on the final-term activity of short dramas and on communicative competence.

The students who participated in this study habitually memorize and recite dialogues in their textbooks. In the final-term activity, students are asked to write a script for a short drama, and act out the play in front of the class. Finally, they are asked to fill in a questionnaire which is designed to estimate the effect of everyday role play of the dialogues on the creation of a short drama and their level of satisfaction with this activity.

### 2.1. Participants

Seventeen first-year students (2 males and 15 females, with average age of 18.9 years) studying at one of the private universities in Tokyo participated in the present study. They had studied

English for an average of 6 years, mainly at junior high and high school in Japan, before they majored in English at the university. They had taken a practical conversation class in which they needed to memorize dialogues and recite them in front of the class during each lesson. All the dialogues in the textbook consisted of two roles (friends, a teacher and a student, etc.). Students took one of the roles, and practiced and acted out the role play in pairs.

## 2.2. Worksheet for Scenarios

In the study, the students used worksheets in which model structures and five situations were presented (see Appendix A). These situations were given to the students as an instruction to make a scenario for their short drama. They could either select one situation from the worksheet or frame a situation by themselves. The situations are illustrated below. The first three situations are taken from Sano (1989): 1. conversation between a child who plays without studying and his/her mother; 2. conversation between a pupil who is cheating in an exam and his/her teacher; and 3. conversation between a suspicious-looking man and a policeman who found him. In addition to these situations, two situations are added: 4. conversation between a student who is reading comics in a convenience store, although his teacher told him to run around the school, and the teacher who found him; and 5. conversation between a merchant who sells a fake painting of a famous painter and the painter who happened to stop by the merchant's shop. The added situations were created so that they would be easy to imagine and so that the characters would have absolute ranking, i.e., one would have imposing power over the other. The latter was declared to be a major factor to facilitate writing a new script at a workshop of the International Association of Performing Language<sup>2</sup>.

Consequently, all five situations were carefully designed to facilitate the participants' cognition of the situation and identification with the roles. Table 1 shows the distribution of situations chosen by pairs.

	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 5	Original
Number of pairs	4	1	3	0	1	0

Table 1: Variable distributions in situations

### 2.3. Procedure

The whole class was first instructed about the activity of short drama and its procedure. Then the students formed pairs. Each pair got the worksheet with the situations and was asked to choose one situation about which they would write a script for a short drama. They were supposed to think about the characteristics of the drama characters and write a script cooperatively. The students were allowed to use their dictionaries, refer to the textbook, and ask questions to the teacher. The teacher collected all the scripts and gave them back to the students with some grammatical corrections and some suggestions for expressions the following week. The students practiced the modified script for about ten minutes. Finally, each pair played the short drama they originally created in front of the class.

While a pair was acting out their original drama, other students carefully watched their play. They applauded at the end of each short drama. When every pair finished playing their dramas, students were asked to fill in a questionnaire (see Appendix B).

### 2.4. Students' Scripts for Short Dramas

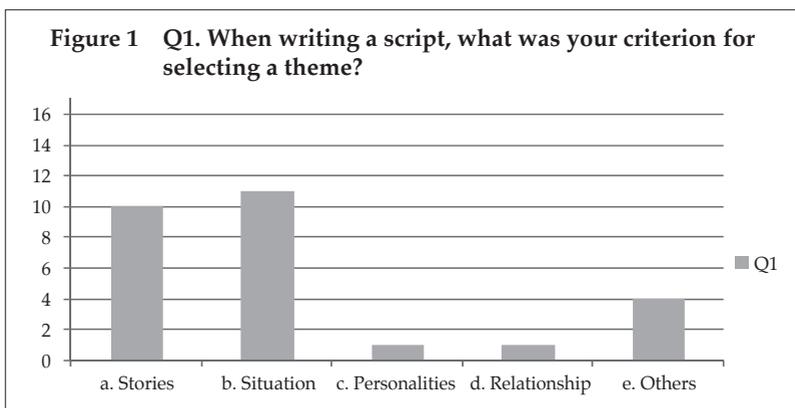
The students made use of their dictionaries and asked many questions to the teacher while making their scripts. Three examples of scripts written by students are given in Appendix C with permission of the students.

As it is obvious from the examples, each script is not long. However, all of the three scripts included punch lines which made the audience laugh. Moreover all of the students had an active involvement in creating a new story with sense of humor. Therefore, the class had a spirited and friendly atmosphere, and students seemed to quite enjoy writing a script inventively instead of just memorizing the dialogues in the textbook.

## 3. Results of the Study and Discussions

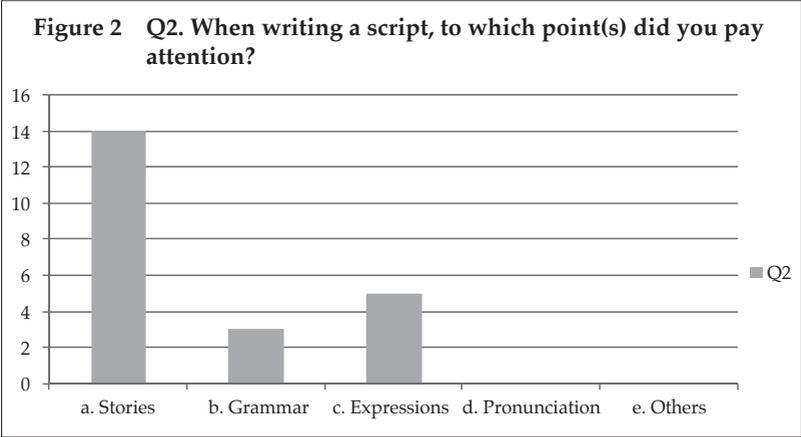
In this section, we will analyze the result of the questionnaire that students filled in at the end of the activity. Firstly, Question 1 concerns the criterion for selecting the theme of the short drama, and we presented five factors as options: *ease of development of*

stories; ease of imagining the situation; ease of imagining personalities of the characters in the drama; ease of imagining the relationship between the two characters; and others. Multiple answers were possible. The majority of the students chose *ease of imagining the situation* and *ease of development of stories* for their criterion, as the Figure 1 presents.



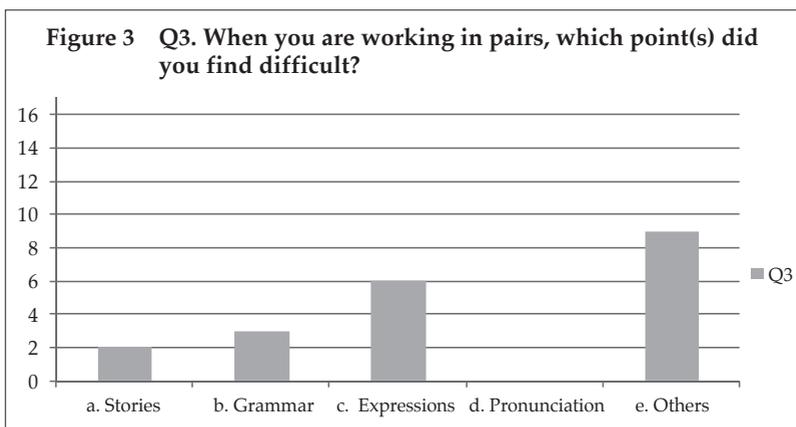
As is discussed in 2.2, it is indispensable to set a scene as an inclusive frame which specifies the time, the situation, and the relationship between the characters, so that students can easily imagine the situations. Four out of seven students who chose multiple answers selected *ease of development of stories* together with *ease of imagining the situation* in combination. This result suggests that the facility in imagining the situation is somehow interwoven with the facility in developing stories, which corresponds to the remarks emphasized at the workshop of the International Association of Performing Language.

Next, we inquired about factors that students pay attention to when writing a script. The following options were given in Question 2: *how you develop stories*; *correctness of grammar*; *naturalness of expressions*; *ease of pronunciation*; and *others*. Most of the students selected *how you develop stories*. Five students out of seventeen chose *naturalness of expressions*, and three of them selected *correctness of grammar*. The result can be seen in the Figure 2.



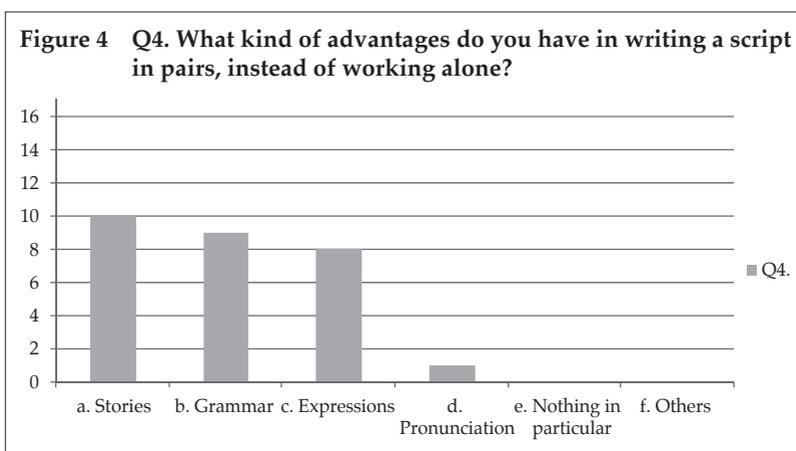
This result conflicts with the claim that Tanaka (2002) makes: teacher’s correction of grammatical features in a creative role play or dramatization would diminish their creativity, because students would have to pay too much attention to the grammaticality. On the contrary, the result of Question 2 demonstrates that even in a short drama activity, error correction would not work as a deterrent for their creating of a drama. Even though students knew that their script would be corrected, students paid more attention to the development of stories, and remained creative without having too much fear of getting their scripts grammatically corrected. As a result, it is possible to make progress not only in conversational skills but also in grammatical knowledge acquired from the teacher’s correction.

Question 3 concerned the difficulties in working in pairs. Students had the following options: *disagreement on the development of stories*; *disagreement on the correctness of grammar*; *disagreement on the naturalness of expressions*; *disagreement on the ease of pronunciation*; and *others*. About half of the students replied *others*, and they did not fill in the blank after *others* in which they were asked to explain reasons. Thus it would be difficult to generalize the tendency, though about one third of the students selected *disagreement on the naturalness of expressions*, while about one sixth students chose *disagreement on the correctness of grammar*.



This result illustrates, as in the result of Question 2, that students tend to pay more attention to expressions than to grammar.

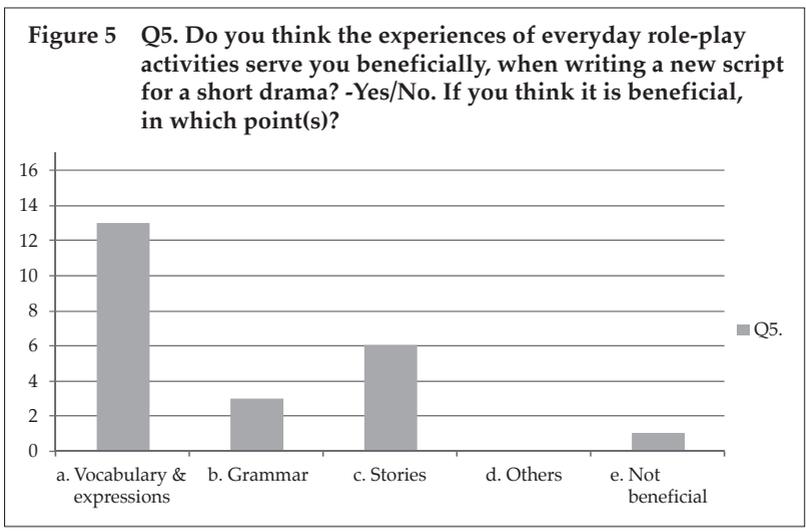
Question 4, in turn, concerned the advantages in working in pairs, when writing a script in pairs. Students could choose multiple answers among these choices: *ease of developing the story*; *suggestion of advices on the correctness of grammar*; *suggestion of advices on the naturalness of expressions*; *suggestion of advices on the ease of pronunciation*; *nothing in particular* and *others*. The majority of the students selected *ease of developing the story*, *suggestion of advices on the correctness of grammar* and *suggestion of advices on the naturalness of expressions*.



Many students found the pair work advantageous in many points. This indicates that drama activities fostered their cooperativeness.

Question 5 and Question 6 examined the relationship between the role play in the conversational classes that students attend twice a week and the final-term activity of short drama, in order to test the hypothesis presented in 1.3. In Question 5, students are supposed to determine whether the experiences of learning and reciting the dialogue in everyday classes served them beneficially when writing a new script for a short drama. If they thought it was beneficial, they were to choose the main factor(s) in everyday exercises which contributed to making a new drama: *vocabulary and expressions*; *grammar*; *development of stories accessible for the audience*; and *others*.

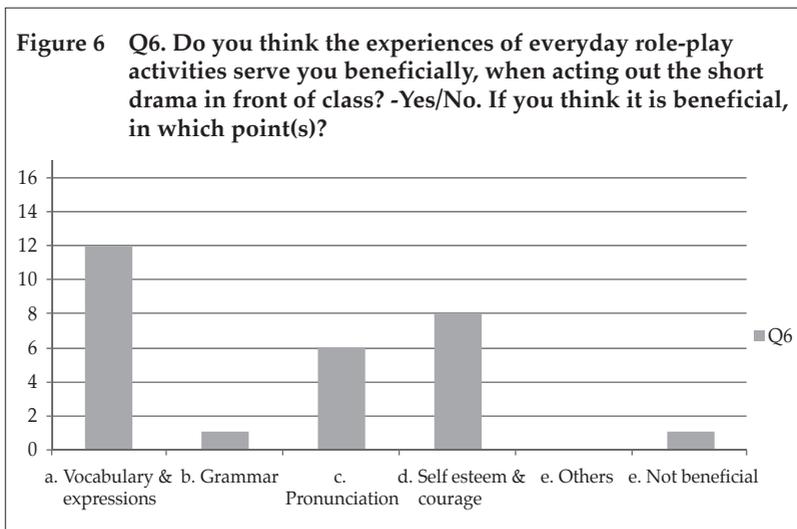
While only one student found the everyday class not beneficial for a short drama, all the other students found it so. Most of the students thought that the experience was beneficial in *vocabulary and expressions*. Nearly one third of the students considered their experience to have served them well in *development of stories accessible for the audience* and some students in *grammar*.



This kind of self-evaluation makes them aware of the practicality of their habitual study: reciting the dialogue in full, after receiving an explanation of expressions, grammar, and pronun-

ciation. As a result, this evaluation motivates them to study continuously in everyday classes. The issue of self-evaluation will be further discussed at the end of this section.

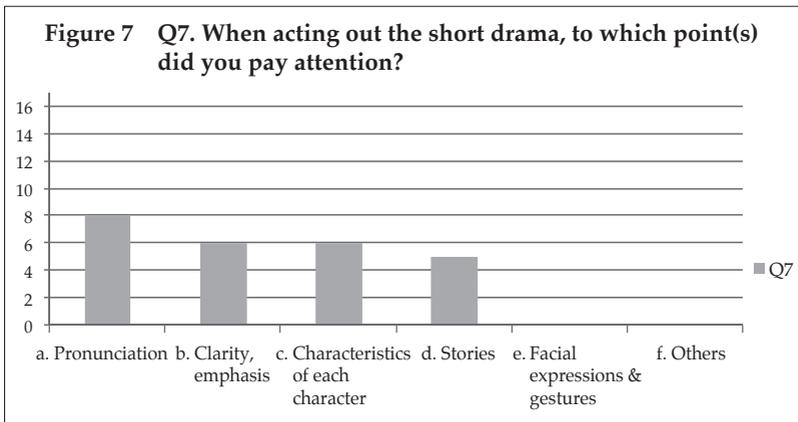
In Question 6, students were asked whether the experience in everyday classes served them beneficially when acting out the short drama. If they thought it was beneficial, they were to choose the main factor(s) in everyday exercises which contributed to acting out the drama: *vocabulary and expressions; grammar; pronunciation; building self-esteem and courage to speak in front of many people* and *others*. All students except one found the everyday classes beneficial. *Vocabulary and expressions* were regarded as the most important factor. Interestingly, many students also selected *building self-esteem and courage to speak in front of many people*. Even though almost all the students were saying at the beginning of the semester that they felt stressed and uneasy about reciting dialogues in front of the class in every class (twice a week), after three months' continual practices of recitation, they seemed to become much more relaxed in acting out roles in front of the class. This habituation provided them with great self-esteem and self-confidence. This fact supports the hypothesis in 1.3.



The results of Question 5 and 6 revealed that everyday practice of role play is beneficial in making students familiar with

speaking in front of many people. Moreover, they also revealed that students can make use of what they memorized in the role plays when writing a script as well as when acting out the short drama.

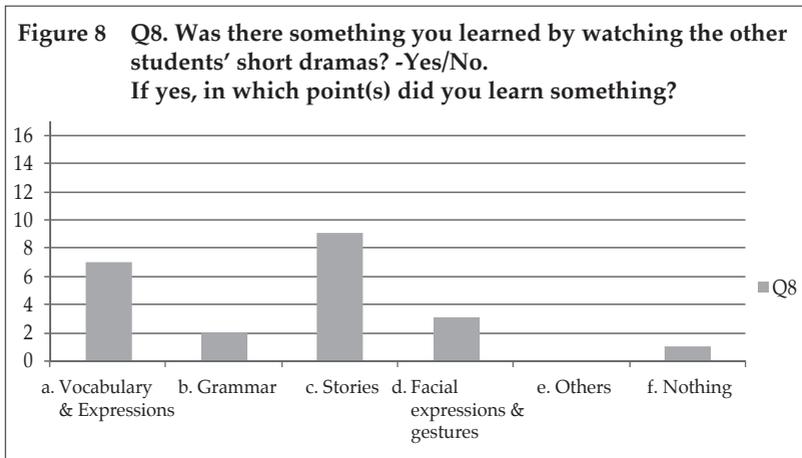
Next, in Question 7, we inquired about factors that students pay attention to when acting out the short drama. The following options were given: *pronunciation; speaking clearly by putting appropriate emphases on important parts; expressing characteristics of each character; showing clearly the development of stories; facial expressions and gestures and others*. About a half of the students paid attention to *pronunciation*. *Speaking clearly, expressing characteristics of each character, and the development of stories* were also considered important factors by many students.



Students cared about not only pronunciation but also about expressing the characteristics of each character, and about the demonstration of the development of their stories. This fact indicates that students consider the activity of drama as a rehearsal for real life experience rather than just an English conversation lesson.

Question 8 concerned the advantage of the drama activity, when students watch the other students' dramas. All students except one found that they had something to learn in watching the other students act out their original plays. Students had the following options: *vocabulary and expressions; grammar; development of stories accessible for the audience; facial expressions and gestures and others*. Many students found *development of stories* and

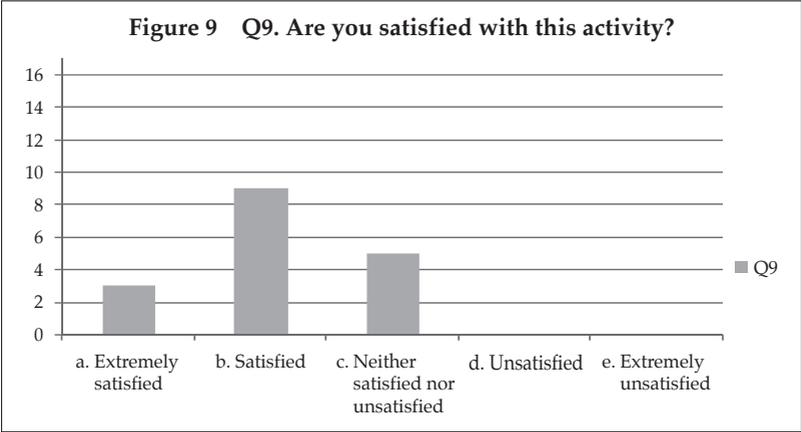
*vocabulary and expressions* helpful for their study. *Grammar and facial expressions and gestures* were also chosen by some students.



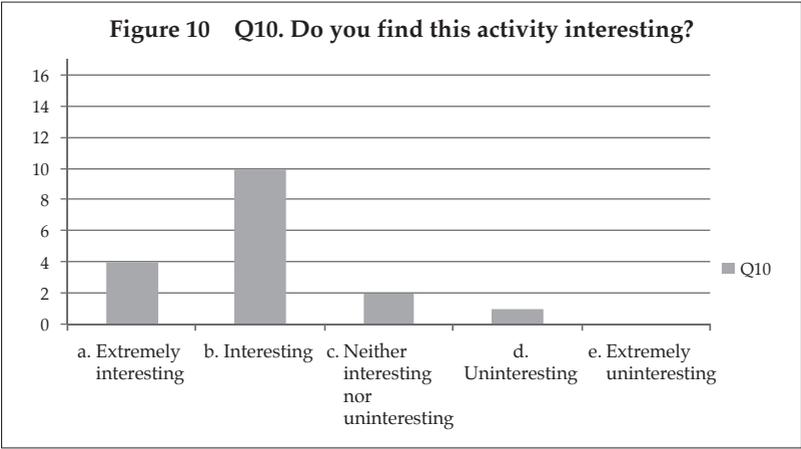
We claim that the merits of drama activity reside in watching the other students' dramas, as well as in performing drama actively. Raz (1985) also refers to the importance of listening to the other students' dramas and claims that "during role play, learners are motivated to exploit all their learnt knowledge of the foreign language, all they have absorbed through listening and reading (p.228)." Consequently, role play and dramatization are one of the best integrated pedagogical methods, as students can learn both from acting out a play and from watching the other students' play.

The last three questions were designed to demonstrate how satisfied the students were, whether they found the activities interesting, and their view of the usefulness of this experience for the future.

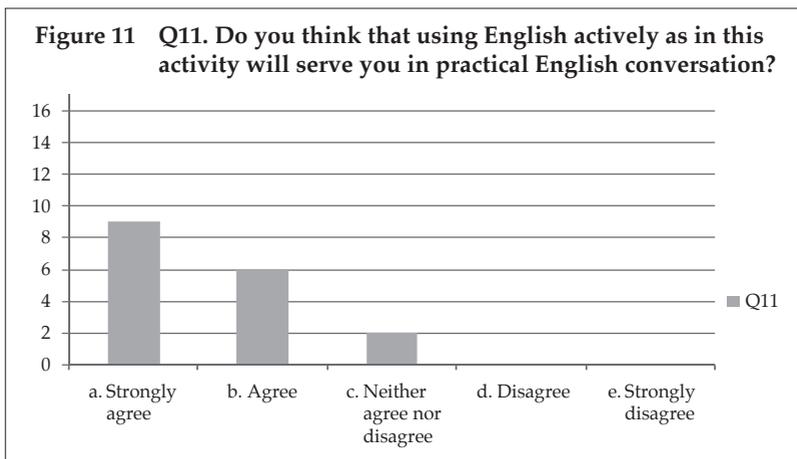
In Question 9, we inquired about the degree of satisfaction. Most of the students were *satisfied* or *extremely satisfied*. Figure 9 shows this result.



In the following question, 10, students were asked whether they found the activity interesting or not. Most of them found it *interesting* or *extremely interesting*. This must explain the high degree of satisfaction marked in Question 9.



Finally, a survey of the students' attitudes toward practical conversation was conducted in Question 11. The students were asked if they thought using English actively as in this activity would serve them in practical English conversation. Almost all the students replied *strongly agree* or *agree* as Figure 11 illustrates.



The result of the Question 11 indicates that students were encouraged to use English in practical conversation outside the class.

This questionnaire served as a useful way not only to reveal students' attitudes toward evaluation of dramatization, but also to make students evaluate themselves. The effect of self-evaluation is also discussed in Tanaka (2002). He affirms that it is important in looking back on their activities at the end of the class: it prompts students not only to reflect on their conduct, but also to raise awareness. He asserts that students can learn more deeply and improve their motivation thanks to self-awareness.

Hence, activities of role play and dramatization with some question forms are recommended so as to remind students of the usefulness of the activities and of the possibility to put dramatization to practical use.

#### 4. Practice of Drama Activities in the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

As we have discussed, the impact of dramatization in foreign language classes is quite remarkable, and students tend to enjoy themselves and learn many things from this activity, both as an actor and as an audience. In this section, we describe how short dramas in classroom activities can be extended to long creative dramas so as to learn the culture and civilization of the target

language in an inclusive way.

I examine the significant role of dramatization by reflecting on my own experience in my undergraduate years as a French major at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. That university promotes dramatic performance in the target languages as part of their foreign language studies. We will firstly present an overview of the everyday short drama exercises at the university, and then introduce the procedure and practice of long complete creative dramas acted out at the university festival in twenty-six different languages. Finally, we introduce some views and opinions on the creative dramas by intellectuals who themselves participated in the activity.

#### **4.1. Short Drama Activities in Everyday Practice**

We practiced the activity of making short dramas right from the start. It was a routine that each small group or pair created a scenario, after some input (whether specific grammatical rules or specific situations) and teacher's explanations for them in the first week. After the teacher had reviewed our assignments, we performed our short dramas in front of the class the following week. In the beginning, all we knew was just some greeting expressions, and we found it difficult even to understand what we were supposed to do in the class. Yet once we performed a very short and simple drama in front of the class, we became familiar with the activity and could enjoy it.

Generally, learning activities that involve creating and performing dramas are thought to be appropriate for intermediate and advanced-level students, as they would require certain amount of vocabulary and grammar to work with. For example, Richard-Amato (1988) labels the activity of story writing as being for advanced students, while simple story act-out is for beginners and intermediate students. At the workshop of the International Association of Performing Language, many teachers stated that they use drama activities only for intermediate and advanced-level students.

However, I claim, based on my experience, that drama activities are suitable even for beginners, if appropriate dialogues as a reference and teacher's help are provided. Moreover, there definitely are advantages for beginners to practice dramas in order to improve their communication skills for the following

reasons. First, right from the beginning the students can practice their pronunciation while having fun, as they practice their lines repeatedly. Second, the fear of using a new language in front of others is diminished through the repeated performance. Third, by repeating and using the target language from the beginner's level, the student will naturally acquire a living language, grasping and experiencing the meaning of the target language's world-view. This can be supported by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the linguistic relativity principle that states that different cultural concepts and categories affect the cognitive classification of the world, and thus speakers of different language perceive and behave differently. Hence, students may get involved in the categorization in the target language and acquire cultural viewpoints in the language in a subconscious way, by playing the role of native speaker of the target language and behave as he or she does.

In conclusion, practicing the drama activity from the beginning offers numerous advantages. The combination of input and output as in everyday exercises is highly recommended, and the reason for this will be discussed in 5.1.

## **4.2. Complete, Creative Dramas at the University Festival**

### **4.2.1. Procedures to Act Creative Dramas**

Through the weekly practice of performing small plays, and after the study of their target language for a year and a half, the students put on a two-hour play at the festival held at the university. It is now part of our tradition that at this festival, known as *Gaigosai*, second-year students majoring in foreign languages -English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, and other 21 languages- perform plays in their respective target languages. We take almost six months to prepare for this comprehensive creative drama.

Firstly, all the students who were studying French assembled together and had a discussion as to what kind of play they would like to perform. The first barrier waiting for us was making the scenario. The challenge of creating a two-hour scenario was quite a feat for us who had only a year and a half of French instruction. Certainly, the everyday practice of making short dramas necessarily helped us; nevertheless, the length and the com-

plexity of the stories were different, and thus challenging for us. We divided the Japanese script into many parts, and each student translated one part into French. We checked the scripts among ourselves before showing them to our French teachers.

Next, our French teachers reviewed our translation, and suggested grammatical corrections and appropriate collocation of expressions. Our teacher sometimes found it difficult to understand what we wanted to say. In such a case, we would explain to the teacher in our best French what we wanted to say, and thus completed our script. Through the writing of the scenario for the play, we felt that our abilities in speaking, as well as in writing and reading, improved tremendously. Once the scenario was complete, we chose the cast.

Then, we had to face the second barrier, acting. Most of us had no experience in theatre, so we knew that our acting would not be the best. We practiced playing a role; however, we gave top priority to working on our pronunciation and getting the natural rhythm of the French language, with assistance and advice from many native French teachers. We stayed late at school making stage settings and properties, and learned about stage lighting and make up. Further, we chose music from CDs that gave us the feeling of being in France. Lastly, we prepared subtitles in Japanese.

Through this activity, the students learned many new expressions. Furthermore, we became knowledgeable of French music, fashion, and history by immersing ourselves in French culture, thus enjoying the world of our target language in a comprehensive way. This play has remained a very precious memory of our days in university even though we were only a bunch of amateurs doing our very best.

#### **4.2.2. History of Creative Dramas at the University Festival**

The history of playing a long creative drama at the university festival goes back to 1906. During the history of one hundred years, many dramas have been put on the stage in various languages.

In 2004, the activity of drama was adopted as the program called “Obtaining 26 Living Languages: with the Support of Performing Language”, an original program recommended by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

in Japan. The financial aid from the Ministry enabled us to invite many professionals from the world of theatre: for example, some ballet lessons were provided, and various workshops were held, including voice practice and musical methods. In this way students were blessed to have the opportunity to experience the real life of the theatre. Moreover, there were invitations to perform at foreign embassies and even abroad. Performing our original dramas outside the university resulted in spreading the opportunity to realize our desires to evolve and grow, practicing our target language.

### **4.3. Other Viewpoints and Opinions on the Dramatic Play**

In this section, we will introduce some opinions on creative dramas as a didactic method by intellectuals who themselves participated in the activity, when they were students at the university.

Tomita (2008) discusses the pedagogical value that acting may provide. He claims that students can 'recapture organic nature' by immersing themselves in the roles of other people. He explains that students concentrate on what they do, think, feel, and act in a dramatic order. This experience would help them to cultivate their mind and make them more creative.

On the other hand, Kawakami (2008) is skeptical of the immediate effectiveness of the activity of drama. He rather considers the activity of drama just a possible way to gain a sustainable, long-term effect in acquiring language.

Kawakami may be right, as the effectiveness of drama activity is not something we can perceive immediately. Nevertheless, the language itself has a characteristic that we learn in the long term, while accumulating experiences of communication in many situations. Thus the successive activities of dramas must serve as a repertory of simulation of exemplified situations.

## **5. Discussion**

We resume our discussion of the results of the study conducted in Section 3 and the remarks made in Section 4. We examined the effect of habituation to the oral presentation on creative activities like dramatization. The habitual practice of role plays permits students to fight against their fear of speaking in public. The

results of the questionnaire by the students also demonstrate that they feel everyday recitation serves them beneficially at the level of vocabulary and expressions, grammatical knowledge and development of stories, as is shown in the answers to Questions 5 and 6.

We also claim from the result of Question 8 that the advantage of drama activity resides not only in performing but also in watching the other students' dramas. The practicality of insightful learning in drama activities is shown by the result of Question 11, as students stated that the activity would serve them also in practical conversation. We asserted the possibility of using drama activities right from the beginning in Section 4, and enumerated its advantages.

We will consider in more depth the following problems concerning this study: the combination of input and output (5.1), meaningful communicative settings (5.2), communicative methods and grammar correction (5.3), and finally the advantages of drama activities (5.4).

### **5.1. Combination of Input and Output**

In this section, we discuss the importance of the combination of input and output in everyday exercises to improve communicative skills, as exemplified in 4.1.

Krashen (1985) emphasizes the importance of providing comprehensible input. This kind of input must encourage learners to make an effort to understand the meaning that the input conveys, and may maintain their motivation for learning the target language. However, the importance of output is dismissed in Krashen's theory.

In contrast, Richard-Amato (1988) puts emphasis on the role of output as well as input. He claims that output can play a substantial part in the acquisition process. Likewise, Ellis (2008) also points out the importance of the combination of input and output as follows:

Interaction affords learners opportunities to receive input in the form of 'models'. It also affords learners opportunities to produce 'output' and to receive feedback on their attempts at production, in particular feedback that points out and corrects their errors (p. 203).

This article puts the greatest emphasis on the role of output, and role play and dramatization are presented as one of the most effective methods of output. The combination of input and output would be beneficial, especially for beginners and intermediate learners who require model expressions and grammar explanations in order to write an original drama.

## **5.2. Meaningful Communicative Settings**

Oller (1981) maintains the importance of meaningful communicative settings as follows:

It seems clear that the analysis of episodes<sup>3</sup> and linking them up with semantic categories must constitute a central process in learning (p. 488).

Richard-Amato (1988) also indicates:

The presentation of episodically organized materials can indeed be an effective language teaching approach. Through materials that do not violate the logic of normal discourse, the student can receive optimal input which can enhance the ability to reproduce, understand, and recall the target language (p. 51).

This view of putting language learning into meaningful and comprehensive situations corresponds to the perspective of cognitive linguistics that we experience and cognize the world as a gestalt. It also conforms to one of the major theories in cognitive semantics, frame semantics<sup>4</sup>, which claims that in order to understand the meaning of a word, encyclopedic knowledge concerning the word is indispensable. In this study, we proclaim that the exercises in particular communicative contexts can be best realized in exercises of role plays and dramatization.

## **5.3. Communicative Methods and Grammar Correction**

Role play and dramatization can be classified as communicative methods of foreign language learning. In this section, we point out the problem of the tenet of the communicative approach that a top priority should be given to creating meaning and that grammatical correctness is considered less important. In every-

day conversation, it might be possible that we put a greater emphasis on conveying meaning than speaking correctly. Nevertheless, in classroom instruction, correctness of forms should be also respected, as long as it is a part of the education program. This article claims that the activity of the dramatization is one of the best and most appropriate methods for improving one's communicative skills as well as paying attention to the grammatical accuracy suggested by one's teacher. As the result of Question 2 demonstrates, error correction would not work as a deterrent for their creating drama in a short drama activity. Students memorize the modified scripts for performing a play, and as a result, they can acquire grammatical accuracy, while performing a role in a communicative way.

#### **5.4. Advantages**

Numerous advantages of drama activities have been emphasized in this study theoretically as well as empirically. We put emphasis on some advantages: one can practice speaking and improving one's pronunciation; one naturally learns the gestures and facial expressions that go along with the language; and one is prompted to acquire a positive and living language attitude and naturally masters the ways of thinking in another language, along with learning the culture.

To speak another language, one has to place oneself into the world and environment of the target language, and in a way it is to place the new "self" to "perform or act" in a new way. This viewpoint is claimed in various studies: Richard-Amato (1988) assumes that second language students can easily become absorbed in the dramatic playing out of life's experiences, and Raz (1985) accentuates that the situation of role play must involve 'real' people expressing 'real' feelings. Consequently, second language learning and dramatization are very closely intertwined, which results in the usefulness of combining the two.

## **6. Concluding Remarks**

The present study examined the significance of role play and dramatization in foreign language education and learning. The following problems were also discussed in relation to the activity

of drama in language classrooms: the combination of input and output, meaningful communicative settings, communicative methods and grammar correction, and advantages of drama activities.

As the present study was limited to only seventeen participants, the results must not be overgeneralized. Similar studies should be conducted on greater numbers of participants in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of drama activities and to examine the participants' evaluations. Moreover, we should evaluate students' competence in the form of tests before and after the practical use of role plays and dramas so as to reveal their improvement in communicative skills. However, this study illustrated some students' evaluations of drama activities and their self-awareness about the practicality of their everyday recitations and their positive effects on creating new dramas.

Victor Hugo stated in *Faits et Croyances* that: "Une pièce de théâtre, une comédie, une tragédie, un drame cela doit être une sorte de personne ; cela doit penser, cela doit agir, cela doit vivre (A dramatic play, a comedy, a tragedy, a drama must be a kind of person; it must think, it must act, it must live) [edition 2002: 196, translated into English by the author]." The practical use of composite art, dramatization, which includes human beings, in other words, dramatic play, is most inclusive and thus a fundamental method to acquire one's target language.

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## Notes

1. In this article, we use the term 'comprehensive drama' in a sense that it includes various non-linguistic tools such as sets and properties for a play, music, lighting, etc.

2. The International Association of Performing Language is an association which explores the power of drama and theatre in second language education.
3. Oller (1981) gives a definition of episodic memory in contrast with semantic memory as follows: While semantic memory is abstract and not necessarily related to any particular event in experience, episodic memory is more concrete and is directly tied to particular coordinates in the experienced time/space continuum (p.488).
4. Frame semantics is a theory propounded by Charles Fillmore. Semantics is connected with encyclopedic knowledge in the theory.

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## Appendix A: Worksheet [Short drama]

-Structure of conversation

A: A greets B.

B: B returns a salute. B continues to do what he is doing.

A: A asks what B is doing.

B: B responds, and explains the reason for which he is doing it.

A: A denies what B said, and reveals what B is actually doing, or blames for him.

(You can continue the dialogue as you like.)

-Situation (Choose one of the following situations.)

1. Conversation between a child who plays without studying and his/her mother;
2. Conversation between a pupil who is cheating in an exam and his/her teacher;
3. Conversation between a suspicious-looking man and a policeman who found him;
4. Conversation between a student who is reading comics in a convenience store, although his teacher told him to run around the school, and the teacher who found him;
5. Conversation between a merchant who sells a fake painting of a famous painter and the painter who happened to stop by the merchant's shop.
6. You can frame a situation by yourself.

## Appendix B: Questionnaire [Short drama]

-Sex: Male / Female

-Age

1. When writing a script, what was your criterion for selecting a theme?
  - a. Ease of development of stories
  - b. Ease of imagining the situation

- c. Ease of imagining personalities of the characters in the drama
  - d. Ease of imagining the relationship between the two characters
  - e. Others (                    )
2. When writing a script, to which point(s) did you pay attention?
    - a. How you develop stories
    - b. Correctness of grammar
    - c. Naturalness of expressions
    - d. Ease of pronunciation
    - e. Others (                    )
  3. When you are working in pairs, which point(s) did you find difficult?
    - a. Disagreement on the development of stories
    - b. Disagreement on the correctness of grammar
    - c. Disagreement on the naturalness of expressions
    - d. Disagreement on the ease of pronunciation
    - e. Others (                    )
  4. What kind of advantages do you have in writing a script in pairs, instead of working alone?
    - a. Ease of developing the story
    - b. Suggestion of advices on the correctness of grammar
    - c. Suggestion of advices on the naturalness of expressions
    - d. Suggestion of advices on the ease of pronunciation
    - e. Nothing in particular
    - f. Others (                    )
  5. You learn conversational expressions in everyday English classes, and recite the conversation in the next class (Practical English Program). Do you think these experiences serve you beneficially, when writing a new script for a short drama?  
-Yes / No.  
If you think it is beneficial, in which point(s)?
    - a. Vocabulary and expressions
    - b. Grammar
    - c. Development of stories accessible for the audience
    - d. Others (                    )
  6. You learn conversational expressions in everyday English classes, and recite the conversation in the next class (Practical English Program). Do you think these experiences serve you beneficially, when acting out the short drama in front of class?  
-Yes / No.  
If you think it is beneficial, in which point(s)?
    - a. Vocabulary and expressions
    - b. Grammar
    - c. Pronunciation
    - d. Build self-esteem and courage to speak in front of many people
    - e. Others (                    )
  7. When acting out the short drama, to which point(s) did you pay atten-

- tion?
- a. Pronunciation
  - b. Speaking clearly, by putting appropriate emphases on important parts
  - c. Expressing characteristics of each character
  - d. Showing clearly the development of stories
  - e. Facial expressions and gestures
  - f. Others ( )
8. Was there something you learned by watching the other students' short dramas?  
-Yes / No.  
If yes, in which point(s) did you learn something?
- a. Vocabulary and expressions
  - b. Grammar
  - c. Development of stories accessible for the audience
  - d. Facial expressions and gestures
  - e. Others ( )
9. Are you satisfied with this activity?  
Extremely satisfied / Satisfied / Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied / Unsatisfied / Extremely unsatisfied
10. Do you find this activity interesting?  
Extremely interesting / Interesting / Neither interesting nor uninteresting / Uninteresting / Extremely uninteresting
11. Do you think that using English actively as in this activity will serve you in practical English conversation?  
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

## Appendix C: Students' scripts for the short dramas

-Example 1 [Situation chosen: 3]

Policeman: Good afternoon.

Suspicious-looking man: Oh, what?

P: What are you doing?

SM: Leave me alone!

P: Show me what is in your bag.

SM: Hey, I have nothing!

P: You are a wanted criminal, aren't you?

SM: Shit! Why do you know that?

P: My wife said you were handsome.

B: Oh, that's exactly what I thought.

P: Let's go to jail!

SM: Okay!

-Example 2 [Situation chosen: 3 ]

Policeman: Excuse me?

Suspicious-looking man: Yes?

P: What are you doing?

SM: I'm doing nothing.

P: What is your occupation?

SM: I'm doing nothing. I want to go home.

P: Wait, wait!!! Show me what's inside?

SM: . . . OK.

P: What's this?

SM: Field glass.

P: What were you seeing?

SM: I'm seeing you every day!

-Example 3 [Situation chosen: 2 ]

Teacher: You, over there!

Pupil: . . .

T: What were you looking at?

P: I didn't look anything.

T: It cannot be true! You must have cheated. You must not do. You know, cheating on the test is not permitted!

P: I'm sorry. I was sleeping with my eyes open.