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HOW CAN DRAMA BENEFIT CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE LEARNING AND MORAL THINKING IN A CHINESE EARLY YEARS EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT?

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained here in is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or processional qualification except as specified.

Jie Cai

20/12/2018

Abstract

In my doctoral research, I set out to explore, as a drama practitioner, how drama can benefit children's language learning and moral thinking in a Chinese early years educational setting. Since the 1990s, when drama education began to be introduced into mainland China, very little academic research has been carried out to examine its development and the ways it has been introduced into specific educational contexts. This research is intended to help Chinese drama practitioners and researchers by presenting an in-depth study of my own attempts to apply a particular approach to drama education in a specific educational setting. This setting - that of a kindergarten - is one of the key areas in which drama education has begun to be practised. I begin the dissertation by reflecting upon current developments in the field in mainland China and problems that persist, particularly in what I see as some confusions between theoretical justifications and the actual practice of drama in Chinese early years education, with particular reference to the influential writings of two leading professors in the field. In the process, I explain the theories that have shaped my own approach. These are very influenced by the practices of drama in education as developed in the UK and, in particular, those I learned and practised myself during the MA in Drama and Theatre Education that I took at Warwick University. For the research in this study, I have applied reflexive-reflective case study as my methodology, and used a personal journal, video recordings, interviews, children's drawings and recordings of their storytelling, observations, and the critical comments of a member of staff as co-researcher as my research methods. All my teaching was carried out in a local public kindergarten for 5-6 year-old children near the city of Cheng-du, where I currently live and work. My reflections examine the successes and shortcomings of my planning and my teaching; problems related to deeply held educational beliefs and practices that contradicted or undermined drama practice whilst, on the surface, offering it support; strengths and weaknesses of the research itself; and reflections on the key fields of how drama can relate to both language learning and moral education in the early years classroom, as informed by this study. My aim is to offer a thoroughly researched, first-hand experience to inform current and future Chinese drama practitioners of the problematics and possibilities of introducing drama education into Chinese educational settings.

Chapter One: Introduction

When I started my research in 2012, there were few publications addressing research or practice in drama education in China. Since then, we have undergone a similar developmental history to that experienced earlier by Hong Kong and Taiwan. In China, however, there is still some confusion over basic concepts, a lack of valuable research and inconsistencies between theory and practice. From 2015 to 2018, the concept of drama education became widespread in mainland China. Many students who graduated from the Masters programme in Drama and Theatre Education in the University of Warwick are now practising drama education in Hang Zhou, Guang Zhou, Beijing, Chengdu and Shanghai. Some of them, like me, have established their own theatre companies and focus on drama education, theatre education and teacher training. In the past three years, more than 300 published articles about drama education or theatre education have appeared on Chinese websites or in journals; many international conferences have been organized; and major developments are happening in schools and in higher education. However, little research has been carried out by higher education institutions in China to investigate how to apply drama in schools or kindergartens. On the one hand, there is still big gap between theory and practice; on the other hand, existing research is flawed and problematic. Therefore, I hope my research can draw a clearer picture and critically investigate how to apply drama in Chinese early years education.

1. The context of drama education in China

For political reasons, drama education has been developed in different ways and led by different people in Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China.

1.1 The context in Taiwan

In the 1990s, a number of scholars such as Zhang Xiao Hua, Lin Mei-Chun, Chen Yun Wen and Zheng Dai Qiong finished their Phd studies in American and UK universities and brought their research findings to Taiwan. A number of their dissertations were later published as books: for example, *Creative Drama Theory and Practice for Teachers and Leaders* (Zhang, 2003); *The Theory and Development of Drama in Education* (Zhang, 2004); *The Theory and Practice of Creative Drama* (Lin, 2005). Meanwhile, Jonathan Neelands' *Beginning drama 11-14* and Joe Winston's *Beginning Drama 4-11* and *Drama, Literacy and Moral Education 5-11* were translated into Chinese in Taiwan.

All of these books later became available in mainland China and began to influence people's thinking about drama education.

Despite the Taiwanese government issuing the *Arts Education Act* in 1986, drama was not immediately applied widely in schools or universities there. The Taiwan government included "performing arts" in the *National Curriculum Guidelines for Year 1 to Year 9* to encourage schools to teach drama and enrich their provision of arts education. As it later did in mainland China, government policy greatly helped the development of drama and theatre education in Taiwan. Importantly, the key academics mentioned earlier were given much governmental support. As a result, in 2005, the National Taiwan University of Arts and the University of Tainan established related departments that began to offer undergraduate and masters programmes to produce trained practitioners and to promote research and practice in schools, communities and institutions. (Xu, 2017; Zhang, 2015; Lin, 2015) From the 1990s onward, many famous scholars began to be invited to take part in international conferences in Taiwan, such as Lowell Swortzell, Robert Landy, Nellie McCasilin, Jonothan Neelands, Joe Winston and John Somers. Later, the Taiwan government began to put millions of dollars into the support and development of drama education and the training of qualified teachers. As a result, Taiwan now has a well-constructed drama education curriculum in kindergarten, primary schools and high schools (Zhang, 2015). Examples of its practice have been introduced to mainland China, where Professor Zhang Xiao Hua and professor Lin Mei-chun are now well known and seen as leaders in the field.

1.2. The context in Hong Kong

In the 1980s, theatre in education became popular in Hong Kong. Xu (2011) states in his journal article that the British director, Bernard Goss, organized many theatre education workshops there to introduce ways of applying theatre in education to the then British colony. In the 1990s, many famous theatre companies tried to create theatre

education productions for different groups and began to explore their own ways of conducting educational drama, such as the *Mingri Institution of Arts Education*,[1] Zuni Icosahedron[2] and Edward Lam Dance Theatre[3]. In contrast to Taiwan and mainland China, the Hong Kong Education Bureau concentrated on programmes of teacher training that stressed the values of performance. It offered at least 24 hours of training a year to all Hong Kong teachers to improve their teaching skills by learning drama and theatre.[4] In 1991, the Hong Kong Education Bureau organized a drama festival for local schools. In 1994, it established the Hong Kong Teachers Drama Association to support those teachers who wanted to apply drama or theatre in their teaching and offered continued professional training for them. In 1998, the Hong Kong government funded the "Drama Education Plan" to promote drama education in 57 kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools until 2004. The Hong Kong Drama/Theatre Education Forum (TEFO) was set up in 2002 to support the development of drama education. It organized international conferences and has its own journal to publicise related articles. The Sixth International Drama and Theatre Education Association (IDEA) was held in Hong Kong in 2007, a milestone in the development of drama education not only in Hong Kong but also in Asia as a whole (Xu, 2011; Zhang, 2015). In 2010, De Shun and Li Ping (2016) conducted a survey to investigate the application of drama education in eleven Hong Kong schools and showed how it has been taught as a compulsory subject regularly and successfully. This can be seen as a signal that drama education is now well established in Hong Kong.

We shall see that, compared to Hong Kong and Taiwan, China 'joined the party' much later, but it is important to consider the development of drama in these two neighbours as both have had an influence on developments in my own country.

1.3. The Context in mainland China

I shall discuss the context of drama in education in China through focusing on four key aspects: Chinese government policy; international conferences; academic research; finally, teaching practice in Chinese schools.

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[1] More information can be found on the their website: http://www.mingri.org.hk
[2] More information can be found on their website: http://www.zuni.org.hk/new/zuni/web/index.php
[3] More information can be found on their website: https://www.eldt.org
[4] More information can be found on the website: https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/

1.3.1. Government Policy and Documents

In comparison with Hong Kong and Taiwan, practice and research in drama education are more greatly influenced by government policy documents in mainland China. In 2000, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic issued two main documents: *The Outline of Curriculum Reform in Basic Education* and *Curriculum Provision of Compulsory Education*, to begin a reform of our national curriculum. Since this, the arts in education have been afforded a greater focus. The following year, the Ministry of Education issued *The Standards for Arts Curriculum in Compulsory Education,* which has been seen as a turning point for drama education in China (Huang & Zhu, 2007; Xu, 2011; Zhang, 2010). In this document, drama and dance were mentioned as part of government education policy for the first time. Importantly, it clarified the developmental levels of drama for year 1 to year 9 students (from ages 6 - 15) in terms of sensibility and appreciation; creativity and expression; reflection and evaluation. In 2002, the Ministry of Education issued *The Developmental Plan for Arts Education in National Schools (2001-2010)* and *The Working Regulations for Arts Education in Schools* to emphasize that arts education must be taught regularly in all urban schools and to push schools to offer different arts subjects for their students. Since then, drama has been introduced into many schools in different ways. In Taiwan and Hong Kong, existing research and practice has to some degree influenced government policy and documentation, but this has not been the case in mainland China. In 2015, the State Council published *Guidelines to Strengthen and Improve Arts Education in Schools,* which clearly proposed that drama should be taught as a key arts subject but recognised that its teaching needed to improve. (Xu, 2017).

1.3.2. International conferences

As a result of this growing governmental interest, many international conferences have been held in different cities by different organizations, bringing increasing numbers of international scholars with different perspectives to China. The International Conference on Drama and Education for Young Children in 2014 was organized by Nanjing Normal University. This first international conference of its kind was a milestone in China and nearly 300 people attended. Six schools gave presentations intended to demonstrate the positive results of teaching drama regularly. Professor Joe Winston, Professor Philip Taylor, Professor Julie Dunn and, from Taiwan, Professor Lin Mei-Chun and Professor Chen Ren Fu, were first introduced to China at this point. In 2015,

two important international conferences were held in Beijing: an International Drama Education Conference hosted by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press; the other, a Conference on Drama and Education by The Chinese Theatre Literature Association and Research Centre of East China Normal University. Between 2015 and 2017, more than ten international conferences related to drama education were held in cites such as Zhu Hai, Chongqing, Xi'an, Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing. More and more experts such as Robin Pascoe, Yvette Hardie, Livija Kroflin, Xiao Hua Zhang, Jonathan Neelands, David Davis, Chris Cooper, Carmel O'Sullivan, Julie Dunn and John O'Toole have been introduced to China through such events. In 2018, as I write this, international involvement seems to be increasing, with talk of the next IDEA conference being held in Beijing in 2020.

1.3.3. Research and academic development

In 2001, assistant professor Zhang of the Nanjing Normal University began her Phd research on an integrated curriculum for drama in kindergartens, publishing her research results in 2005. Since this, Zhang has focused on arguments for a drama curriculum in early years education, resulting in her publication *The Curriculum for Drama Education in Kindergartens* (2014). In 2005, the Shanghai Theatre Academy established the first major in drama education in its dramatic literature department. Later, Professor Huang of Zhe Jiang University (2007) and her team began to research the practice of drama education in primary schools, sponsored by the government. Meanwhile, professor Ma Li Wen of Beijing Normal University and her colleagues began to conduct research in primary schools, lately focusing on how drama can help develop the personal growth of teachers as well as improve generic teaching strategies. She has also contributed to the establishment of a Research Centre in Applied Theatre and Expressive Arts Education in Beijing Normal University (Xu, 2017; Ma, 2011 & 2016). In 2016, The Central Academy of Drama established its own major in Drama Education. Xu's (2017) journal article claims that, between 1997 and 2016, there have been 172 journal articles and dissertations related to "drama education", "creative drama" and "theatre education" that focus on work carried out in mainland China, including 32 Masters dissertations and two Phd dissertations. This year, three universities in Chengdu invited me to give lectures about drama and theatre education. It is clear, then, that an increasing number of universities are paying attention to this growing area in education.

1.3.4. Practice in schools

In addition to the research mentioned previously, schools themselves are developing their practices and disseminating what they see as their achievements. In 2007, Shanghai Hualin Primary School attempted to introduce drama education to the whole school and its practice has been reported on in detail as a model for drama education by a number of Chinese scholars (Zhang, 2010). In Hangzhou, Tiandi Primary School has began drama class as an after school club for children from year 1 to year 6 and has had accounts of their work published (Wang, 2017). In Nanjing, assistant professor Zhang Jin Mei has worked with her students and local teachers to carry out a number of practical teaching projects in six kindergartens, attempting to establish a model for a drama education curriculum for 3 - 6 year-old children. The institution of Drama Rainbow in Beijing, a private company, continues to work closely with British and Irish practitioners Chris Cooper, David Davis and Carmel O'Sullivan to practise theatre in education for children aged between 3 - 8 years old. They have also organized teacher training, led by Chris Cooper and Carmel O'Sullivan. My institution, Marphy's Play House, has also established a drama curriculum for 3 - 12 year-old children and works with many local schools in Chengdu. Our institution also offers professional training in drama and theatre education for more than 200 school teachers every year. Meanwhile, Simon Wong, the director of Mingri Institution for Arts Education in Hong Kong, focuses on teacher training for kindergarten teachers and has developed a particular and rather rigid model on how to teach it. He has had a great influence in mainland China. It is clear, then, that interest in drama education in the early years has begun to grow in China in recent years.

2. Problems raised by research and practice

Drama education, then, has become fashionable in mainland China. In the numerous publications and articles, some of which I have mentioned above, terms such as process drama, creative drama and developmental drama are used freely, but it is far from clear that there is a shared understanding of the nature and purposes of drama education for very young children.

2.1 The gap between theory and practice

Drama is continually linked to performing in school contexts (Zhang, 2015; Huang, 2007). Drama education as a model for learning is supposed to be used to challenge this

conception but, ironically, although drama education often starts from this premise as a learning process, it often ends up with an emphasis on performance. For example, Shanghai Hualin Primary School has been praised as a model for applying genuine drama education in Shanghai (Xu, 2007; Zhang, 2010; Guo, 2015); however, the key reason for this is the fact that their student performances have received awards in many competitions. In professor Zhang Jin Mei's research, she argues strongly against the use of drama to teach early years children to perform, yet the schemes presented in her examples of a drama curriculum always end up with children performing. The Central Academy of Drama and the Shanghai Theatre Academy both have majors in drama education, but a key aim is to train teachers how to direct children's shows in schools. Fang's research (2012) took a sample of 231 parents; of these, 88.34% thought that drama was about performing, and believed that this was very useful for young children. 39.4% of the parents had never heard of drama education and 37.9% had just heard the "words" before, not knowing what it meant. 49.5% of parents thought that drama education should teach children how to perform on stage. Her research questionnaire also showed a lack of interest or participation in drama among early years teachers, either as audience or performers. 35.6% of the sixty kindergarten teachers who took part in her survey had never had any experience of drama or theatre; the rest only went to the theatre occasionally.

2.2 Using drama as political propaganda and as a didactic tool

One feature of drama education demonstrated by research in kindergartens is that school teachers believe that it should be based on themes and not directed by children's interests or free play. However, these themes normally fit rigidly within values promoted by our political system, such as "love China", "Chinese virtues" ,"respect for the national flag", or "Chinese traditions" (Xu, 2017; Guo, 2015; Zhang, 2010). Such topics are readily sponsored by local government agencies and are seen as safe by schools. In early years education, then, even when drama education is not seen in terms of performance, it is likely to be regarded as an aid to didactic or moralistic teaching, very unlike the discourse found in western approaches. Themes such as "wash your hands" , "don't be selfish", "be polite", "don't tell lies" and "don't speak to strangers" are reported by Zhang as common in Chinese kindergartens (Zhang, 2015). In such cases, drama is being applied neither as a powerful way of learning nor as a performing art.

2.3 Ignoring the significance of structure and questioning

Professor Mei-chun and Professor Jin Mei are leading academics in early years drama. However, none of their research has mentioned how to structure a drama lesson or how to ask effective questions to encourage children to think. For example, in Zhang Jin Mei's writings, she employs the theories of Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton, Joe Winston, Brian Way and Eliot Einser to help theorise her own approaches. However, in none of the lessons that she describes is it clear how these influences have found a place in her practice. In one example, she has children stage a fashion show for the emperor and one of her stated objectives is to teach children how to walk and talk like a eunuch. The theme of this lesson, she claims, is teaching children that lying is wrong (Zhang, 2015). I will return to the problems and contradictions in her influential writings later, in my literature review.

3. My research context

This perceived gap between theory and practice in current writings on drama education in Chinese kindergartens was what initially led me to consider this research project. As language learning and moral education are seen as key aims in Chinese kindergartens, I chose to focus my own research on teaching within these two areas as a means to critically reflect on how best to position drama education within Chinese kindergartens.

3.1 Research focus and questions

This research is a reflective study on my own practice, but the teaching at the heart of this practice was designed to address three key questions.

a) How might drama benefit early years children's language learning?
b) How might drama benefit young children's moral thinking?
c) How might a drama curriculum address aspects of the national guidelines for early years education?

Being a case study, all of these questions are explored within the specific context of a particular Chinese kindergarten

3.2 The context of the kindergarten

I carried out my research in one state kindergarten in Chengdu. This kindergarten had around 700 children between the ages of 3 - 6. Each class had around 38 children and one lead teacher, as well as two teaching assistants and one teacher in charge of child

care. This particular kindergarten had been teaching drama for two years before I started my research. Drama and Visual arts are two key curriculum areas in this school and the school principal, the dean of curriculum and the school teachers in general were very positive about applying drama to their teaching and supportive of my research.

3.3 The research group

Due to the limits of space, I had to teach drama in the classroom. I decided to divide the class into two groups. The research group consisted of eighteen children aged between 5 and 6, chosen by the lead teacher, with an equal number of boys and girls. The lead teacher was happy to join in with my research and agreed to act as a co-researcher, observing my teaching and the children's responses during the process. After each session I interviewed the children individually, as well as the lead teacher.

3.4 The research outline

I applied reflective practitioner case study as my methodology. I interviewed the school principal and the head teacher of my research class before I began, and observed their daily routine in order to better understand the children and the ways they were used to working. Later, I designed my schemes of work informed by what I had observed. My fieldwork lasted for one term and consisted of me teaching four drama schemes based on four stories and one poem - twenty-two sessions in total, with each session lasting between forty-five and sixty minutes. I kept a reflective journal and adapted my schemes of work regularly, responding to the problems that occurred during my teaching. As well as a personal journal, I made use of video recordings, interviews with the lead teacher and the children, children's drawings, recordings of their storytelling, and on-going observation as my methods to collect data. My analysis and discussion focused on critical issues relating to how drama could be seen to benefit the children's moral thinking and language learning during my teaching.

Chapter Two: Literature review

As an introduction to this literature review, I must first position myself ideologically in relation to the educational traditions of drama, as there is no one, given understanding of what drama education consists of, even among those who practise it as distinctive from education for theatre performance. The two major theorists at the root of what is commonly known as drama-in-education (DiE) were Dorothy Heathcote (Wagner, 1979) and Gavin Bolton (1979, 1984), who both worked in the UK. Their work developed from the earlier work of Peter Slade, which was very much in the progressive tradition of education - namely, a tradition that emphasises the centrality of the child in the educational process as opposed to a given curriculum. The common metaphors that help distinguish between the 'progressive' and 'traditionalist' approaches see the child as either a flower to be watered and nourished in order to grow and develop naturally; or as an empty vessel to be filled with useful skills and knowledge. These traditions, in turn, offer different metaphors for the teacher. In the latter she is the authoritative holder of skills, attitudes and knowledge that she must transmit efficiently to children; in the former, she is an enabler, a facilitator, someone who is sensitive to children's cognitive and emotional needs, who is willing to shape the curriculum around what interests children, as opposed to what an imposing curriculum has determined that they need to know. Both Heathcote and Bolton used the convention of 'teacher in role' to undermine the status of the teacher as the absolute holder of knowledge. In their drama work, for example, they would often begin by asking children what they would like to do a drama about and would then attempt to shape their stated interest into a story, with tensions that intended to help them act out and reflect upon previously unexamined beliefs and attitudes. The publications cited above contain numerous examples of this approach.

Although there was a reaction in the 1980s in the UK against this understanding of drama (See Hornbrook, 1989), its form was adapted to changing curriculum demands by both the practitioners who taught me at Warwick, Jonothan Neelands and Joe Winston. In their different ways, they both worked within this tradition, placing children's interests at the heart of the learning process of drama, and seeing attitudinal reflection as key to the learning. One major difference from Heathcote and Bolton is that both Neelands and Winston like to work from a given story or picture book, not only as a

spring board to the drama work but also as a narrative that can provide an aesthetic appeal to hold the attention and interest of the children. In addition, Winston's books for primary teachers (1997, 2000), both of which have been translated into Chinese and are hence influential in mainland China, have provided models of how drama work based upon such stories can be anchored to language learning and moral education, directly through the teacher playing at not being teacher. It is upon this tradition and making use of the example of Winston, in particular, that I position my own work. As we will see in the rest of this chapter, it differs in some key ways from two very influential practitioners who have written in Chinese specifically on the teaching of drama at kindergarten level.

In this section, I have chosen to focus on the research of two academics. The first is Jin Mei Zhang, assistant professor at Nanjing Normal University, who started her research on drama teaching in Chinese kindergartens in 2001; the second is Mei-chun Lin, a professor at the National University of Tainan, who has also been seen as a pioneer in applying creative drama within Taiwanese kindergartens since 1993. Both of their publications and research studies have been funded by their respective governments, as part of their national education programmes to respond to innovative policies and guidelines in early years education. Both have organised large conferences on drama education and have invited influential western practitioners to speak at them. In 2016, both were invited to speak at the national conference of the International Drama Education Congress (IDEC) in Beijing. Their practices and theoretical justifications have had a major influence on kindergarten teachers interested in drama in both Taiwan and China. Therefore, it is necessary to spend some time in this literature review examining their theories and practices.

1. Lin Mei-chun's practice in Taiwanese early years education context

Since 2007, the ministry of education of Taiwan has been reforming and developing their guidelines for the early years education curriculum. Lin Mei-chun's influential department of Drama Creation and Application has trained qualified drama teachers in kindergartens and, after six years of practice and research, their achievements determined government policy in placing drama in kindergartens as a form of art to foster children's aesthetic capabilities. This has been seen as a milestone in the development

of early years education in Taiwan (Zhang, 2015).

Lin has been greatly influenced by creative drama from the American tradition, where she obtained her doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Arizona State University in 1992. Her most influential book, which was published in mainland China in 2005, is entitled 'Theory and Practice of Creative Drama – Action research in the classroom' (2005), and is based upon this research. In this book she defines different approaches to drama teaching in schools and the curriculum, citing key theorists such as McCaslin (1984) for Creative Drama, Bolton (1984) and Heathcote (Wagner,1979) for Drama in Education and Neelands (1990) for the use of Drama Conventions.

However, she defines her own approach to drama education as one of improvised and spontaneous activity in the classroom. The central purpose is to provide an experience for the children of spontaneous acting and speaking, along with rhythmic movement, imitative movement, sensory activities, imitative sound and dialogue and narrative pantomime (children performing along to the teacher's storytelling). As with the practices of Creative Drama, she prioritises creative expression over providing new understandings of the world, or exploring issues of human significance, which are seen as central to western drama educators such as Bolton, (1979); O'Neil and Lambert,(1990); Morgan & Saxton, (1987); and Winston (1998). To Bolton, drama can be seen as 'thought-in-action', through which a new understanding of the world comes from making meaning of internal action (p.24). This represents 'the individual's attitude to his world based on his feeling about the world' (ibid). Drama is a way of 'exploring being' consciously, enabling a 'change of understanding about human behavior' (Morgan & Saxton, 1987) to take place during the learning process.

1.1 The educational functions of drama

Lin believes that drama offers chances for children to learn and grow comprehensively. The educational functions of drama for young children are, for her, divided into four areas, which she sees as working together as an integrated whole:

1.1.1 Social development

Here she agrees with Geraldine Siks (1983) that drama helps children know themselves

through playing someone else; that drama can comfort children and help them manage their emotions; and that it can lead children to reflect on their own and others' emotional experiences.

1.1.2   Cognitive development

This part is mainly based on Piaget's research and theories. As Lin states, drama creates an imaginary learning area for children to re-create what they know about the world. This process of re-creation stimulates children's cognitive development, provided the teacher can intervene sensitively in ways that deepen their thinking.

1.1.3   Physical and aesthetic development

Lin insists the basic element of drama is to help young children to explore the world through sensory awareness. During this process, children learn how to manage their bodies and how to select creative and suitable forms of physical expression to make meaning.

1.1.4   Language development

Lin here refers to the extensive research of Vitz (1983), which showed how drama improves children's ability in language making in a range of ways including, among others, speaking fluently, improvising stories, speaking coherently and at length, and second language learning. Furthermore, she insists that drama can help children prepare for reading.

1.2   Drama and curriculum in the kindergarten

Lin proposes four forms of drama teaching in the curriculum:

a.   Spontaneous dramatic-play

b.   Themed role-play activity

c.   Themed drama in education

d.   Linear creative drama

She provides examples of each. Below, I summarise one of her exemplary lessons that applies to the fourth of these modes, which she calls 'Linear creative drama'. I provide this in detail, as it both exemplifies her approach but also poses a number of questions concerning the relationship between her theory and actual practice.

1.3 An example: Five Little Monkeys

Teaching objectives:

a.   Understanding the meaning of "convince"

b.   Improving children's sound and body movement.

c.   Improving their ability to solve problems

d.   Encouraging them to create a new nursery rhyme

Teaching resource:

Monkey finger puppet, tambourine, background music

Teaching plan:

1. Stimulus and motivation

    Telling children what the meaning of "convince" is and then using the monkey fin-ger puppet to create the drama environment. Organizing children to discuss the meaning of the word "convince".

    Question: Mother monkey said: no TV!, if you are the little monkey, how could you convince your mother to let you watch the TV.

2. Listen to the nursery rhythm

    Sing the song "five little monkeys swing in the tree" to children and encourage them to practise changing the tone by asking the question:

    If you are the monkey, what will you do when you see a crocodile is walking to-wards you?

    If you are the crocodile, what will you do?

3. Discussion and practice

    Using the questions to guide the children to imagine and try out movements.

    a.   How do the little monkeys swing?

    b.   Where do they swing?

    c.   How does the crocodile get close to the monkey? How does it get to eat the monkey?

    d.   If there are only two monkeys left, what are they feeling? (Scared? Sad?) How do they swing now? Is it different from the beginning?

        Only one little monkey is left; how can he confront the crocodile? If the mon-key doesn't want to be eaten by the crocodile, how can he convince the croco-dile? Encourage the children to discuss this and collect as many ideas as possi-ble.

e. Divide the children into groups of 5 or 6; each group will discuss the monkey's name, personality, the sound he makes, how he swings and how he manages not to get eaten.

4. Presentation (performing)

   a. Here, the children are led by the teacher to make a range of step by step performance decisions with regard to space, sound, movement and so on.

5. Reflection

   After the activity, the teacher can ask questions to encourage the children to recall what they did and give suggestions. Some suggestions are for children to consider the differences between the groups' solutions, the things the monkey said to the crocodile and strategies to avoid hurting one another while performing.

6. Extension activity

   Intended to help children create a new nursery rhyme based upon the old one.

1.4 Reflections on the work of Lin Mei-chun

Lin's presentation of how western educators have theorised drama education in different ways is useful and accurate. However, it is a little unclear as to how this informs her practice, as exemplified here. If drama is intended to enable children to reflect on the world they live in, asking them to imagine how the two surviving monkeys felt after their three brothers had been eaten by a crocodile would appear to lead only to a few obvious responses. Asking them to imagine how a monkey might convince a crocodile not to eat him may, on paper, look like a logical and fun way to improve young children's cognitive development, language development, social ability and problem-solving, as she insists; however, in terms of human understanding, it is potentially quite confusing. I tried this lesson with my six year-old son and he was adamant that the monkeys must have lost their minds. 'Are they crazy?' he asked. 'Arguing with a crocodile? If they want to live they must run away!' He felt that he could not engage with this particular exercise.

Gavin Bolton (1979) has emphasized that there is often a gap between teaching intentions and actual learning. He states that learning cannot happen in drama without careful selection of symbolic action, where spontaneous feelings recalled from past experiences are readily accessible and brought into play by the teacher. My son's responses, and my own experience, lead me to suspect that these qualities are not evident in this

particular scheme of work. It is only one of the lessons provided in the book, of course, but it is seen by many Chinese kindergarten teachers as the advice of an expert, and I fear that it does not fully exploit the kind of learning drama can bring. So what stories or activities should a kindergarten teacher use when planning for learning through drama? The work of Professor Zhang Jin Mei offers another view on theory and practice that also presents some problems.

2. Zhang Jin Mei's practice in the mainland Chinese early years education context

Zhang Jin Mei is the leading academic of teaching drama in mainland Chinese early years education. She speaks of herself as the first to bring the concept of drama education to China and has published four books based on her research and practice. These books begin by drawing on her doctoral research in six kindergartens and contain a whole drama curriculum for different age groups. She has attempted to construct an entirely new theory of drama education by taking key features from the American tradition of creative drama and the British tradition of drama education. She claims her curriculum to be 'ideal, perfect, sensitive and diverse for early year education' (Zhang, 2015, p84).[5]

2.1. The importance of drama for young children

Rather than employing the theories of social constructionism, Zhang claims to apply embodied cognition, phenomenological philosophy and somatic psychology to draw upon why drama education is necessary for young children. She explains what she sees as the important connections through three aspects:

2.1.1. Body philosophy

Like many contemporary drama practitioners, Zhang agrees with Maurice Merleau-Ponty that our body is the primary site of knowing the world, thus denying the Cartesian division between body and mind. She sees the body as shaping our felt experience of the world. Thus, the body should not be externalized, materialized and instrumentalized. It is not an appendant of thoughts, mind and spirit. More unusually, she sees this

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[5] "该书从戏剧与人类、儿童及教育三者之间存在的本质联系出发，建构一种理想、完美、多元、感性的儿童教育…"（p. 84）

primacy of the body paralleled in Chinese Confucianism, which, she says, shares the same conception that our body-subject is forever being shaped by nature, society, consciousness and physical existence. Thus, the aim of education in Chinese Confucianism is to achieve harmony between spirit, energy and essence. The centrality of the body in drama mirrors the centrality of the body in our ordinary lives – and the practice of drama can help bring this congruence into education, which so often seems to ignore the body or even see it as an impediment to learning as a purely mental function.

2.1.2. Somatic Psychology

Zhang draws upon Shaun Gallagher's (2006) philosophy of embodied cognition in terms of body-formatted representations and body-related metaphors to illustrate how our bodies shape our understandings, imaginations and reflections upon the world. She insists that bodily movement has a crucial function in the cognition process. For example, when we try to move a big box, our body-formatted representations remind us to choose specific actions such as a lower centre of gravity and the need to bend down, but when we touch the box and realise it is very light, we will immediately select different actions to fulfil the task. This sequence of body-formatted representations-action-reflection-adaption is the process of cognition. Thus, she claims, drama creates the chance for children to use their bodies to act and reflect and so develop their cognitive ability.

2.1.3. Somaesthetics

Zhang here refers to Richard Shusterman's (2008) philosophy of somaesthetics which is defined as:

....the critical meliorative study of one's experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory- aesthetic appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-fashioning. It is therefore also devoted to the knowledge, discourses, and disciplines that structure such somatic care or can improve it. (p.19)

She argues that the meanings of the body in somaesthetics philosophy are related to three aspects:

a. The body is spiritual in nature and integrates soul, inspiration and imagination.

b. Through the body, we acquire perceptual experience through mindfulness and physical experience.

c. We need to improve and train our bodies through the guidelines offered by somaesthetics philosophy.

She concludes that Richard Shusterman classified two types of somaesthetics: representational somaesthetics (such as cosmetics) and experiential somaesthetics. The former is 'concerned more with the body's exterior or surface forms' (p.26) and the latter is 'more about making us feel better in both senses of that ambiguous phrase' (p.26). Thus, our body language and positioning in space shapes our aesthetic ability, and even our feelings from our skin or organs will impact upon it. Our understanding of the world will be expressed or reflected through our body movements. How we feel, smell, touch and move can cultivate our 'bodily sensibility' (Shusterman, 2008)

2.2   Young children's body and spirit in a dramatic environment

According to Zhang, then, the body is the resource, medium and result of drama making. Actors use their bodies to tell a story, to create meanings and to bring characters to life. She insists that the body is the key element in drama and that children use their bodies to feel, imagine and express in three ways:

2.2.1 Reality and fiction: bodily perception and bodily imagination

Zhang claims that dramatic expression relies on real experience of bodily perception through the five senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Thus, young children create a fictional context through their bodily movement which is greatly shaped by their actual experience of reality. For example, the teacher shows a picture of trees to the children and later they use their bodies to create a forest based on what they feel and see about the trees, their imaginary actions and expressions being the result of thinking through their bodies.

2.2.2 Origination and transformation: bodily expression

Zhang claims that our culture, society, family, education, gender and habits will all shape how we express ourselves through our bodies, with transformations taking place in pace, weight, time, space, gender and age. For example, children can play as a boy or girl, pretend to be light or heavy, imagine the past or the future, move quickly or

slowly and become old or young in order to realize the tensions in drama. Such tensions can stimulate children's expression of bodily aesthetics. Moreover, she argues, early years children are good at such transformations in drama and can feel a change of emotion through it.

2.2.3. Self and character: bodily creation

Zhang believes the key element of drama is that the actor plays a role through their body. On the one hand, the actor has their own personality and style through which they create different roles; on the other hand, their role also has its specific personality. The actor has to find a balance between self and role-playing. When an early years child plays a role, there are four types of relationship between themselves and their role:

a. Being themselves in a dramatic environment.

To Zhang's point of view, early years children are too young to distinguish self from characters. When they pretend to be a fish, wolf or monkey, they naturally think they are a fish, wolf or monkey. Zhang thinks this is not yet role-playing, because the children have no understanding of their characters and play the roles unconsciously.

b. Expressing their attitude and opinion to the roles.

In this type of relationship, children understand the difference between two roles and play a specific role through particular choices of tone, gesture and movement. Though they may lack awareness of audience, simply enjoying the experience of pretending to be someone else, they have developed an understanding of characters and select specific actions to express their understanding.

c. Performing for an audience

In this type of relationship, children are aware of their roles but also of the audience. They understand how to play specific roles for an audience.

d. Controlling the performance and having the audience perceive the character rather than the child.

To Zhang's point of view, this is the most difficult relationship to achieve. Children consciously play specific roles and make the audience see only the characters on

the stage. She also agrees that such an ideal situation may never occur in kinder-garten.

2.3 The problem of drama teaching from the anglocentric tradition

Zhang gives an explanation of the concepts of creative drama, drama in education and theatre in education, referring to key theorists and practitioners in both and describing their work. Dewey's (1966) concept of 'learning by doing' is described as progressive education which involves the 'use of the body', 'handling of material' and the 'needs and purposes of the learner' (p.201) and she refers to the writings of Winifred Ward (1930), Geraldine Siks (1958) and Rosenberg (1987), who all helped construct a sys-tematic theory of creative drama. Gavin Bolton, Dorothy Heathcote and Cecily O'Neil are seen as the leading theorists of drama education and the use of drama as a learning medium. However, she argues that both creative drama and drama education are lacking in artistry, somaesthetics and a true audience, thus being too readily reducible to games, play and fun activities. She contrasts this with the traditional Chinese way of teaching drama in kindergartens, which concentrates on formal performances, in costume, for parents, in which children learn lines and are directed by the teacher. She is, however, also against this as she sees it as educationally meaningless for this age range. As a result, she attempts in her practice to solve this problem and balance the conflict be-tween instrumental objectives on the one hand and aesthetic objectives on the other, stating that drama should focus on process and also lead to a final performance.

2.4 Drama and curriculum in kindergarten

Zhang claims to have devised a new drama curriculum that includes content, teaching objectives and three modes of teaching.

2.4.1 The content of a drama curriculum

a. Dramatic expression

Zhang sees dramatic expression as the fundamental practice for the early years child, because this encourages them to express their feelings and thinking through the body in fictional contexts and by taking on different roles. Their dramatic ex-pression is also based on their reflections on the real world through their five senses. The medium of their expression is their bodies, which includes their movement and facial expressions, voices and language and how they make use of other art forms,

such as music or drawing. The key expressive elements are mime, posture, control and emotion.

b. Theatre making

This includes understanding three elements of theatre - character, plot and scene. The making procedure consists of: beginnings, character, conflict and dialogue. The principle here is for the teacher to discuss with the children and encourage them to make decisions together. Zhang believes this process is thought-in-action and thought-through-action, which are at the heart of the educational value of theatre making.

c. Performing

Children are to learn how to perform through puppet theatre, and physically through acting, singing and pantomime. Then, children can perform in four forms of theatre: puppet theatre, musicals, pantomime and more naturalistic forms of drama.

2.4.2 Objectives of a drama curriculum

a. Cognitive development

Zhang sees cognitive development through drama as helping children to understand dramatic characters, the sequence of a plot and technical terms such as scene, scenery and so on. All are intended to contribute to their knowledge of the elements of theatre / drama itself.

b. Capability development

A drama curriculum should improve children's ability to think, speak, perform and work in groups.

c. Emotional development

Drama should encourage children to participate willingly, to understand a character's emotions and to reflect upon these emotions.

2.4.3 Modes of a drama curriculum

She proposes three modes of drama teaching.

a. Dramatic games every week.

b. A drama workshop every month;

c. A themed drama scheme every term;

I shall now give an example of a structured, long-term, themed drama scheme designed for 5-6 year old children. The story she chose is a very famous traditional story in China called *The Mouse Bride*. It is the tale of a Mouse Father who wanted to find the strongest groom in the world to marry his daughter, so the Groom could protect her from the threat of a cat. The Father asked the sun, the cloud, the wind, the mountain and the wall. All of them had a weakness, and finally he realized that the best Groom was a mouse. As with Lin Meichun's work, I believe it has a few problems in the match between theory and practice.

2.5 An example scheme

Title: The Mouse Bride

Age group: 5-6 year-old

Mode: themed drama activity

Total sessions: 15 sessions

Duration of length: 25-30 mins of each session

Session	Main activities	Teaching Objectives	Teaching Resource
Session 1	Miming the main characters in the paper-cut picture book and making still images through group work.	1. Understanding the story and the significance of the traditional Chinese paper-cut picture book. 2. Understanding which character they are playing and being able to mime them.	Paper-cut picture book of The Mouse Bride/ Traditional Chinese music

Session 2	1. Dressing up like the Groom and Bride in western and Chinese traditions. 2. Playing the western and Chinese wedding ceremony	1. Knowing the features of the Groom and Bride in Western and Chinese traditions 2. Using their gesture, voice, facial expression and body movement to pretend to be the Groom and Bride in Chinese and Western traditions. 3. Enjoy playing the Groom and Bride.	Flowers/ Suits/ Hats/ Pictures of Groom and Bride Wedding music

Session 3	Miming the traditional Chinese Bridal Sedan Chair	1. Knowing the shape of a traditional Chinese Bridal Sedan Chair. 2. Using body movement to depict the traditional Chinese Bridal Sedan Chair	Traditional Chinese wedding music/ Video to show the children what a traditional Chinese Bridal Sedan Chair looks like/ pictures of a traditional Chinese Bridal Sedan Chair
Session 4	Playing the wedding rituals and conventions	1. Learning how to dance and play instruments in a Chinese wedding. 2. Choosing their own way to show how they welcome the Bride. 3. Controlling their positions to show the wedding party	Instruments / flowers/ flags and fireworks/ Wedding music/ Cartoon of the story

Session 5	Establishing the problem and encouraging children to solve it. The problem is: The mouse mother wants to eat wedding cake, but they don't have it. How should little mice solve this problem?	1. Using different materials to pretend to be little mice. 2. Set up the dramatic conflicts and try to solve this problem. 3. Feel the love in the mouse family.	Different props/ Music
Session 6	Learning the nursery song of The Mouse Bride	1. Sing the song and remember the lines 2. Answer the questions in the story: who is stronger and more powerful? Show the answer through their body language 3. Singing the song rather than speak the dialogue	Music
Session 7	Showing the capability of the Groom	1. Understanding the features of each character. 2. Using their singing and body movement to show the characters. 3. Enjoy performing	Stickers of Sun/ Chinese Music

Session 8	1. Understanding how to be a good Groom and practising how to propose 2. Practising what to say to a girl when asking her to marry him; creating the lines.	1. Playing the role of the Groom and knowing the features of this character. 2. Decide who should be the Groom: all the boys will be the groom and propose to a girl, but the girl can only marry one Groom. Then there is a "problem" for the boy, so the boy has to solve the problem to win the girl's hand. This can exercise their problem-solving skills.	Stickers/ Music
Session 9	Creating the wedding party and playing instruments	1. Using their bodies to create the scene of the wedding party 2. Playing instruments	Instruments/ Music
Session 10	Decorating their new home	1. Knowing how to decorate a new home for the Groom and Bride 2. Using different materials to decorate 3. Expressing their ideas confidently	Handcrafts/ Music/ Video

Session 11	Enjoying the music and expressing their feelings through body movements	1. Enjoying the music 2. Understanding the structure of the music 3. Stimulating children's love for traditional Chinese music	Props for dancing / Music/ Video
Session 12	Learning the western wedding dance and music	1. Learning the traditional western wedding dance 2. Trying to create the dance by themselves. 3. Enjoying the romantic emotion of wedding music	Western wedding music/ bridal veil
Session 13	1. Playing the western wedding ritual and conventions 2. Knowing what to say in the wedding ceremony and experience the rituals.	1. Knowing the western wedding ritual. 2. Feeling the emotions of the Groom and Bride 3. Using their imaginations to create the wedding ceremony.	Pictures / Flowers/ glasses of wine/ Music
Session 14	Creating the scene of the wedding party and showing what the people eat and how they eat	1. Knowing what kind of food will be on offer at the party. 2. Using their imaginations to create a happy story. 3. Showing the scene through dancing, singing and eating.	Food and dessert / Money/ Wedding setting

Session 15	Story Making and rehearsal	1. Knowing what a script is and how to create it. 2. Telling the whole story 3. Illustrating the story through their drawings	Recording of their photos / Paper and pens

2.6. Reflecting upon the work of Zhang Jin Mei

As an experienced teacher of drama in kindergartens, I have some problems with this scheme of work – incidentally, one that Zhang has described as part of a keynote address in conferences I have attended in Nanjing (2014) and Beijing (2016).

Firstly, it is difficult to see how this structure supports her theoretical framing as the theories themselves are unconvincingly linked to the needs of kindergarten children. Richard Shusterman's philosophical aesthetics, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy and Shaun Gallagher's psychopathology are brought together and then proclaimed as explanations as to how children develop cognition through body or body movement; but there is no research evidence to support this and none of the theorists have conducted empirical research on children's cognitive development. As a result, they remain strictly in the realm of theory, which would not matter if accounts of her own practice clearly expounded how they can be demonstrated in drama practice. She regularly references Hegels's difficult writings and applies them rather mystically to children's spirit and humanity. Yet in her examples they seem to be bound only to some very conventional values such as love, marriage and traditional Chinese music. Tagore's (1936) poems and Chinese Confucianism are quoted but I, for one, fail to see how they provide a theoretical justification for the type of activities described here, nor how they justify the theoretical claims of cognitive development.

Secondly, her explanations of drama and theatre are contestable at times. According to her understanding, the convention of 'Greek chorus' means the actors deliver their dialogue only through singing and dance, which is debatable. She also claims that drama / theatre is an art of the body rather than an integrated form of art. In fact, in drama or theatre, the actor is important and their body can be a powerful and principal medium to deliver the meaning of a play, but it can never be seen as the only maker of meaning

in drama. Perhaps dance, rather than drama, best suits her philosophy when expressed in these terms.

Thirdly, I think there are problems with how she uses the story itself in pursuit of her learning objectives. In the original, there is no problem concerning the wedding cake and, as with the example from Lin, we have an artificially imposed problem from outside the story that children are being asked to explore in order to solve a problem and learn the value of family love. Once again, I asked my son about this problem and he answered that the mother should not be greedy and, besides, someone should tell her that it wasn't her who was getting married.

Finally, I believe that there are some questionable activities here, particularly in relation to gender relationships. She claims that children are being enabled to act different genders, but it is the boys who are being taught, at the age of 5-6, romantic things to say to a girl so she will love him. Zhang asked all the boys to propose to the girl, with the girl only able to marry one groom; she believed this competition was a 'problem' which could provide an opportunity for the boys to practise their problem-solving skills. In another lesson, she explains how she taught girls how to serve an Emperor (played by a boy) in role as seductive imperial concubines, while some of the boys took on the role of palace eunuchs. The girls needed to learn how to walk in an alluring manner. I would strongly argue that such teaching content is inappropriate for young children in modern China.

Both of these influential scholars, therefore, present problematic models of practice for kindergartens, despite the sophistication of their theoretical explanations. Indeed, even where I to share similar understandings about drama education with them, I feel the gap between their theories and practices necessitates further research intended to make better connections between the two. There are too, I suggest, two important problematic areas that are central to successful drama teaching that are ignored in their work, which I want to discuss below as they will prove to be central to my own research agenda.

3. The importance of structure and questioning in drama teaching

3.1 Structure

3.1.1 The importance of drama structure for cognitive development

Planning a drama lesson is key to gaining and holding children's attention and to aligning this attention to a learning agenda. The sequence of activities is of paramount importance here. In cognitive development theory, young children cannot understand concepts or knowledge they have not yet internalized without effective structure and instruction (Vygotsky,1962; Bruner, 1966). In the 1960s, Piaget's experiments appeared to demonstrate that early years children were highly egocentric and could therefore not understand things from a perspective other than their own. However, Margaret Donaldson (1987) pointed out the defects in his experiments and demonstrated that children as young as four could, indeed, manage this provided that the context for the questioning was set up in such a way that it made human sense to them. This demonstrated the importance of teachers needing to establish appropriate contexts and structures to develop young children's understanding, rather than seeing stages of cognitive development as rigid laws restricting it to age stages.

Jerome Bruner (1966) emphasized the importance of structuring learning activities in what he called 'scaffolding': focused interactions between teacher and learner structured in order to guide the child step by step into an understanding of a specific learning target. In drama, such learning is progressed through the use of action and symbol, as well as speech. The intention is, to borrow Bruner's words, to increase children's ability to 'grasp, transform, and transfer what they are learning', but the 'consequence depends upon the stage of development, the nature of the material, and individual differences' (p.49). In the drama lesson of five little monkeys, if one of the teaching objectives was to understand the term "convince", the optimal sequence should lead children to acquire the ability to convince others by practising it, reflecting upon it and summarizing it, preferably in a number of different contexts that would make sense and present a meaningful challenge to children of this age. They cannot just be asked to do it and then be supposed to have understood and acquired it (Bruner, p.49).

The sequence of selected action, dramatic activities, questions and emotional experience are primarily what decide whether drama teaching can cause active learning or not (Bolton,1979; O'Neill, 1990). Indeed, an ineffective structure cannot provide any real

opportunities for active learning, to advance children's knowledge to a higher level. This kind of learning was most famously theorized by Vygostsky as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), a zone of learning which contains uncertainty but also the potential for conceptual advancement. From Vygotsky's point of view, children need a teacher's intervention, providing both suitable knowledge and an effective structure for learning, if they are to cross the area of ZPD. Thus, in my research, examining how effective my own dramatic structures are in advancing children's learning, and how I can improve them, is one of my priorities. At the same time, from Zhang Jin Mei's work we can deduce another important aspect of structuring a drama lesson: attending suitably to the structure of the story itself.

3.1.2 The importance of story structure for experience construction

As Winston (2009) has pointed out, a good story is a good teacher, because we:

> *'communicate our daily experience to ourselves and to others in story form, we make sense of the behaviour of others by inventing stories to explain why they act as they do'. (p.3)*

Indeed, stories play a crucial role in early years education. On the one hand, they are 'a means of transmitting values from one generation to the next' (Winston, 1997), and help young children understand the social and cultural conventions within which they are growing up (Bettelheim, 1976). On the other hand, the narrative form of story is a 'primary act of mind' (Hardy,1975), and provides a structure of thinking which is extremely important for early years children (Bruner, 1984).

In Zhang's drama lesson, *The Mouse Bride*, she spends fifteen sessions focusing on a wedding ceremony and the conventions and differences between traditional Chinese and western wedding ceremonies. This is not, however where I see the cultural and moral meanings and values of the story lie. The main body of the story tells of how the mouse bride wanted to find the strongest and most powerful Groom in the world. Her father asked the sun, the mountain, the wind, the wall and finally a little mouse, who is eventually the one who triumphs. This story leads children to think about what we mean by 'the strongest', and how strength does not simply rely upon physical power. In Zhang's work, however, the drama structure is unrelated to the story structure. Even

without the story, children could still learn about wedding ceremonies and conventions. The educational value of a good story is in how its narrative sequence helps children 'linger among the ideas contained within a story's imagery, to engage more fully with the world the story creates and to apprehend the issues of human significance.' (Winston, 2009, p. 25) However, many drama teachers (Winston, 2000; Toye, 2000; Bolton,1979) argue that simply acting out a story cannot release the most valuable and powerful effects of drama education as well as the value of story. To combine story and drama in an appropriate way, I will draw upon Booth's (1994) concept of 'storydrama', and view story as a puzzlement for exploring in drama. I am also minded that, within the framework of a story, drama can guide children to construct knowledge from experience (Bolton, 1979, Booth, 1994, Taylor, 2000), gaining a better understanding of significant human issues which they can relate to their own lives. I also take on O'Neill's (1995) idea that a story can act as a pre-text to start a drama, which operates 'by framing the participants effectively and economically in a firm relationship to the potential action.'(p.22)

3.2 Questioning
3.2.1 The function of questioning
There is a danger that a kindergarten teacher may believe they can teach drama because they know how to organize still images, hot seat, perform as teacher in role, thought track and various other drama conventions. From my experience working with actor teachers, these tools do not lead to children learning unless the teacher also knows how to utilize questions well. The reason that some of Piaget's experiments were later questioned is that he did not take into account the impact or distraction of his questions (Donaldson, 1987). Drama educators such as Bolton (1979), Heathcote (1990), Saxton (1987) and Winston (1998) have all stressed the importance of questioning in drama class. Saxton does, perhaps, provide the most helpful guidance in her book *Teaching Drama*. She argues that the function of questioning in drama is to discover 1) what the student knows 2) what the student understands 3) what the student needs to know 4) what the student thinks and feels about this knowledge 5) how to help the student find that knowledge. Sometimes, she suggests, the teacher might focus too much on the answer they wish to elicit from their pupils, ignoring the fact that questioning need not be transactional in this sense but be a means of powerful dialogue, to shift children's

perspectives and to push them to think. Dialogue here does not just mean dialogue between characters but, in educational drama, a dialogue between teacher and student. Saxton goes so far as to propose that asking better questions is the key way to improving one's teaching

3.2.2 The types of questioning

Saxton(1987) clarified four types of questions that are often used in drama class:

a. Questions which concretize the outer discipline of the work: rules, form, content, plot and action.

b. Questions which help to shape the child's inner understandings.

c. Questions that 'press' the students into a deeper consideration of the dramatic situation and its human implications.

d. Some ineffective questions.

Thus, questioning enables deep learning to take place through the interaction between teacher and children. In this way, language is being used as a tool to help children think and make sense of their understandings. It is widely accepted that language development is one of the key outcomes of good drama teaching. But if a teacher is to use questions successfully, she must have a sophisticated idea of what language development is. As we shall see in my research, this was not the case in the school in which I taught.

Taking all these considerations into account, I shall now examine the two main areas highlighted in the policy guidelines for Chinese kindergartens that are normally combined with drama, namely language learning and moral development.

4. Drama and language learning

4.1 Language learning in Chinese kindergartens

In Chinese early years education, the most important government document is *The Guidelines for Learning and Development for 3-6 year-old Children (2006).* This is not a national curriculum for early years education, but all state and private schools are expected to follow its guidance, which focuses on five areas: Language, Society, Health, Science and Art. Each area has teaching objectives for different age groups: 3-4 year-old, 4-5 year-old and 5-6 year-old. In the language development area, it states

clearly that language should be viewed as a tool for thinking and communication and highlights the importance of oral language, stating that it should be placed at the centre of children's language development as it impacts so greatly on young children's communication skills. The guidelines also state that children's language competence develops through communicative usage in their daily lives. Thus the kindergarten and the teacher should create a free and relaxed environment and encourage children to communicate with adults and classmates, helping them to become willing and confident communicators who enjoy sharing their ideas with others and receive positive responses when they do. The guidelines also stress the importance of their existing social experiences, of extending their life experience through activities with enriching dialogic content, strengthening their understanding and expressive skills.

However, this guidance only sets up core principles and general teaching objectives, rather than providing any clear guidance for an appropriate pedagogy. Thus, all Chinese kindergartens can choose their own forms of pedagogy to achieve these objectives; the school teacher is responsible for the daily teaching and the choice of teaching resources based on her own understanding of the national guidelines, while following the schools' educational philosophy and pedagogy. Problems or challenges may occur in two ways, then, depending upon both the school and individual teachers understanding of language learning and the respective teaching approaches they adopt. For example, the publication *Language learning area in Kindergarten: teaching resource and assessment* (Wang, W.L., & Huo, L. Y., 2018) contains all approved teaching methods and lesson designs for developing early years children's language abilities; however, these methods only focus on vocabulary learning and knowledge of character and grammar - the author does not even mention the importance of communication and social interaction. Meanwhile, *The outstanding language learning activities for Kindergarten* (Guo. ed. 2015) pays a lot of attention to storytelling skills, but the teaching objectives it contains mainly focus on helping children to repeat stories and remember the plot. It shows no appreciation for children's reflections, or any feelings that stories may elicit from them. As a professor of Huang Dong Normal University and Academic Consultant of Early Years Department of Chinese Education Ministry, Zhou Ke (2014) points out that a major problem with language learning in Chinese early years is the lack of a creative pedagogy to encourage children to use language; furthermore, teachers do not pay enough attention to the pragmatic level of language.

To my point of view, language development is not straightforwardly linear and does not consist of simply learning pronunciation, vocabulary or how to speak clearly - an approach I have witnessed in the kindergartens in which I have worked. If kindergartens and teachers lack real understanding of language learning for early years children, this can lead to a misuse of drama in the language curriculum. In the next section I will state my understanding of language learning.

4.2 The features of language learning for early years children

4.2.1 Language learning is a process of active construction rather than of passive acquisition

Since the 1950s, cognitive psychologists have put the significance of meaning back at the centre of human psychology, arguing that we should view children as active and intelligent social co-constructors of knowledge and culture (Wagner, 1998, p16). Thus, to children, language learning is also a key way of interacting with others and constructing the world - it is not just a one-way transmission.

In the 1960s, Noam Chomsky (1965), as one of the representatives of a nativist theory of language learning, proposed the concept of the 'language acquisition device' (LAD) which stressed on innate language learning capacity. This meant that children could not possibly learn language as quickly as they do unless the brain was programmed to acquire a significant, innate knowledge of grammar from a possible infinite number of grammars. To his point of view, language is biologically-based and he stresses acquisition rather than learning. He insists that the LAD contains a universal grammar which refers to entire sets of rules or linguistic parameters, and its operation allows children to acquire complex language at a very early age.

However, Halliday (2004) argues that language is not just about learning grammar or syntax and children acquire basic grammar without needing to be taught. So, when we consider early years children, we should consider that they are already young intelligent makers of meaning – through words, facial expressions, gesture and physical movement (Wagner, 1998; Bruner, 1987). He points out that the child is not an isolated individual and learning language is not a process of acquiring some pre-existing commodity. To an early years child, language learning is a process of construction and is an intersubjective and inherently social phenomenon (p. 308). If we see it as a process, then we

need to consider what resources we need for this process to flourish. But, as Bruner (1987) argues, language will also be the key tool to help them scaffold new knowledge, because it is through language that children will think and therefore acquire new meanings. Language is, therefore, central to a social constructivist theory of how we make meaning and learn. As Bruner (1996) claims, language is here being seen not only as a powerful technology for communication, but also as the key means of encoding 'reality', for representing matters remote as well as immediate, and for doing all these according to rules that permit us both to present 'reality' and to transform it by conventional yet appropriate rules (p.25). Thus, language is an instrument or medium for children to develop their cognition and develops through social interaction.

Piaget performed his famous 'three mountain' experiment with pre-school children to investigate whether they could see something from another's point of view. When he put a doll in different positions and asked the children to describe what the travelling doll could see, most of them failed to give the right answer and tended to describe this from their own point of view. Thus, he stated that pre-school children are still egocentric and limited in their logical thinking. However, as Margaret Donaldson (1987) pointed out, some of Piaget's experiments can be critiqued, as he failed to take into account the power of language in a child's cognitive processes. Donaldson and her colleague redesigned his research, renaming the experiment 'hide from the policeman'. Here, two elements were highlighted: a recognizable story and careful instructions and explanations of the situation through a series of questions. More than 80% of pre-school children were able to give the right answer as to where the doll could stand so as not to be found by the policeman. Donaldson argued that pre-school children are more capable than Piaget thought to problem solve and take on another point of view, provided the instructor first helps them make human sense of the situation and the task. Importantly, the clarity of the instructor's motives and intentions were key in making the children understand the task; in other words, the use of language was of central importance to the children's cognitive development. To sum up, language learning should not only focus on the outcomes, but also on the processes that help children learn and become capable language users, viewing them as active learners and meaning makers rather than as passive receivers of language.

4.2.2 The importance of the uses of language in the learning progress

Halliday (2004) summarized three stages of children's language development: 1) learning language 2) learning through language 3) learning about language. The first stage is at the level of what he terms 'protolanguage', which does not include wordings, grammar or vocabulary. Children only master certain basic functions of language to express and exchange meaning. The second stage is at the level of language awareness. The child becomes conscious of language and language itself is treated as educational knowledge rather than common-sense knowledge. Halliday points out that context is important at this stage, as children use language as a tool to build up a picture of the world in which they live.

Halliday also highlights the functions of language, including: instrumental; regulatory; interactional; personal; heuristic; imaginative and informative functions. The earliest of these is the instrumental function that children use for the satisfaction of their needs, progressing eventually to the use of the informative function for effective communication. As argued above, then, language learning should focus on process rather than a simple outcome based model.

When a child goes to kindergarten, she has to deal with more complicated relationships and situations than she has been used to before. One feature of this period, Halliday insists, is a rapid growth in children's vocabulary, use of grammatical structures and dialogue. Thus, the child gradually comes to see language as a means of communicating their shared experiences and as an effective channel of social learning. Language learning for kindergarten children, then, should not concentrate on increasing vocabulary and clear pronunciation, but also focus on creating different contexts for language use. The social function of language should be placed at the centre during this developmental stage.

4.3 Drama as a way to benefit early years children's language development

As a social activity, drama activities match the social function of language in the actual world and help children practise their language socially in two ways. On the one hand, drama creates different contexts and clear purposes for children to talk and communicate, encouraging them to speak and transmit their understanding and intentions (Pren-

diville and Toye, 2007). Drama can be seen as a key way of learning language in specific contexts. Heathcote believes 'drama activities can reveal and stimulate many styles and levels of language that traditional classroom instruction cannot and does not provide' (Wagner,1998, p.34). As the research of Wilkinson (1988) found, drama provides greater opportunities for a varied use of language than can usually be found in the classroom. Taylor (2000) argues that, in drama, the specific contexts provided by role and story lead children to choose different forms of speech when they adopt different roles (p.89). In this way, drama can actively frame their language use and helps them practise the social skills of listening and speaking appropriately in specific contexts (Neelands, 1992; Prendiville and Toye, 2007).

More importantly, drama creates the motivation and desire for children to talk and experience the social function of language, which is a primary function in language development. As Bolton (1984) argues, in the traditional classroom, teacher and children normally talk *about* the knowledge content in ways which distance it from past experience, emotion and real life. Such talk, he argues, cannot release the power of language to have them see how we impact others through language:

'The language experience in classrooms is often restricted to teacher-student and student-teacher talk related to the classroom content, unless a teacher…decides to provide alternative language experiences by transforming her classroom through the power of drama…allow(ing) youngsters to create personal meanings and explore the concepts that make us human.' (p.68 in Wagner ed. 1998)

In drama, children gain a greater understanding of language as a powerful tool, enabling its user to 'act upon' rather than 'be acted upon'. (Wilkinson, 1988, p.12)

On the other hand, the drama activity of role-playing benefits children's language and moves their cognitive development towards a more abstract level. By taking on different roles, children can learn how to communicate through different modes or language types which they might have no chance to use in their daily lives, extending the range of their language registers and styles (Nelson, 1988). Moreover, within specific contexts and roles/people they talk to, children have the chance to practise different moods, tones and speeds with selected actions, symbolic gestures or body movements. Drama

also provides them with experiences that enhance their ability to judge the appropriateness of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies in a wide variety of imagined experiences. Such experiences can raise their levels of social cognition (Wagner, 1998, p.35). As Vygotsky (1962) points out, thought and language are interdependent and both deal with the abstract world. Through role-playing, children have the chance to play with the elements of language and achieve 'meta-linguistic awareness' (Cazden & Lobdell, 1993). This special kind of language performance requires special cognitive demands and is more difficult for children to acquire.

Piaget (1962), Vygotsky (1966) and Bruner (1983) were the pioneers of researching the relationship between pretend play and cognition development, which also impacts on the higher level of language ability, that of literacy. Both Piaget and Vygotsky regarded symbolic play as an activity of the interpretation of experience. According to Piaget's observations, the peak time for symbolic play is when children are around 3-6 years old. To his point of view, symbolic play is a form of representational assimilation that can empower young children by enabling them to consolidate past experiences without the constraints of the real world (Göncü and Gaskins, 2011). Thus, it is a way for children to decontextualize reality and produce their own thoughts. Vygotsky also offered insights into pretend play, which should be seen as crucial for pre-school children's mental or cognitive development. Pretend play creates imaginary situations and is rule restrained. Children have to be aware of the rules they create in order to maintain the imaginary situation. Meanwhile, Vygotsky claims that thought in pretend play is separated from objects; actions arise from ideas rather than from actual things, therefore a child's own construction of meaning of word and thing determines their behaviour in play. Importantly, he argues pretend play is not for pleasure but for future wish fulfilment, which sometimes even children themselves are unaware of. This future orientation links to his famous theory of the ZPD: ' the zone of proximal development of the child, where the child is always above his average age, above his daily behaviour' (p.552, in Bruner, 1966).

However, Göncü and Gaskins (2011) argue that neither Piaget or Vygotsky take into account the social function of symbolic play or pretend play. Piaget viewed symbolic play as 'merely egocentric though in its pure state' (Piaget, p.568, in Bruner, 1966), while Vygotsky ignored both the support and co-structuring received from others, such

as teachers or parents, who build up a ZPD with children together. Göncü and Gaskins point out that children's past experiences come from emotionally meaningful experiences co-constructed with others, and the meaningful objects that children choose depend on these experience. Thus, symbolic play may be best conceptualized as being both an individually and socially motivated activity, formed in significant part by the sociocultural structure of children's relationships, as well as their community values and support (Gaskins, Haight & Lancy, 2007; Gaskins & Miller, 2009; Göncü & Perone, 2009).

From this point of view, the dramatic activity of role-playing for young children can be seen as preparation for a higher level of language development and also as the ground for their cognitive development. Bolton (1998, p.69) emphasises three main benefits of role-taking in drama for language development: 1) by taking on roles which are different from those they normally enact in their everyday lives, children can expand their language register and vocabulary; 2) drama offers a frame work or context to encourage children to attempt different modes of communication, causing the student in role to argue, inquire, inform, explain, discuss and reflect; 3) drama alters the relationship between teacher and student. This shift can create an effective dialogue between teacher and children to discuss, explore together, ask questions, develop hypotheses about problematic issues, test these hypotheses through possible problem-solving activities and reflect upon the shared experience during the process (Freire, 1970). In this way, the kind of dialogue that is hard to find in traditional classrooms can be instigated, sustained and lead to the generation of new knowledge (Bruner, 1987).

5. Drama and moral education

Besides language development, moral education is the other important area of content constantly connected with drama education in Chinese kindergartens. In Zhang Jin Mei's theme-based drama curriculum, almost all the themes contain at least one moral issue that she intends to teach children directly. For example, in the themed drama workshop *Mulan*, rather than exploring her feelings and decisions, the main objective is to teach children Mulan's filial piety. At the 2014 International Conference on Drama and Education for Young Children, I attended group presentations given by different kindergartens to state how they made use of drama education, and all the teachers spoke of choosing stories that contained explicit morals important for young children to learn,

such as honesty, generosity, obedience and kindness. In the kindergarten where I did my research, the teacher combined a very charming story with drama to explore the life of a lonely old man who lived in a huge rubbish dump, possessing nothing but items of rubbish to build his kingdom. However, the main teaching objective was not to explore the character of the old man, nor even the symbolism of the story, but rather teaching children not to make litter. Why is drama so readily used as a didactic moralistic tool to teach children simple ideas of right and wrong? To explain this briefly, I shall refer briefly to how Confucianism continues to shape our education system, especially in the area of moral education.

5.1 Moral education in the Chinese context

5.1.1 Chinese moral philosophy and its features

There are two features of Chinese moral education and its traditions. The first feature is the traditional content of Chinese moral education originating from Chinese philosophy, greatly shaped by Confucianism (Zhang, 2010; Fung, 1948). A very famous modern Chinese philosopher and professor of Beijing University, Fung Yu-Lan, published a highly influential book *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (translated into English by Derk Bodde, 1937), outlining the significance of the Confucian tradition in the education of both aristocracy and common people for over two thousand years. In the Han Dynasty, around 136 BC, Emperor Wu announced that Confucian philosophy was to form the basis of the official state teaching and examination system and it has remained so ever since, even since the 1949 Revolution and the subsequent pervasive influence of Marxist ideology (Fung, 1948, p.198). Of particular significance to Confucian moral thought are the five *Ch'ang*, namely five constant virtues: *jen* (human-heartedness), *yi* (righteousness), *li* (propriety, rituals, rules of proper conduct), *chih* (wisdom) and *hsin* (good faith) (p.40). The moral communitarian thrust of Marxism chimes well with Confucianism's emphasis on human-heartedness and righteousness, stressing as they do the social responsibilities and obligations of citizens to act morally for causes higher than their own desires and self interests, even when this is emotionally difficult. This is seen as the kind of 'perfect virtue' (Fung, 1948) that humans should acquire. According to Zhang Xin's (2013) point of view, a professor of Zhe Jiang Normal University, this is not just a principle aspect of Chinese philosophy but also forms the content and origins of Chinese moral education.

Apart from the content, there is a pervasive influence from the Chinese didactic tradition of moral teaching. This has historically been implemented mainly through interpreting the ancient cultural heritage via the teacher's own moral concepts and demonstrations (Zhang, 2013, p. 41). The twin aspects of a traditional, fixed sense of virtues and the need for the teacher to model them, to show their students how to behave, are thus deeply rooted in Chinese teacher education (Fung, 1948).

5.1.2 Problems with moral education in China within the current context

A key problem with this approach is that most Chinese teachers have come to see virtue as a form of knowledge in itself, which should be taught directly to children in the form of what is right and wrong, or 'good'. Moral education consists of learning what a good person should naturally do and how they should behave in society (Zhang, 2013; Feng, 2017). Feng argues that Confucianism was chosen as the basis of national education because it advocated respect for the Emperor and social institutions, as well as emphasizing the centrality of family relationships to a good life; in this way, it has been used as a political tool by different governments to civilize and domesticate the people for more than 2000 years (Feng, 2017). However, Feng is not the only contemporary educator to point to the inadequacy of such a rigid approach to education in the contemporary, globalised world, the publications of Ken Robinson being an influential example of this (*Out of our Minds*, 2001, *The Element*, 2009). With the explosion of different sources of media, children are bombarded with different opinions and stories that even the most repressive of regimes would find it difficult to regulate or prevent. No one voice or set of values can dominate or shape a child's moral thinking; a more creative, more subtle, more critical approach is required.

Besides these culture features, another problem is the political impact. In 2018, the researcher of Chong Qing Normal University, Yan Lin Li, published her book *Preschool Moral Education Reform in Contemporary China,* chronicling the history of Chinese moral education in early years education since 1949, the year of the establishment of The People's Republic of China. As she states, from 1949 until 1977, early years moral education contained a strong political ideology, it's objectives being to foster children's loyalty and love for our country (p.22). It also aimed to instil the morality of truth, courage, unity and fraternity, while encouraging children to obey rules and be

polite (ibid). From 1978 until 1991, the Chinese government promoted the notion of 'five loves' as the guidelines for early years moral education: 'love the country, love the people, love labour, love science, love public property'. However, because of the cultural revolution, politics greatly shaped the content of moral education, as kindergartens were required to teach children to believe in communism, trust communism and, moreover, believe in the revolution and be ready to sacrifice anything for their country and for communism. During this period, moral education totally ignored the nature of early years children. It was not until 1992, when China started to develop its economy, that kindergartens and education started to focus on children themselves rather than political needs. Since 2000, Chinese education has experienced great change; more and more education philosophies have been introduced to the country, while the internet has opened our eyes about how to view the children in our education system. However, with the longterm impact of this, we still encounter major challenges.

To my point of view, moral education in the Chinese kindergarten currently lacks any kind of effective pedagogy to rise to this challenge. The examples I have alluded to, of how stories and drama have been applied within the early years curriculum, are testimony to the dreary lack of creative thinking on the part of teachers, their inability to think beyond the moralistic and their lack of willingness to engage playfully with human issues in ways that might activate children's moral imaginations and not simply be used as embodiments of abstract virtue. For this reason, there is an urgent need for these teachers to rethink what moral learning might actually consist of beyond the internalization of instructive rules and, to this purpose, I will address some educational thinkers from the western tradition who can throw some light upon this challenge.

5.2 A creative understanding of moral education

Rather than view moral education in our early years curriculum as simply teaching right or wrong, or as a means to directly transmit a set of given virtues, rewarding good behaviour and sanctioning anti-social behaviour, I believe we should focus on the moral thinking which is the process of understanding our moral life. Then, we must critically and culturally reflect on our decisions and attitudes to specific situations. In professor Joe Winston's book *Drama, Narrative and Moral Education.(1998),* he critically illustrates the important understanding of morality from three scholars: Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan and Alasdair MacIntyre.

5.2.1 Kohlberg and moral cognitive developmental theory

Kohlberg (1971) attempted to establish the six stages of moral development, which include: 1) obedience and punishment orientation; 2) self-interest orientation; 3) inter-personal accord and conformity; 4) authority and social-order maintaining orientation; 5) social contract orientation; 6) universal ethical principles. These are attributed to three levels, which are: Pre-conventional, Conventional and Post-conventional. He claimed that children's moral development should be understood as a linear progression which shows a child's 'increasing ability to reflect autonomously and selflessly upon the moral principles which need to be applied to specific moral dilemma or problems' (Winston, 1998, p.13). Kohlberg also applied the methods of Moral Exemplars, Dilemma Discussions, and Just Community in moral education. At the same time, by taking Piaget's theory of the acquisition of moral knowledge, which suggested children's moral growth lay in their attitude to rules and rule-keeping - namely the process from heteronomy to autonomy - Kohlberg viewed the aims of moral education as to lead children to seek and appreciate universal ethical principles, which are valid for every culture. Winston points out that Kohlberg's moral cognitive development theory was 'irrespective of such important constituents of the human moral identity as culture and gender, and prescribing universal moral precepts which are tacitly but notable congruent with the values of western liberalism' (p.15). But to my point of view, Kohlberg's work is indeed helpful, as it shifted the idea of moral education from didacticism to a rational processes of thinking - very distinct from what we have been used to in China.

5.2.2 Gilligan and the Ethic of care and Narrative moral Theory

Winston (1998) has summarised Gilligan's theory of the 'ethic of care' as one that critically reflects on Kohlberg's 'universal ethical principles'. Gilligan represented the female voice to point out the absence of appropriate emotional response to others in Kohlberg's overly rational view of moral action. She claimed that morality is defined by ongoing relationships among individuals. Thus, culture and society create the specific contexts for moral action. Gilligan also put narrative at the centre of moral thinking, seeing stories and our emotional responses to them as valid knowledge in moral education. Rather than stressing rationality, Gilligan defines morality in terms of 'relatedness' and embraces 'particularity, complexity, and emotional attachment' (p. 17). This impacted on many later researchers, such as Day, Freeman, Tappan, Noddings and Witherell, leading to a focus on how individuals' own moral experiences and moral voices

can be conveyed through the narrative mode of thought.

The contribution of Gilligan's theory is to offer more sensitive ways to consider what can be used as a teaching resource in moral education. Especially in kindergarten, children's emotional responses normally inform their judgements on a moral issue and it is hard to engage them in a moral dilemma without establishing some emotional attachment. By taking a further step, Winston illustrates MacIntyre's theory, which is influenced by the Aristotelian Tradition.

5.2.3 Alasdair MacIntyre and the Aristotelian Tradition

MacIntyre's famous book, After Virtue, published in 1981, proposed a different perspective on moral philosophy from that which had influenced Kohlberg. Rather than locate moral thinking and action in rationality and duty, he proposed it was best understood through the Aristotelian ethical tradition of the virtues. These virtues, he suggested are 'locatable with the social roles that individuals inherit and create for themselves, within their own particular telos which they either succeed or fail in fulfilling' (p.19). This means that they cannot be learned as a set of abstract principles - prerogatives to 'be brave' or to 'be loyal' - but through particular instances in particular human lives. For example, we may all agree and respect that honesty and loyalty are both meaningful virtues, but genuine moral cognition happens when we are forced to consider how someone should act when virtues come into conflict with one another. Many children, for example, have experienced when honesty comes into conflict with loyalty (do I tell the truth even though it may get my friend into trouble?). MacIntyre suggests that the key question is not what is right or wrong, but how should I best live a good life? For this reason he places stories at the heart of learning to be a moral person: 'Narrative is at the centre of his concept of the unity of the moral life and at how morality is learned' (Winston, p.18).

Moreover, Winston argues that rather than taking a morality system based on rules of right and wrong as the main body of moral knowledge, it is more meaningful to follow Bernard Williams' 'system of ethics', or 'thick concepts' (1985), which include not only courage, integrity and kindness, for example, but also their opposites,. We cannot understand generosity unless we understand selfishness, for example. What drama can do

best here, Winston proposes, is to have children recognise and respond both emotionally and rationally to these virtues/vices as they display themselves in stories that make human sense to children and that grip their attention. By investigating, thinking about them and proposing alternative courses of action, young children are exploring the moral life as it actually feels and not simply learning to follow a set of moral rules.

5.3 How drama benefits early years children's moral thinking

If we view moral education as a journey of exploration, then we should view drama as a way helping children step into this journey. There are two benefits of using drama as a way of teaching moral education.

5.3.1 Drama can create a no-penalty zone for children to test their responses to specific moral dilemmas

Drama is based in fictional contexts, allowing children to play with their ideas by keeping a distance from reality but also by relating issues to their own experiences and understandings which come from reality. In this imaginary context, teachers can take on different roles in order to direct the children actions, attitudes and decisions around a particularly moral issue, leading them to respond to these issues from different perspectives. Toye and Prendiville (2000) use dramas that set children up 'in a role position which requires them to work as one unit, as a community to help each other in order to help someone else' (p. 79). Therefore, drama can help children to develop self-reflection on issues of morality and provide contexts in which they can try out different behaviours. Toye and Prendiville provide an example here regarding a scheme of work based on the story of 'Goldilocks' with kindergarten children. When the teacher in role as Goldilocks' father asks what he should do to his naughty daughter, one little boy suggested smacking her. The father (TiR) challenged his idea by simply saying he does not smack her, asking the boy 'do children stop being naughty when you smack them'? The little boy answered: 'No, but they cry'. According to this example, Toye and Prendiville believe this helps children to think seriously about issues such as wrong doing and appropriate punishment and therefore push them to consider the moral life in new ways.

However, I would argue here that, without careful structure and interaction, being placed in a specific position will not necessarily lead children to understanding an issue

and then reflect upon it. I myself performed this same activity once, asking the same question as the father: 'what should I do with my naughty girl'? One boy said: 'you can beat her'. I replied: 'No, I would never do that to my girl. Is it right to beat children'? Suddenly, a very naught boy said: 'then you can throw her into the forest and let her die'. After this, more and more children laughed and said: 'you can kill her/let a train smash her/let a wolf eat her up/drive a tank to crush her' and so on. This must be the most terrible moment in my teaching experience and the school teachers were shocked to hear such darkness coming from the children. I do not think this was because these children were essentially evil; I knew there must be something wrong with my structuring of the lesson to cause this terrible failure. In fact, this drama lesson was designed to make children feel a connection with Goldilocks and explore the balance between naughtiness and responsibility. When I reflected upon my teaching, I think one possible failure was that I did not create sufficient emotional engagement in the drama. The children simply did not feel any responsibility to the story and turned it into their own game rather than following the teacher's guidance.

5.3.2 Drama helps children to morally engage through its emotional experience

Drama is not just a medium of teaching, it is also a form of art. As an art form, alongside structure and methodology, emotional engagement should be put at the centre of drama teaching to provoke moral thinking and reflection.

In Aristotle's book *Poetics,* he illustrates his theory of tragedy. By watching the suffering of a hero and his inevitable failure fighting against his fate, and through the process of catharsis, the spectators feel pity for him and fear to act against the laws of the Gods. Thus, the emotion that the theatre provokes serves the function of moral clarification in order to teach people how to act morally and acquire necessary social virtues.

However, both Brecht and Boal argue that this kind of Aristotelian emotional engagement is intended to 'lead the audience to ignore the moral decisions which motivated the action' (Winston, 1998, p.61). His battle with fate being inevitably lost, this leads to a passive form of moral engagement which is essentially politically conservative in its intentions. Brecht saw this use of the emotions as a means to suppress the audience's rational argument. According to Boal, who was very much influenced by Brecht, emotion is being used as a moral tool to 'purge the spectator of any anti-social elements,

any urge to disobey or overthrow the laws' (Winston, 1998, p.61). What Boal (2006) suggested was that theatre must release the urge for freedom, instead empowering the audience by experiencing oppression and finding active ways to overcome it.

However, Winston (1998) argues that they are both wrong to separate emotion so clearly from reason. To his point of view, emotional engagement should serve reason in drama. Children can learn through emotion, which can be seen as valid knowledge and 'cognitive in kind, in that they are expressions of a certain understandings of their objects' (Best, 1992, p. 9 cited from Winston, 1998, p.63). In fact, early years children more easily identify themselves through emotional engagement. Without it, they cannot even become aware of their attitude towards and understanding of a specific moral issue, because they are too young to express their opinions through calm rational reflection. Thus, Winston attempts to bring Aristotle, Brecht and Boal together to inform a positive way to connect reason, emotion and moral engagement in drama:

'Children should be morally engaged and care in either a positive or negative sense about the people being fictionally represented and what is happening to them…consciously or unconsciously, we make choices, deciding where our attachments lie and these choices are value-related. The emotions we feel and the moral choices they lead us into making are other-regarding and happen during the dramatic action.' (p.68)

Bolton (1979) also argues that without subjective feeling during the drama process, deep understanding cannot happen. The feeling level also affects the learning process. Emotional engagement is very important for a teacher when working with young children in order to help them understand the fictional situation from their limited life experience. The fusion of reason and emotion will be at the heart of my attempts to encourage children to think morally in my drama lessons.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter includes five parts. In the first, I will discuss how I conducted my research and consider issues of my research paradigm. This leads me to reflect critically on the problematics in both Zhang Jin Mei's and Lin Mei Chun's research in Chinese kindergartens and on two competing intellectual traditions in educational research. In the second part, I will illustrate how I located myself and employed the dynamic concepts of reflective and reflexive practitioner as central to my methodology. In the third part, by examining case study as methodology, I will discuss the different means of data collection, strategies of analysis and how I made sense of the evidence. In the fourth part I will briefly summarise my teaching resources and curriculum structure. The fifth part will explain my research context in terms of the kindergarten and the classes I worked with.

1. Theoretical Underpinnings of research paradigms

1.1 The problematics of Zhang Jin Mei's and Lin Mei Chun's research

In my research, I inquired into how I could be a creative and reflective drama practitioner by bringing theory and practice together effectively in order to benefit kindergarten children's language development and moral thinking. Zhang Jin Mei and Lin Mei Chun's drama research were the only related research projects that I could find in this field published in China. In Zhang Jin Mei's research, she attempted to solve the problem of balancing the aesthetic and educational functions of drama and its uses for kindergarten children. Rather than critically and reflectively explaining how she conducted her research inquiries through action research, She declared she had constructed an 'ideal, perfect, divergent and sensitive'(2015, p.84) drama curriculum, which had later been proved to be 'perfect' through her research[6]. However, her drama schemes are presented without any reflection, or explanation of her strategies of collating and analyzing data, nor any thoughtful analysis. Her findings and generalizations are questionable, but no room is left for readers to discuss and reflect upon them. The same weak-

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[6] "张金梅（2005） 在借鉴西方百年传统戏剧教育经验的基础上， 深入幼儿园实践，提出了一种全新的综合课程课程研究范式——"戏剧综合范式"…该书从戏剧与人类、儿童以及教育三者之间存在的本质联系出发，建构一种理想、完美、多元、感性的儿童教育，着力探讨了幼儿园戏剧综合课程的主要来源…"（p.84）

ness can also be found in Lin Mei Jun's research, as she viewed her teaching and curriculum as good demonstrations and solutions for those inexperienced teachers who want to apply creative drama in kindergartens but have not yet acquired the capacity to teach or design such work. I would argue that both professors misrepresented themselves and improperly used their power in their research. They present their good and ideal lessons as the result of professional knowledge, generated through their professional backgrounds rather than their research practice.

However, Winston (1998) argues that a key feature of drama in western civilization has been its cultural function 'to open moral debate by problematizing accepted social and moral values expressed within a society's shared mythology' (p.87), and the stories which are explored through drama deal with 'vicissitudes of human intentions and actions, also contextualized in culturally and socially specific situations' (p. 91). This should also apply to research in drama, I would argue. The problems we encounter during drama teaching cannot be easily solved through copying the work of so-called experts. As Eisner (1985) has pointed out, educational practice is an 'inordinately complicated affair, filled with contingencies that are extremely difficult to predict, let alone control' (p.104).

To my point of view, both influential practitioners have ignored the complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflicts which are highly stressed by Schön (1983) in his theory of the reflective practitioner. Neither present their research motives, positions, patterns of inquiry or strategies for analysis. Apart from that, their research, like that of Professor Huang's which I mentioned in my literature review, were all attempts to respond to government policy, serving curricula of outcome targets rather than examining educational processes, advocating the benefits of placing drama in the kindergarten for children rather than scrutinizing any problems associated with this. Such pressures constrain research possibilities, as has been argued by Winston (1998) and Taylor (1996). Even given such political incentives, an awareness of research paradigms certainly will help provide insight into our research.

1.2 Research paradigms

Kuhn (1962) viewed 'paradigm' as a world-view which counts as accepted or correct scientific knowledge, an accepted model or pattern (p.23). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) think, in educational contexts, 'paradigms' can be seen as

'...shared belief systems or set of principles, the identity of a research community, a way of pursuing knowledge, consensus on what problems are to be investigated and how to investigate them, typical solutions to problems, and an understanding that is more acceptable than its rivals'. (p.8)

Both Hawthorne (1992) and Guba (1990) describe paradigms as a set of beliefs to guide our action and constrain our research or frame our work. O'Toole (2006) classifies two types of paradigm: a philosophical paradigm and a research paradigm. The former is a world-view that underlies the theories and methodologies of the researcher's practice and research (p.31). The latter is the 'theoretical approach or pattern that we take for our project, the assumptions we make from the outset and the way we position ourselves in relation to the subject matter and our research question' (p.33).

In my literature review I discussed Confucianism, which has greatly shaped our educational ideology in China for more than 2000 years, it's core concept being to educate and fashion a virtuous person, with the teacher as a model and representation of this educational philosophy. This philosophical paradigm will, to a great extent, constrain any research paradigm. That is why, despite my criticisms, I can sympathise with Zhang Jinmei's assertions. I have encountered similar pressures to provide absolute answers, to be the model for other teachers to copy; however, as a young practitioner with a western educational background in drama teaching, I cannot help but question such traditions in our education system and its views on what educational virtue or absolute excellence actually is. And this has led me to adopt a less certain, more reflective research paradigm.

Pring (2015) contrasts two paradigms, one that views objective reality as impersonal and independent; like scientific knowledge, it can be used to define reality and provide proof (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, p.8, 2018). Another paradigm views the researcher

as part of a world which consists of ideas, of multiple realities shaped by how we construct knowledge rather than passively absorb or learn it. In this paradigm, research is context-specific and searches for meaning rather than proof or truth (Pring, 2015, pp 65-6). However, Pring goes on to argue that the real world is complex and should not be over-simplified into categories of objective and subjective; the research paradigm we choose should not be falsely dualistic, but should be shaped by the purpose and context of the research itself. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018) also argue that these binary classifications are not meant necessarily to drive the research, as the research should be driven by the research motives and its specific requirements (p.6). To my point of view, considering issues of the research paradigm helps us become aware of our own intellectual location in the research process; it also reminds us of the possible limitations of our choices and perspectives and enables researchers to embrace complexity and openness (Grady, 1996). However, the pressures in China to provide proof and truth can lead researchers blindly into a positivistic paradigm, which has been criticized by many social scientists. I shall therefore expound the features of positivism and its limitations in drama research below.

1.3　The positivist paradigm and its criticism

The French philosopher, Auguste Comte, who coined the term 'positivism', emphasized observation, reason and experimentation as the means for understanding human behaviour and social phenomena, thus proposing a form of research similar to ways of inquiring into natural phenomena. He classified three stages of progress in human thought: theological, metaphysical, and the scientific or positivist stage, arguing that only the positivist stage demonstrated truth (Kincheloe, 1991). This view was impacted by Descartes and Newton, accepting that truth only exists in the objective and verifiable world (Taylor, 1996). Within this concept, positivism saw research as an instrumental tool for discovering knowledge (Carroll, 1996) and argued that any event that could not be rationally and scientifically articulated could not be presented as true (Taylor, 1996). This view depended on certain assumptions of its scientific faith that Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) characterized into four tenets: the first assumption refers to a direct link between causes and events, the ultimate aim of scientists being to find the regular, causal relationships which enable a firm basis for prediction and control. The second assumption is empiricism, which believes that specific, reliable knowledge depends on the nature of empirical evidence for its support. The third assumption is the

principle of parsimony, which insists that phenomena should be explained in the most economical way; and the final assumption is generality, which relates to rational and empirical knowledge and allows us to move from particular observations to abstract or more general conclusions.

However, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) argue that positivism is less successful in its application to the study of human behaviour than it claims, as it our behaviour is messy, full of uncertainty, uniqueness, complexity and value-conflicts (a world reflected in literature and drama, of course). Positivism ignored the impact of ideology, because it cannot be observed or tested. As Roszak argued, positivism's pursuit of objectivity is a 'form of alienation from our true selves and from nature' (Cohen et al. 2007, p.18). Thus, it denies human beings' ability to make sense of their own experiences and sees human behaviour as 'passive, essentially determined and controlled, thereby ignoring intention, individualism and freedom' (p.16). Moreover, according to the development of science, especially physics, some objective knowledge is nowadays treated as problematic, and Ketiley (2012) argues that objective knowledge is actually contested and affected or refracted by our subjective meanings. Such points of view are also argued by Guba and Lincoln (1996), who propose that all research paradigms are inventions of the human mind, subject to human error and cannot be incontrovertibly right (cited in Taylor, op. cit.). Therefore, given the problematic nature of concepts such as objectivity and subjectivity, we might bring our biases into our research context and be blind to our own inappropriate judgements.

Importantly, positivism only focuses on problem solving, rather than problem setting or problem exploring, which might be a more appropriate subject for a drama educator. In Zhang's research, she pre-determined the problem as one of a need to solve a conflict between the functions and aesthetics of drama education. However, the real conflict that I see in her research is related to the effective interaction between teacher and children. Schön (1983) argues that, as a practitioner in the real world, problem setting is more important than problem solving, as it is a 'process in which, interactively, we name the things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we will attend to them' (p.39). Thus, for an educator, the problem should be constructed from a problematic situation which we find puzzling, troubling and uncertain. In response to this short critique of positivism, I will now explain the paradigm which I employed in my

research.

1.4 The 'third space' paradigm

O'Toole (2006) distinguished three main types of paradigm: the descriptive and interpretive paradigm, the interventionist paradigm and the third space paradigm. The descriptive and interpretive paradigm is often known as phenomenological, which refers to the study of the nature of a phenomenon. Any description and interpretation depends on our constructed reality, which is shaped by our society, community and our own experience. The Interventionist paradigm attempts to investigate what happens if an ongoing change takes place in the procedure. The third space is the mixture of both of these and tries to identify and explore the problematics of a situation through description and interpretation, and then explore ways of making improvements. This often leads to a research methodology in the form of a reflective practitioner case study, which I adopted as being best suited to my research inquiry in a specific educational context. Here, the researcher acknowledges their centrality to the research process but still keep their research open to discussion or challenge. As drama and story deal with human social behaviour and what Bruner has called 'the vicissitudes of human action' (1986.p.16), its research data are best sought for from within a narrative form of research rather than a narrowly scientific one. Taylor (1996) insists that unpredictability and uncertainty in the classroom need to be well framed, described, interpreted and reflected upon, and that this process does not lead to measurable outcomes and objective performance, just as in our drama lessons we hope to lead children to explore knowledge and understanding rather than provide them only with skills and information (Winston, 1998; Stenhouse,1975).

Stenhouse also proposed four educational processes: training, instruction, initiation and induction. Training relates to skill practice and instruction refers to the acquiring of information; initiation is connected with 'securing commitment and conformity to certain social norms and values' (Winston, 1997). But the most crucial and valuable process is induction, which enables students to cope with unpredictability and to come up with creative solutions. This relates to Eisner's thinking (1985), who distinguished between instructional and expressive objectives, the former being related to skills and content, the latter to the exploration of questions or issues with outcomes that cannot be predetermined. Thus, a drama curriculum is not aiming to make measurements but

is aiming to explore processes. Winston (1997) sees this process model as one that enables the generation of moral knowledge that are 'thick concepts through which we grasp and understand the virtues that constitute ethical behaviour, and the moral dilemmas which inevitably permeate social life' (p.90). Although this paragraph has described curriculum rather than research, I have positioned it here as I believe it shows a match between the content and purposes of my teaching and of my research. Both fit with the values of reflective practitioner research.

2. Research methodology design

2.1 Research motives

John O'Toole (2006) illustrates four main motives for undertaking research, which can be specifically connected to research in drama:

a) To create new knowledge for its own sake.

As a drama practitioner, my desire for doing research may be driven by curiosity and I might test or seek verification of what has come to be accepted as knowledge in the discipline.

b) To create knowledge in context.

In this motive, as a drama practitioner, I might test a hypothesis and investigate a specific phenomenon or on-going problem in a specific classroom or community context.

c) To create knowledge for a particular context.

Here I might attempt to analyze or critically reflect on an immediate contextual demand or problem, such as the gap between theory or practice, and try to improve it.

d) To create knowledge for social reform.

Here I might explore with students what our society should be through drama, which can be seen as one of the 'best and safest ways of investigating society and speculating on possible new societies' (p. 5).

According to this categorization, the motive for research should be to critically create professional knowledge for different purposes or contexts rather than to prove how intelligent our professional knowledge is, as I have seen evidenced in China. For example, John Somers (1994) undertook a large-scale case study research to provide statistical data and documentary evidence to show how drama can affect children's social

and moral attitudes. He provided these data through including the perspectives and observations of a large number of students and their teachers. Joe Winston (1997) undertook his case study research to explore how drama with fairy tales as a pre-text can engage children in moral processes and encourage them to explore and articulate ethical concepts (p.87). His attempt was not to prove but to explore what he encountered and analyse how he reacted to these problems. Philip Taylor (2000) worked with an elementary school teacher to jointly design a series of classroom drama experiences which explored the impact of chemicals on the environment. In his research design, he employed an interpretive-based paradigm and used a range of research methods such as journal, logbooks, and interviews to develop multiple perspectives on the event being examined.

Influenced by such exploratory approaches to research, I have employed a reflective practitioner case study as my methodology to see how I might bring theory and practice together to benefit kindergarten children's language development and moral thinking in the Chinese education system. I have taken as among my starting points a number of hypotheses about what constitutes good practice in drama teaching, namely: the importance of structure in a drama scheme; the importance of being able to ask good questions; the importance of building emotional engagement among pupils; and the importance of encouraging open moral debate to enable the development of language and moral thinking. I have chosen to focus on my own teaching to explore these issues. My research motive is not to prove my drama curriculum is better than others, but to explore, as a drama practitioner, what problems might arise during my teaching and to analyse and reflect upon my practice. In the next section I will critically expand upon the methodology I applied in my research.

2.2 Reflective Practitioner
2.2.1 The problems of a traditional research contract
Schön (1987) pointed out two main problems with traditional research. The first was an ignorance of the actual problems that need to be solved in real world contexts. He argued that, by misreading or manipulating situations, lead practitioners tended to prove what they wanted to prove, with the research serving the practitioner's own interests rather than the social demands it was supposed to serve. He argued that problems are not given in a determinate zone of practice, but are constructed 'from the materials of

a situation' (Dewey, 1938). By taking this view, he suggested that problem setting should be part of the research, being part of an 'ontological process' (Goodman, 1990). According to my teaching experience, I do notice the gap between professional knowledge and real-world practice, and one of my research motives was to explore the causes of such a gap. The second problem Schön saw was misplacing the position of the practitioner in research practice. In the positivist paradigm, professional knowledge is viewed as the centre of research by application of instrumental problem solving, the position of the individual practitioner being seen as less important. However, Schön (1987) argued that we should invert this, and place the individual practitioner at the centre of the research process, because professional growth depends on reflection on practice, with individuals possibly transforming themselves through a deliberate critical self-examination (Greene, 1978). In China, even though drama education is not a new concept, there are still many misunderstandings and confusions in applying it in our educational context, especially given that professional research in early years drama education is practically still non-existent. As a drama practitioner, my concern was how I should learn from my own practice by taking Dewey's (1966) term of 'learning by doing'. As Taylor (2000) asserts, the emphasis of the reflective practitioner is the 'individual's capacity to remind oneself to reconsider, to stop, pause, meditate, and contemplate an issue or phenomenon in a different way and thereby provoke an enlightened perspective' (p.83.) This is also one meaningful purpose of doing research.

2.2.2 The concept of reflective and reflexive practitioner

Schön (1987) summarized three dynamic concepts of reflective practice:

a) Knowing-in-action - framing the appropriate problem of a specific situation and understanding the complex phenomenon through professional, spontaneous and rational strategies. This takes place 'in action' while we are doing something. Knowing-in-action is similar to Dewey's concept of 'learning by doing' and Polanyi's 'tacit knowledge' by which people apprehend throughout tacit sensations. This kind of knowing is spontaneous and skillful, but we may not be able to make it verbally explicit (p.25).

b) Reflection-in-action - this is an on-the-spot moment of critical thinking, taking place during the research rather than after it. This leads to our restructuring of strategies of 'action, understanding of phenomena, or ways of framing a problem' (p.

28). The key element is surprise, which we might ignore during research. Reflection-in-action helps us reshape what we are doing while we are doing it and is connected to present action. This crucial feature is also shared in drama education, which requires co-operative, improvised indeterminate and interactive endeavour, impossible to predict but necessary to manage effectively (Neelands, 2006; O'Neill, 1995; O'Toole, 1992; Taylor, 2000).

c) Reflection-on-action---refers to critical thinking on the whole research process and is distinct from present action. Reflection-on-action enables us to rethink what we have done and to think about how to make our practice better in the future.

Schön viewed reflective practice as 'artistry' - the art of problem solving, implementation and improvisation (p.13). This artistry demands 'divergent thinking skills' and design ability. To Taylor's (2000) point of view, this concept of the reflective practitioner, like the artist, is similar to Brecht's concept of distancing, to make the audience critically think of specific phenomena. He summarized nine characteristics of the reflective practitioner (p.84-86) as:

- Critical thinker
- Producer of knowledge
- Risk taker
- Theory generator
- Prepared to fail
- Open-mind and flexible
- Collaborative
- Revising teaching and learning procedures
- Story-maker and story listener

To my point of view, being willing to step into a problematic situation is a crucial aspect of our research practice. Meanwhile, coping with surprise and reflecting on its consequences afterwards are essential to the process. The question of how we remain open and honest during our research needs to be carefully considered. To help here, I also employ Neelands' (2000) concept of reflexivity, which refers to 'partnership-based' and

'dialogic pedagogic practice'. In this critical model of reflective and reflexive practitioner, the emphasis is on the 'transparency of the processes of selection, reflection and modification that underpin it' (p.19). The dialogue and relationship between teacher, children and any others who may be involved needs to be critically reflected upon and analysed. Neelands defines this as follows:

'critical reflective practice seeks to model its social democratic values in the classroom so that learning and teaching are based on open dialogue, negotiation and the fostering of critical thinking and action amongst the community of learners and teachers who have recognized and vocalized rights and responsibilities'. (p. 37)

Informed by this concept, I asked the school teacher as my co-researcher to observe my teaching from outside and evaluate the children's participation and emotional engagement. Children's interviews, the school's attitude to my teaching and video recording were also used to help me reflect upon my research. In the case of this study, I, as researcher and drama practitioner, was the main instrument of data collection and interpretation what I intended to look upon was not only my research motives, but also to reflect on the actual reciprocity between my practice and my understanding in the places where any problems were located.

3. Case study

As I have stated in my research motives above, this research project required the indepth investigation of a specific group of kindergarten children in response to an innovative form of pedagogy. It aims to further the understanding of developing children's language and moral thinking through drama education. Importantly, I explore the possible problems between theories and practice as a critical drama practitioner. This nature of my inquiry has led me to employ case study as my research methodology.

3.1 The brief development of case study in education

In the 1960s to 1970s, case study research was developed to respond to the perceived failure of positivist research (or the objectives model) in complex educational contexts in terms of providing valid evidence for further curriculum development and adequate explanations for success or failure (Simons, 2009). Helen Simons points out that the failure of traditional research models was mainly their inability to inform professional

decision-making and improve social and educational action in specific cases. Many experimental or quasi-experimental designs and surveys had been utilized to evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of educational programmes, but could not explain how the results were achieved in particular contexts (House, 1993; Simons, 2009). Robert Stake and Barry MacDonald were seen as pioneers in applying and developing the uses of case study research in the 1970s. In the USA, Stake (1967) claimed that research needed to widen its database and involve multiple perspectives, as such data would not only show the outcomes but also the transactions and judgements that led to these outcomes. Such data should aim to 'tell the story of programmes' (Simons, 2009) MacDonald's (1971)The Humanities Curriculum Project in the UK drew upon the different perspectives of research participants to shape a research report, and considered the relationships and interactions among decision makers, teachers and students, their expectations as well as their achievements. Later curriculum materials designed by the project in the 1970s and disseminated nationally were richly informed by this deep and rich data. Later in the 1970s, more UK and US researchers contributed to the development of case study research in education. Simons (2009) has reviewed this developmental path and sees in it the emergence of an alternative research model, namely case study practice and naturalist inquiry. She points out the common characteristics of these approaches related to 'documenting complexity, interpreting in context, observing in natural social conditions and communicating in the natural language of participants' (p.15-16). She argues that one feature of case study was to evaluate a particular programme and involve multiple participants' perspectives, interests and values during the research process. Now, case study has been widely applied and accepted in education systems and curriculum evaluation projects. In the next two sections I will look at its features and limitations.

3.1.1 The features of Case Study Research

Different people have defined case study differently, many seeing it as essentially qualitative in nature. However, as the influential work of Robert Yin (1993&1994) has shown, case studies might well include different research methods, which overlap with other types of research, including some such as questionnaires which are quantitative in nature. Simons and Stake also agree that it cannot be simply viewed as qualitative research (Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995). Stake (1995) offers the following definiton: 'case

study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' (p. xi). MacDonald and Walker (1975) see case study as the 'examination of an instance in action' (p.2). Simons describes it as an 'in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a real life context' (Simons, 2009, p.21). Yin sees it as most applicable to research situations 'when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Merriam (1988) defines case studies as 'particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic, relying heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources' (p. 16).

These definitions draw our attention to the importance of case study as a bounded (and therefore limited) study and also their emphasis on multiple perspectives within particular contexts, naturalist settings and openness to acknowledging unanticipated problems and to creating theory from practice rather than vice versa. The first feature - the notion of boundary - allows us to reflect on the generation of particular knowledge. Although such knowledge is strongly contextualised, we can consider the application of this knowledge to similar contexts. The second feature is the way in which it generates data. Winston (1998) regards case study as providing a narrative form of knowledge. This is derived from Bruner (1996), who clarified two modes of thought or ways of knowing, one being narrative, the other paradigmatic. Case study therefore provides the kind of knowledge that is presented in narrative form – history, literature, ethnography. As an in-depth investigation, case study strives to draw upon what can be perceived in naturalistic settings and often makes use of what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz called 'thick description' (1973) to analyse real-life contexts revealed in their uniqueness and complexity. As Winston (1998) argues:

'case studies are focused and rigorous and are intended to contribute towards theory which is grounded in practice, but the research methodologies they employ and the shape the research can take are not rigidly defined.' (p.92)

Lamnek (1993) concludes that there are four main criteria for case study, the first being openness, which refers to there being no restriction regarding research direction into predetermined goals or paths of action. The second is communicativity, which emerges

and is constructed from the interaction between action and communication. The third is naturalism, which means that the research context is a real-life experience and not an experiment. The fourth criteria is interpretativity, which defines social reality as interpretive rather than objective (Carroll, 1996, p.78). In other words, meaning must be constructed and is not simply discovered objectively through scientific approaches.

However, none of these theorists see the designs and conclusions of case studies as entirely unproblematic, because of the lack of control and high probability of bias during the research process (Campbell, 1979). I will now turn to the strengths and limitations of case study in the following sections.

3.1.2 Strengths

In my previous chapter, I explained how we might bring Kohlberg's rational moral development theory and Gilligan's ethic of care together, to argue that emotional engagement is a ground for moral justice. In my case, the moral issues which will be discussed in the drama work are 'thick' rather than 'thin' concepts. As explained by Bernard Williams (1985, pp.143-145), thin moral concepts are those which concentrate on right and wrong, whereas thick moral concepts are concerned with issues which are more difficult to categorise so simply and are thus open to debate. Thick description is important during a research process that investigates such moral thinking in action. The first main strength of case study is that it allows me to study in-depth and interpret children's and school teachers' attitudes and behaviours:

'in the precise socio-political contexts, and document multiple perspectives, explore contested viewpoints, demonstrate the influence of key actors and interactions between them in telling a story of the programme in action.' (Simons, 2009, p23)

As an example, the responses of the research participants and their attitudes to specific moral issues will inevitably be impacted by Chinese society and culture in ways that are not immediately visible, but that will need to be taken account of in any reflective evaluation. The rich, descriptive material taken from multiple perspectives should approach objectivity through 'inter-subjectivity', to some degree helping me to avoid superficial and biased interpretations and also 'offering support to alternative interpretations' different from my own (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018. p.378). Meanwhile,

as a non-reproducible form of art, the nature of drama and the participants who are engaged within drama education create unique sets of social relationships which are capable of study. More than just data collection, the creative sequence of a drama lesson is also important to evaluate (Carroll,1996). To sum up, the nature of case study and the nature of drama in some ways go hand in hand.

The second strength of case study for myself is the way it allows me, the researcher, to explore the dynamics of change during the research process in terms of relationships between school teachers, children, and the drama teacher who is, at the same time, the researcher; and to reflect on my teaching with renewed understanding. All these aspects impact on the research path, which, as Shcön (1987) pointed out, is one where research is viewed as artistry, the researcher being like the artist, constructing the valuable materials to build up this path in order to understand the world she is operating in. As Simons (2009) reminds us, this exploration of the dynamics of change enables a potential shift in the power base of who controls knowledge, as it puts our professional knowledge at the centre of research and views it as an instrument of problem solving rather than as given truths. Winston (1996) proposed that good case study research is to 'seek out rather than solve problems, provoke rather than answer questions, deepen our understanding rather than rush to closure' (p. 45). Besides this concept, such power shifts encourage us to view children as 'experts' to work with, rather than sources of data for analysis (Carroll, 1996). Simons also emphasises the importance of co-constructing perceived reality through the relationships and joint understandings we create in the specific context. Meanwhile, by taking the self-reflexive approach, research is a way of self-development in our profession, to investigate and create theory in real settings - in Wellington's (2015) terms, it is 'strong on reality' (p.174). As I argued in an earlier chapter, my research is not intended to prove that my practice is better than Zhang and Lin's research. What I am really curious about is how to bring theory and practice together in such real life contexts, thus hoping to improve my practice through enhanced understanding and view myself as an extended rather than a restricted professional (Stenhouse, 1975).

The third strength of case study is its accessible language (Simons, 2009). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) also claim that case studies present research or evaluation data

in a more publicly accessible form than other kinds of research report, because its reports are illustrative and illuminating, accessible and easily disseminated, holding the reader's attention through being vivid accounts (Wellington,2015, p. 174). As it uses the form of narrative - 'a primary act of mind' - case study is capable of serving different audiences and stakeholders to see the transparency of the design process and contextualized and descriptive data without the need for specialized jargon. This accessible language can provide insights into other similar cases and situations, assisting interpretation (Nisbet and Watt, 1984). However, like all other research methodologies, case study has its limitations that I shall explore below.

3.1.3 Limitations

In this section, I indicate the potential weaknesses of the case study approach, and also consider possible responses to these limitations. There are two main arguments against case study. The first is related to its limited generalizability (Yin, 2009; O'Toole, 2006). Wellington (2015) argues that a case study is not replicable, may not be representative, typical or generalizable (p. 174). However, Cohen, Manion and Morrison have reviewed other researchers' discussions of whether 'generalizability' is necessary and what kind of generalizability is provided by a case study. Ruddin (2006) has questioned the necessity of generalizability in qualitative research in general and Simons (2009) claims that the generalizations in case study are not as formal as those in quantitative research as they stem from a qualitative database, generated from 'the tacit and situated understandings within specific settings' (p.24). Robson (2002) and Yin (2009) view the kind of generalizability provided by case studies as 'analytic' rather than 'statistical' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Yin (209) claims that case studies generate 'border theory', which can be utilized in other identified and similar cases. Statistical generalizability is made on the basis of highly standardized and invariant contexts which is not the basis of case study (Verschuren, 2003). Analytic generalizability refers to logical descriptions of variant and complex phenomena. As with the non-reproducible features of drama itself, the purpose of my case study was not to provide statistical generalizability. However, the analysis will hopefully resonate with problems faced by other drama teachers in a similar context.

The other argument against case study refers to the masses of description which might contain subjectivity and bias, working against logical evaluation. This limitation may

be caused for three reasons. Firstly, the masses of data accumulated will be difficult to process (Simons, 2009). Because of the flexible nature of case study, the researcher can choose different methods to collect data, such as video recording, journal, logbook, interview, survey or observation forms. The data will be selected later for analysis and evaluation by the researcher and the selection may be constrained by the researcher's ideology, limited experience or superficial understanding. As Schön (1987) has stated, the 'feel' or sensitivity of personal understanding about the world is variant, according to different people in terms of their knowledge, experience and world view. Without careful and systematic design, case study may be 'impressionistic, and self-reporting may be biased' (Shaughnessy et al. 2003, pp. 290– 9). Importantly, this data may make the report and evaluation over-persuade, which would be difficult to be seen as appropriate analysis. Secondly, the data analysis may mainly rely on personal memory (Shaughnessy et al. 2003, pp. 290– 9). This will be due to faulty design and lack of a systematic approach. If I am to be a reflexive as well as a reflective researcher, proper methods have to be chosen to enable this reflexivity to take place. Another problem is that it is difficult to cross check a case study to see if its findings are valid or not (Nisbet and Watt,1984, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018. p.378). Therefore, the data collection and selection may be biased and prejudiced. However, subjectivity is inevitable in all research, and all human interventions contain our personal judgements. Simons (2009) believes this is not necessarily a limitation and, on the contrary, points out that appropriately monitored and disciplined subjective judgements can be seen as essential in understanding and interpreting any case and, indeed, any form of research (p.24).

3.1.4 Triangulation

Even though subjectivity is inevitable in interpretive-based research, as researchers we still need to seek validity and rigor in our research design and during the research process. Thus, I employed the concept of triangulation to ensure multiple perspectives, rather than simply relying on my own. Cohen and Manion (2000) define triangulation as an "attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint' (p.254). Stake (1995) has clarified four categories of triangulation:

- Data source triangulation---whether our observation and reporting have revealed the same meanings in different situations.

- Investigator triangulation – whether we have invited other co-researchers to look at the same scene from their own, different perspective.

- Theory triangulation - applying more than one theory to interpret the phenomena drawn from our research.

- Methodological triangulation – whether we have used more than one method to gather data, such as interviews with participants, observations from inside and outside, questionnaires, and relevant documents to support our interpretations.

However, Winston (2006) has pointed out that triangulation only works if the researcher is 'open and responsive to judgements different from her own and refuses to prioritise those that support what she already thinks' (p.46, ed. Ackroyd, 2006). My approach was to collect information from multiple sources aimed at corroborating the same finding (Yin, 2014, p.120). To make this happen, I involved school teachers, parents and children in my research to offer different perspectives at different stages. My main category of triangulation was, therefore, methodological.

3.1.5 Ethical issues

Cavan (1977) has defined ethics as 'a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others' (p. 810). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.113) put forward three views of ethics they consider to be of significance to the researcher. The first is a deontological view of ethics and concerns one's duty or obligation to undertake and behave in certain, accepted way. The second is a consequentialist view of ethics and concerns the outcomes of ones actions. The third is virtue ethics, which concerns people and their search to live a good and virtuous life. This view is close to MacIntyre's moral philosophy, which I addressed in the literature review. However, each view is problematic in some way. The deontological view might lead us to wish to treat all research participants in the same way and so ignore personal characteristics, their status or backgrounds; this could, paradoxically, lead us to be unfair. In terms of the consequentialist view, it might be hard to balance the demands of both participants and researcher, because the pursuit of some greater good might, again paradoxically, bring potential harm to participants. Virtue ethics, on the other hand, may lead me to concentrate too firmly on my own motives and moral standpoints to the detriment of the specific, practical aims of the research.

To my point of view, the research process was dynamic and open to change, and all three views could act as a good reminder to re-address if my research might be potentially harmful to anyone at any stage. Establishing reliable and respectful relationships with schools, teachers and children was always a central concern of my research.

'Where trust and respect have been created through establishing good relationships, difficulties that arise can be resolved cooperatively through mutual understanding and dialogue.' (Etherington, 2007; Schwandt, 1998; Torres and Preskill, 1999) (cited in Simons, 2009, p.97)

But rather than consider abstract categories, a few questions kept me focused on necessary ethical issues throughout the research process and these were adapted from Simons (2009):

- Are my questions in interview with the class teacher sensitive and not too intrusive?
- When taking photographs or filming, do I have regular informed consent?
- Have I recorded the participants' perspectives accurately?
- Am I honoring the participants' requests to keep information confidential?
- Have my biases led to unfair selection of data or interpretation?
- Have I portrayed the participants fairly in my reporting?
- Have I respected the children's responses enough and asked their permission to take photos or ask questions?
- Have I made improper judgments of the school?

In my own practice I have been guided by a set of ethical principles and procedures that stem from a democratic ethic, underpinned by principles of fairness, justice and equity.

3.1.6   Informed consent

Simons (2009) reviewed four issues concerning informal consent. The first is always providing sufficient information to let participants be informed of the issues that will be under study. The second is rechecking the informed consent and, if necessary, securing it again in relation to difficult issues that may arise during the fieldwork. The third is to be aware that informed consent should be obtained from each person you seek to

interview rather than from their institution or major stakeholders. Finally, it is important to understand that the same approach to informed consent cannot suit all circumstances (p.103-104). Cohen, Manon and Morrison (2018) point out that informed consent has many concerns and is the most problematic aspect in research. For example, who should be informed and in what way? What degree of informality and formality is appropriate in consent giving? In particular, when undertaking research with very young children, it is vital to consider child protection and respect them as independent individuals.

In my research, on the one hand I obtained informed consent from the kindergartens for my permission to work in the school, video record and photograph during the teaching sessions. I also obtained informal consent from the class teacher when I interviewed her, and after each interview sent her the transcripts to check whether she agreed with the recording or not. However, the only missing informed consent was from parents; the kindergarten did not think it was necessary to get their permission to video and take photos if this was part of the research. It was impossible for me to contact them directly, so the parents may not have known about this. The interviews with children depended on whether they wanted to answer my questions when they were in the play area. Sometimes children refused to answer, but most of the time they were more than happy to discuss with me. The children were interviewed individually, so they took great control of what they said. Their responses were recorded for further analysis.

3.1.7 Confidentiality and anonymization

My research was concerned with an exploration of my own practice rather than reflecting on the kindergarten's drama curriculum, and the kindergarten and class teacher were happy to be named in my report. Anonymization was applied in my research to the children, to protect their personal information and also to avoid any unnecessary judgments of their language ability.

3.2 Research methods

In my research, I used a personal journal, video recording, interviews and observations to collect data and also kept children's drawings and recordings of their storytelling.

3.2.1 Personal journal

This was an ongoing and loosely structured notebook, which was always written in

after each teaching session. This journal included my observations of what children did, descriptions, insights, feelings, surprises, ideas, doubts, responses to classroom events and reflections on my teaching. It was written in a loose-leafed note book. It was very helpful to record the emotional engagement that happens in the classroom and describe children's body language, facial expressions, even their tears or smiles to look for on the video recording and analyse later. This also impacted on my teaching plans, which were adapted based upon my reflections.

3.2.2 Video Recording

With permission from the school, I set up a video recorder in the corner of the classroom to naturally record my teaching. To avoid the 'reactivity problem' (Jewitt, 2012; Lee, 2015), the video was set-up 10 minutes before my class and was located in a shadowy corner, where the children hardly noticed it. The only disadvantage was the time-consuming nature transcription. Thus I watched the recording after each session and spent one hour taking notes in my personal journal to inform my future analysis. I attempted to gain permission from the children's parents; however, the kindergarten refused to allow this, as it is rare to ask for informed consent and recording permission in China. The kindergarten thought it might cause trouble to ask for such permission from the parents. This was an ethical problem that was therefore taken out of my hands. For pragmatic reasons, I therefore stuck to the ruling of the school.

3.2.3 Interviews

In my research, interviews were an important method of data collection, allowing me cross-check and helping provide multiple perspectives. I interviewed the class teacher, who was also my co-researcher, every lesson to discuss what she had observed and cross check this with my own observations. I also interviewed some children after each session to find out their attitudes to specific issues or characters; normally I chose 10 children to interview, although this was dependent on their willingness to partake. At the end of term, I had a lengthy interview with the class teacher to discuss the outcomes of my research. The main feature of an interview in case study is in-depth inquiry. Cannell and Kahn (1968) have defined the research interview as a 'conversation between two people which is designed to obtain research data to meet the objectives of research which concern systematic description, prediction or explanation' (cited in Cohen, Morrison and Manon, 2018). Yin (2014) regards interviews as an essential method, more

akin to a guided conversation than a series of structured queries, fluid rather than rigid (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Kvale (1996) proposes that the interview can generate conversational knowledge, which is a 'social interpersonal encounter, not merely a data-collection' (p.11). This knowledge is constructed through interview between interviewer and interviewee.

The purposes of interviews in my research were to:

- obtain the class teacher's deep perspectives on my teaching or specific teaching moments/activities;

- identify and analyse the important issues that arose in class;

- share our opinions, feelings, thoughts and reflections through responsive and interpersonal relationships;

- uncover and represent feelings and events that could not be observed by myself alone (adapted from Simons, 2009, p.43).

Cohen, Manion, Morrison (2018) clarify three types of interview:

- the structured interview

Here, content and procedures are organized in advance. This type of interview has little freedom to change direction, as the sequence and wording of the questions are determined in advance by means of a schedule.

- the semi-structured interview

Here, the topics for discussion and a set of open-ended questions are determined in advance, but the wording and sequence of questions can be changed according to the interviewee's responses.

- the unstructured interview

This has greater flexibility and freedom than the others and is suitable for the discussion of open-ended situations.

- the non-directive interview

Derived from a therapeutic or psychiatric approach to interviewing, this mainly requires active listening to the interviewee's subjective feelings and only a few questions guide it, with minimal direction and control taken by the interviewer.

- the focused interview

This focuses on a respondent's subjective responses to a known situation in which she

has been involved and which has been analysed by the interviewer prior to the interview (p.512). Thus, the interviewee can re-check the hypotheses that he or she has been considering.

According to these clarifications, I undertook semi-structured interviews with the teacher for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to regularly document the teacher's perspective on my teaching in terms of my interaction with the children, my questioning, children's responses and reactions to the drama, her personal opinions on certain occurrences and moral issues within a limited time and space for the interview. This interview took place after each of my sessions in the play area, which was not very quiet, and children would sometimes interrupt. Thus, I needed a pre-determined set of questions to stay focused on my inquiry. Importantly, she only had 30 minutes of availability for each interview, so I had to ensure I gained the useful information I needed in the limited time. Secondly, I used the interview to ask specific questions which related to the observation form. For example, in one lesson I wanted her to observe how the children responded to the teacher in role activity, so later in the interview I asked her what she observed at this moment and what she thought about the children's responses. There were two fixed questions I asked her each time: what did she think about the children's engagement in today's session and which moments had impressed her the most.

I also interviewed some of the children individually after each session, to find out what they felt about the class and specific moments that I could not ask them about during the teaching. As there were sixteen children in my group, there was not enough time to discuss this with all of them. There are two principles about interviewing children which I kept in mind at all times: 'do no harm' (Jansen, 2015) and 'make the strange familiar' (Blumer, 1969). It is very important to respect children as 'experts' from whom we can learn about their experience, opinions and ideas (Solberg, 2014, p.244). Their opinions and feelings generated knowledge to help me reflect on my teaching and the specific moral issues the lesson was covering. Their perspectives were significant to my research. The most important thing was to ask them questions in a familiar place and situation (Morrison, 2013) and to use their language (Danby, Ewing and Thorpe, 2011) to build trust between us. Leeson (2014) reminds us to avoid making children feel that they have to explain themselves to us in interviews. I normally spoke to the children in their play area. After one hour's drama teaching, it was very hard to make

them sit in the classroom for an interview, and also they needed to follow their daily kindergarten routine, which meant they had to play outside. On the one hand, they felt very relaxed in the play area and were happy to answer my questions; on the other hand, however, the noisy open area was distracting, so I kept my questions few and short, all related to my teaching or the story we had combined with the drama.

I took notes during the interview process to highlight what I had observed from the children and teacher; the subtext, body language and facial expressions, especially for the children, who had limited language ability and so their body language was worthy of recording. The notes also helped me remember what the main focus of our conversation had been. At the same time, I also made an audio-recording, with the teacher's permission, as a further check to the accuracy of my notes.

3.2.4 Children's drawing and storytelling recording

This age group of children cannot write and read independently in China, so drawing was an important means for them to think and express themselves creatively in response to the drama work. In the classroom, children had limited time to reflect upon the story, the emotions and characters, fully and individually. Some children had difficulties in speaking and drawing for them offered another way to express themselves. The drawing normally happened during the gap between the teaching sessions, so children had time to rethink the story in detail. It was also a good way to help them remember what we had done in our class. I tried different ways to encourage the children to re-tell the story at home: after *The Selfish Giant*, I asked them to draw the garden in their minds and show how the children and Giant played together; after *Issun Boshi*, I asked them to re-tell the story and recorded their storytelling; After *Mr.Dong Guo and Wolf*, I asked them to take five photos with their parents to show me what they remembered of the story; After *The Green Ogre* I asked them to make masks to show the ogre. These ways all helped me to analyse how the children had understood the story and the characters.

3.2.5 Observation

Drama, story, education and reflective practitioner case study all focus on studying people and their responses to specific situations in specific contexts. Observation is a crucial method of data gathering for such a study. As the practitioner was also the researcher, all the observation took place in the classroom, a naturalistic setting, which

Simons (2009) says is best suited to informal observation in case study practice. The reasons she gives are:

- It helps the researcher obtain a comprehensive picture and sense of the setting, which cannot be obtained through verbal communication alone.

- It provides rich description for observed incidents and events for further analysis and interpretation

- It helps uncover the norms and values which are part of an institution and a programme's culture or subculture

- It offers another way of capturing the experience of those who are less articulate

- It can provide a cross-check on data
  (p.55)

In my research I set up three observation angles. The first was participant observation from my own angle as a teacher; another was observation from the class teacher's angle as co-researcher; the final was the video-recording that I could consult after my teaching. Each of these provided different and complementary resources.

- Participant observation — I taught lessons every week and observed the participants responses and interactions and their attitudes to the drama class. This was a form of 'semi-structured observation', which had an agenda of issues but gathered data in a not very predetermined or systematic manner (Patton, 1990, p.202). For each lesson I prepared between three to five areas of focus based on my schemes of work, but I still remained open to the holistic situation and surprises provided by the children. For example, as the focus of the first session was on getting to know the children and the classroom context and establishing trust, my observation focused on three questions.: firstly, how the children responded to drama conventions in terms of the use of space and settings; secondly, whether they were willing to interact with me or reluctant to do so; thirdly, on getting to know their average language ability, group working skills and responses to circle time. These questions helped me focus on some key moments I thought might be important to my later teaching. After each session, by reflecting in my personal journal, interviewing the class teacher and watching the video-recording, my observation focus was adapted for the following session. All my observation descriptions were recorded in my personal journal.

- Complete observation---this was also based on semi-structured observation but from a totally different angle. The class teacher as my co-researcher observed my teaching from outside. Her focus was the same as my own, but she was encouraged to observe incidents which emerged during the teaching process. This use of an outside observer had three advantages: firstly, the class teacher had taught the children for three years and knew them much better than I did, and could therefore offer me more information about individual children and their behaviour. Secondly, her observations and her judgements could help me evaluate whether my teaching achieved the objectives or not. Thirdly, her observations helped me cross-check my own interpretations and analyses.

- Videoed observation - this enabled me to reflect on my teaching from a different angle, a reflexive tool to help control my bias and subjectivity. The advantage it offered was its 'capacity for completeness of analysis and comprehensiveness of material, reducing the dependence on prior interpretations by the researcher and enabling the researcher to structure data' (Cohen, Morrison, Manon, 2018, p.555). Also, by watching my responses to children, video-recording revealed many details that I had ignored when I was teaching. It also provided 'timing and causality' to help me identify causal processes at specific moments (Cohen, Morrison, Manon, 2018, p.555).

However, Sanger (1996) reminds us to be aware of falling into the trap of using video to simply confirm what we already know, as a means to prove what we want to prove. Stake and Kerr (1994) suggest a researcher should always be conscious about how we construct meaning through our selection, and how there thus exists possible misrepresentation of our experience. Spradley (1979) and Kirk and Miller (1986) suggest that observers should keep four sets of observational data: notes made in situ; expanded notes that are made as soon as possible after the initial observations; journal notes to record issues, ideas, difficulties etc. that arise during the fieldwork; and a developing, tentative running record of ongoing analysis and interpretation (cited in Cohen, Morrison, Manon, 2018, p.555).

3.2.6 A Co-researcher

I invited the class teacher to act as my co-researcher. She had been a kindergarten teacher for twenty eight years and had taught this group of children for three years. She was very experienced and very supportive of creative teaching. There were two main tasks she fulfilled for me. Firstly, she observed my teaching from outside and was interviewed by me after every session. Secondly, she led relevant activities in the week's gap between my teaching sessions to help the children remember the story. Her reflections and doubts were very valuable first-hand data in my research.

4. Teaching resources

4.1 Stories and schemes of work

Poem

I chose one Chinese poem to see whether drama could help the children understand the features of a poem and create their own. Also, this first scheme was taught with the aim of getting to know the children's average language ability and their responses to drama class. It helped us get to know each other and establish a working relationship.

The Selfish Giant

This was based on Oscar Wilde's story *The Selfish Giant,* and the drama scheme work was adapted from Joe Winston (2004). I used this scheme principally to explore how drama might benefit children's language development.

Mr.Dong Guo and Wolf

This is a traditional Chinese fable. Mr Dong Guo rescued a wolf from a hunter, but the Wolf then wanted to eat Mr. Dong Guo. The drama scheme was intended to explore moral issues and whether categories such as good and bad are sometimes too simplistic.

The Green Ogre

This is a Japanese story about two ogres: one was green and the other was red. The Red Ogre wanted to make friends with human beings, so the Green Ogre pretended to be bad so the Red ogre could 'defeat' him in order to make the villagers trust him. This drama scheme again aimed to explore moral issues to do with friendship.

<u>Issun Boshi</u>

This is another Japanese story. The one inch boy called Issun Boshi was very small, but wanted to find his own fortune and set out on an adventure. This drama scheme was designed to explore how drama could combine with story and other art forms to benefit children's language development.

4.2 Traditional Chinese shadow puppetry

Shadow puppetry was used to tell the traditional Chinese story of Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf. This form of storytelling was very interesting for the children, and made the story easy to understand and remember. Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf is part of the primary school curriculum. The class teacher thought it might be too difficult for kindergarten children to understand, so I used this form of storytelling to make the story more accessible.

4.3 Photos

The class teacher undertook some activities which related to my drama teaching. For example, she organized the children to act out Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf and took photos to decorate their play area. The class teacher also had the group make a doll's house for Issun Boshi, then created a story of how the thumb boy lived in his doll house. All the children took photos of these to make an exhibition.

5. My Research contexts

5.1 The first kindergarten

I completed my field work in two kindergartens, because of the failures in my data gathering in the first kindergarten. This was situated in a state school in Yibin and had nearly 300 children aged from two to six years old. Yibin is a prefecture-level city in Sichuan Province and has a population of nearly six million. The local government has recently spent 250 million RMB annually to encourage local schools to explore diversity in educational practice, especially in arts education.[7] The kindergarten I chose announced their grounded educational philosophy to be based on Developmentally Ap-

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[7] The data can be found on the website: https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%AE%9C%E5%AE%BE/376288?fr=aladdin

propriate Practice, Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences, Maria Montessori's pedagogy and Piaget's theory of cognitive development. I chose this kindergarten because its principal showed strong willingness to apply a drama curriculum as one of its supplements to Chinese quality education[8] and to place drama at the heart of the school's education in the arts. She told me they were very familiar with drama and often organized children to perform on Children's Day and other public holidays. However, my fieldwork had to stop due to the class teacher's constant interruption of my classes in order to conduct, for example, a measurement for school uniform; rehearsals for celebrating the school; sports meetings, to name but a few of the interruptions. The most absurd interference was when the teacher stopped and canceled my drama class, because she thought the children were not behaving properly during my teaching, even though I told her it was absolutely fine for them to make this level of noise in drama class. Four sessions were cancelled without telling me in advance and two sessions were unfinished in my whole teaching design. Therefore, I had to stop and contact another kindergarten to continue my research in the following academic term. This was also why my fieldwork took much longer than I originally expected or intended.

5.2   The second kindergarten

5.2.1 The context of the school

The second kindergarten is a state school in Chengdu and has nearly 700 children. Chengdu is the provincial capital of Sichuan Province and has a population of sixteen million. Its educational provision quality is much more developed than Yibin. To avoid the unexpected interruptions I had experienced in Yibin, I had formal interviews with the kindergarten principal and teachers before I started my research. In this kindergarten they had already placed a drama curriculum in their daily routine for more than one year. They had three drama sessions every week and each session was 25 to 30 minutes in length. Some of the kindergarten teachers had received creative drama training, led by Simon Wong of Ming Ri Educational Institution, who has been a major figure in the development of drama education in kindergartens throughout China.[9] As the school principal informed me, there were two main curricula in this kindergarten; one was art,

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[8] First announced in 1985 and issued the Guidelines of Chinese Education Reform and Development in 1995 to emphasize the importance of teaching non-knowledge education in schools to benefit children's personal development comprehensively.

[9] More information can be found: http://www.mingri.org.hk/

which mainly focused on handcraft and visual art, and another was drama, which had been established for just one year when I visited. The school had attempted to establish a drama curriculum for all age groups as part of their integrated curriculum.

5.2.2 The research class

The class I chose to teach had thirty-eight children and three class teachers. One boy had autism and one girl had difficulties in communication and reading. The lead teacher was in charge of the daily management of the whole class and another two teaching assistants were in charge of teaching and child care. The drama classes were taught regularly by teaching assistants every Tuesday and Thursday morning with all the children together in their classroom. Rather than aiming at a performance by the end of term, their drama classes emphasized a pedagogy closer to process drama, concentrating on dramatic play and a combination of drama and storytelling. The lead teacher was happy to work with me as an observer and offered me forty-five minutes for each drama session. According to the interview with the class teachers, the numbers of children and limitations of space and time were big problems for them in their teaching. Therefore, I divided the class into two groups, but only one group was my research group. When I taught my research group, one teaching assistant organized another group of children to play outside, and another worked with me as a facilitator, helping with class management. Then we swapped the two groups, with the teaching assistant who had worked with me teaching the outdoor group while I conducted interviews with the research participating children. I designed twenty sessions based on one poem and four stories. The entire duration of my teaching was eleven weeks, from mid March of 2015 until early June of 2015. The below presents my research schedule.

Date	Event	Interviewee	Main Purpose
10/03/2015	Visited the kindergarten	School Principal/ Director of curriculum	Collected more information about my research context
17/03/2015	Observed the daily teaching in my research class and interviewed the lead class teacher	Lead of class teacher (my co-researcher) 30 mins	Understood the daily routine of the class and the children
19/03/2015	Team building	None	Acquainted myself with the children's responses to drama and helped them get used to me
24/03/2015	Drama and Poem (1)	The lead teacher-20 mins	Regular teaching
26/03/2015	Drama and Poem (2)	The lead teacher-15 mins Some of the children-30 mins	Regular teaching
31/03/2015	The Selfish Giant (1)	The lead teacher-20 mins Some of the children-15 mins	Regular teaching
02/04/2015	The Selfish Giant (2)	The lead teacher-25 mins Some of the children-20 mins	Regular teaching
07/04/2015	The Selfish Giant (3)	The lead teacher-20 mins Some of the children-17 mins	Regular teaching
09/04/2015	The Selfish Giant (4)	The lead teacher-28 mins Some of the children-35 mins	Regular teaching

14/04/2015	Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf (1)	The lead teacher-15 mins Some of the children-10 mins	Regular teaching
16/04/2015	Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf (2)	The lead teacher-25 mins Some of the children-12 mins	Regular teaching
21/04/2015	Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf (3)	The lead teacher-20 mins Some of the children-10 mins	Regular teaching
23/04/2015	The Red Ogre (1)	The lead teacher-10 mins Some of the children-17 mins	Regular teaching
28/04/2015	The Red Ogre (2)	The lead teacher-10 mins Some of the children-5 mins	Regular teaching
30/04/2015	The Red Ogre (3)	The lead teacher-8 mins Some of the children-10 mins	Regular teaching
05/05/2015	Holiday	None	None
07/05/2015	The Red Ogre (4)	The lead teacher-20 mins Some of the children-13 mins	Regular teaching
12/05/2015	Issun Boshi (1)	The lead teacher-10 mins Some of the children-16 mins	Regular teaching
14/05/2015	Issun Boshi (2)	The lead teacher-15 mins Some of the children-5 mins	Regular teaching
19/05/2015	Issun Boshi (3)	The lead teacher-15 mins Some of the children-20 mins	Regular teaching

21/05/2015	Issun Boshi (4)	The lead teacher-16 mins Some of the children-10 mins	Regular teaching
26/05/2015	Issun Boshi (5)	The lead teacher-30 mins Some of the children-8 mins	Regular teaching
28/05/2015	Conclusion	The lead teacher-20 mins Some of the children-30 mins	Recalled what we did in drama class together during the whole term
02/06/2015 04/06/2015	Cancelled by the school	None	None
16/06/2015	Interview	The lead teacher-80 mins	Reflected on my practice and collected final documents

Chapter Four: Analysis

In this chapter, I will analyse four aspects to reflect on my practice in the school. There are four stories I combined with drama which were my main analytic focus. Before I started my teaching, I planned the sequence of the four stories; however, after reflecting upon this during my teaching, I changed the sequence. In each drama scheme, I focused on two aspects related to the research topic: language learning and moral thinking.

First aspect

In *The Selfish Giant*, I focused on how drama created different contexts for children to use language and enriched their vocabulary. In terms of moral learning, I wanted to analyse how emotional engagement helped the children to critically think about the moral issue of selfishness.

Second aspect

In *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf*, I focused on how drama helped the children to understand the complex story in terms of plot, characters and relationships and to evaluate whether they could remember the sequence and retell the story by using their own language. Through a deeper understanding of the story, I hoped to find out whether drama could offer them different perspectives on the moral issue of ungratefulness through an open debate.

Third aspect

Due to the problems I had in teaching *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf*, I taught the *Kind Red Ogre* after this to see what moral issues were suitable for the children and how they responded to thinking about friendship. I also focused on the relationship between emotional engagement and critical thinking. In terms of language learning, I analyzed how drama helped children's interest in written language and reading.

Fourth aspect

In the final story, *Issun Boshi*, I sought to analyse whether drama helped the children's storytelling abilities, which is part of language assessment in the Chinese national guidelines. In terms of moral learning, my focus was on their reflections upon self-

growth.

1. The first story: *The Selfish Giant*

This scheme of work was based on Joe Winston's drama project *The Selfish Giant*, in his book *Drama and English at the Heart of the Primary Curriculum* (2004). In his teaching, there were two main focuses, the first combining drama with spiritual educa-tion to explore the selfishness and redemption in the original story; the second placing drama in the curriculum relating to English, science and art. The original drama work was designed in 5 units, each lasting 45 minutes to one hour. In my researcher practice, I only designed four sessions and each was a maximum of 50 minutes due to the limited time for drama class in the children's daily routine. Differing from Winston's teaching intentions, I concentrated on two points relating directly to my research: how my drama work created different contexts for the children to learn language, specifically the uses of vocabulary and characters' profile; secondly, on how emotional engagement might help the children explore the moral issue of selfishness from different perspectives. First, I shall briefly outline my four drama sessions of The Selfish Giant.

1.1 The lessons in Summary

<u>Session One</u>

At the beginning, I told the children there was a beautiful garden which belonged to a giant, containing many beautiful and magical things. I then encouraged them to think of what these beautiful things might be. However, when I did this with the first group of children, they tended to think only as if it was a park, quite similar to the one in their community; thus, in my research group, I demonstrated first, telling them something magical that might not exist in the real world but that did exist in the giant's garden. My aim was to encourage them to use their imaginations, stretching their ideas and, hence, their language. I then asked them to describe these things in detail. Here we spent quite some time building up our garden. Later, the children mimed what they had contributed and described this in groups. They also had the chance to play with other groups, to feel how happy the children in the story were when they played in the garden. I hoped in this way the children might experience this happiness physically and emo-tionally. This activity also framed the context of our story and was presented as a pre-text for the dramatic problem. When the Giant came back, he forbade the children from playing there and the group were encouraged to use polite phrases to ask his permission

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to return. They also decided on presents which might make the giant happy and change his mind. At the end of this session, they were asked to describe what they thought of the giant and his decision. Besides using oral language, they also worked in pairs to sculpt the giant when he looked at the closed gate, showing his attitudes and feelings at the moment of banishing the children. This activity allowed the young children to share what they thought with their limited language ability.

Session Two

This session started with a meeting with the giant. I was in role as the giant and showed my ungrateful attitude to their imaginary presents. When out of role, as a teacher, I asked them what they thought about the giant and his responses, and wrote these judgments down on the white board. The children were also encouraged to think of questions to ask the giant to find out why he did not like their presents; why he did not allow children to play in his garden; why he was so grumpy and so on. When in role again, my intention was to challenge them: for example, I asked them why should I share my garden? Why should I make friends with people I didn't know? In the next activity, we discussed the giant's responses and mapped out his profile in detail. The children could see how many words we used to describe a person through our understanding, step by step. The strategy of teacher in role attempted to emotionally engage the children to talk to the giant directly by demonstrating a clear manner and mood. I hoped also to see how this emotional engagement impacted on the children's understanding of his character and his actions. After this, we created the terrible wall that the giant built to keep the children away, and added sound and movement to make it dramatic and physical. The children then worked in pairs to make a sculpture of the giant, showing his feelings as he looked at this completed wall. At the end of the session, we discussed why some people did not like sharing and kept others away. I wanted to explore the children's understanding of selfishness rather than simply discuss whether selfishness was right or wrong.

Session Three

In session three we created the winter garden, which was very cold and full of wind, rain and snow. I spent a long time here encouraging the children to use their voices and create group still images to depict the situation. By comparing these images with those of the garden at the beginning of the drama, I asked them what the giant's feelings

would be when he saw his garden now. The children were encouraged to show their understanding here through oral language and also physicalisation. I hoped to create some sympathy for the giant, to provoke some human ambiguity rather than moral judgements. Whether they could have emotional engagement and connection with him was a key point, as I felt that children know and feel selfish attitudes themselves at times. At the end of the session, I wrote down what they had to say about the giant at this point in the drama. They were also encouraged to perform the drama activity of sculpturing to show me how the Giant looked at his garden, then to describe all the sculptures.

Session Four

The final session concentrated on the happiness that sharing can bring, rather than the tricky idea of redemption. Because of cultural differences, I did not mention the Christ child or Christian ideas in my teaching. I told the rest of the story with background music, then had the children make still images in groups to show how the giant played with the children and had lots of fun with them once he had seen the error of his ways and invited them back into his garden. I then reminded them of the group images we had done so far: when the children played in the garden when giant was away; the winter garden full of wind, rain and snow; when the giant opened his garden again and played with the children. I encouraged the children to tell the whole story according to their drama experience. At the end of the session, the giant died peacefully; I placed white cloth in the middle of the classroom, which represents death in Chinese culture, then invited the children to say last words to him and to think about what they would like to give him as a final present. Death is rarely mentioned in Chinese kindergartens and so I also wanted to know the teacher's response to this topic.

1.2 Language Learning

1.2.1 The giant's profile - understanding the character from different perspectives

In fact, the class teacher, myself and the children were all surprised by how many words and phrases were found to describe the character of the giant. The different dramatic activities seemed to have successfully offered the children different contexts to under-stand the giant and his actions, engaging their emotions and hence enriching their vo-cabulary. It is in this area of enriched vocabulary that I am focusing my attention on language learning, as this is a straightforward and readily visible way to examine what

is a seriously complex field.

In session one, when the giant forbade the children to play in his garden, I asked them what kind of person they thought the giant was. They used the words below:

Bad	坏
Detestable	可恶
Mean	小气
Hateful	讨厌
Selfish	自私
Annoying	烦
Stubborn	死心眼

Later, when he stood by the window and looked at the closed gate of his garden, I asked what his feelings were and how he appeared physically? At first, they struggled to describe the giant's feelings, using only simple words like:

Happy	高兴
Proud	得意
Very happy	很高兴
Smiling	在笑

They the worked in pairs to sculpt his appearance and I asked them to look at each other's work and describe what they could see. After this group work, we sat in a circle again to discuss the giant. This time they used a broader and more complex range of vocabulary, utilizing words like:

Happy	高兴
Surprised	吃惊
Lonely	寂寞
Sad	难过
Disappointed	失望
Mad	生气

Expected	期望
Proud	得意
Excited	兴奋
Despicable	卑鄙
Grumpy	愤怒

There were two interesting findings when they did these activities. The first is that the drama evidently enriched the vocabulary they were able to find communally; both performing and observing the physicality of the giant helped with this. According to my observations, most of the children had no difficulty in sculpting their partners. They did this very quickly and enjoyed it. In fact, the drama activity made their understanding more visible to me and to each other, and encouraged them to try out different ideas. There was one girl (A) who did not know how to start; she looked at another girl and tried to ask her partner to copy her, pointing and saying "do that, do that, like that". However, her partner could not copy very well, and this made the girl (A) very frustrated. Later, when I went back to these two groups, I gave different comments on their work, and told her what I thought I saw. The girl (A) realized that I appreciated 'difference' rather than saying whose work was better. She then started to ask her partner to do what she wanted, saying things like: "put your arms like this"; "your nose needs to wrinkle"; "no, no, like me, harder, more grumpy". Thus, she was searching for and finding new vocabulary to help complete the immediate task. Later, during circle time, as children contributed more words to share their understanding, she could both listen and contribute. All ideas were relevant and accepted.

The second finding is that emotional engagement helped the children to explore the character more deeply. Without being in role and observing others' work, their understanding of the character was very simple and superficial. Their limited language use was not because they lacked vocabulary; on the contrary, they knew the words already, but they could not draw upon their knowledge in that specific situation. Importantly, their emotional engagement allowed them to explore the complexity of the character. When they saw different attitudes of the giant in each other's sculptures, they tried to understand what kind of feelings others had thought, rather than make judgments on whether the acting was good or not. In session two, after I had been in role as the giant

and threw away their gifts, the children were angry. When I asked them what they thought about the giant, they used words like:

Terrible	可怕的
Grumpy	愤怒的
Evil	邪恶
Something wrong with his brain	脑子有问题
The most selfish man in the world	世界上最自私的人
Very very very bad	太坏了太坏了

Later, they worked in pairs again to make sculptures of the giant standing by the window, looking at the terrible wall that he had built to prevent children from coming into the garden again. After they had observed each others' work, I asked them what the giant's attitudes and feelings were now. They used these words:

Anxious	紧张
Frustrated	焦虑
Angry	生气
Pleased	满意
Proud	自豪
Lonely	孤单
Sad	悲伤
Worried	担心

Interestingly, there is ambiguity in these responses, denoting a more complex reading of emotion, more true to emotional life as we experience it, when we are seldom simply feeling one thing only. However, the children did not always see it this way and their comments could cause some disagreement. When one girl told the girl sculpted as the giant that she was worried, she answered quickly that she wasn't, she was angry. Another child, a boy, would not stop smiling as the giant and so the other children said he looked happy. However, the boy who had sculpted him voiced his annoyance, saying

he wasn't supposed to be happy but his partner wouldn't do as he asked. Instead of criticizing their poor acting skills, I tried to explore these difficulties in circle time by asking more focused questions. Could he feel happy about some things, sad about others? What might these things be? Was he frustrated? What might make him feel frustrated? These questions sometimes led to quite complex responses from the children. One boy, for example, in response to this last question, said that he might be worried that the children might come to his garden again. If they got hurt trying to get in through the terrible walls, the parents might blame the giant, and the giant would think this was unfair. This might not be a good example of what 'frustrated' means, but it does show how drama can enrich children's understandings of the inner moral life of a character.

In the third session, I again concentrated on the giant's feelings rather than on judgments of his behaviour. When I asked them how the giant felt when he was standing by his window and looking at his wintery garden, the children used words like:

Regret	后悔了
Sad	伤心
Disappointed	失望的
Cold	冷漠
Hopelessness	绝望
His heart is snowing	他的心都在下雪
Scared	害怕
Lonely	孤单
Bored	无聊
Doubtful	怀疑
Confused	疑惑

The children showed sympathy for the giant and contributed many ideas even without pair work. By the end of the third session, the giant opened up his garden and the children could play in it again. I asked the group what he felt when he saw the children playing, and they used words like:

Very happy/happy	高兴/很开心
Glad	满意/快乐/欢乐
Cheerful	欢呼
Smiling	微笑
Not lonely	不孤单/不寂寞
Generous	大方

In the final session we retold the whole story physically and with background music. I was in role as the giant and played with them in the garden; we made lots of funny still images which showed the mess that the giant made. The final activity was to say good-bye to the giant and draw a present for him at his grave. I encouraged the children to draw pictures of the gifts that they wanted to give to him and to say something as they left it by his grave. This was the most touching moment in this project, and many children cried. They drew all the things the giant might like: pictures of his garden/TV/hot-pot/flowers/a picture of children playing with him/castle/heart/sun and so on. They were then encouraged to put their gifts around his grave, which was represented using white cloth. They all said thank you to him and some added the following phrases:

· I love you
  我爱你

· No worries, I will look after your garden.
  别担心，我会照顾好你的花园

· You are a good man, I should always trust you
  你是个好人，我以前应该相信你的

· I shouldn't grow up, if I'm always so small, you won't get old and die
  我不应该长大，这样你就不会变老了，就不会死了

· I will remember you forever
  我会永远记得你

· I will burn money for you every year (it is Chinese culture to burn fake money for dead people each year to show that they are in our memory)
  我会每年都给你烧纸钱的

- Your garden is the most beautiful garden in the world

  你的花园是世界上最美的花园

- I miss you

  我想你

Here once again there is a variety of responses, but all are consistent with the dramatic situation. They show that the children's own emotional lives have been tapped into and provided the children with the linguistic resources to spell out personal and quite moving responses to this point in the story.

1.2.2 The Reflection on findings

After the second session, I interviewed the lead teacher specifically on the giant's profile that we had mapped out so far.

M: What do you think of the giant profile we have written so far?

T: Surprise, really, is it finished or will you continue with it?

M: I will continue with it, according to the story. What do you think about the vocabulary the children used?

T: Well, most children knew these words, actually these words are not difficult for this age group of children, maybe a little hard for some children but I think most of them knew these words already. But I was surprised they could describe the character using so many words.

M: I think storytelling is quite common in kindergarten and you do teach children to describe characters in a story, right?

T: Yes, but it is different, it is very simple.

M: Could you please tell me more about how you teach them?

T: Normally when the teacher tells a story, we do ask children what is their opinion and what are their thoughts. I think we just do not write it down in the way you do. It's a really good method. But I think drama is more active and encourages them to act out, they were so engaged. The drama class is longer than our daily class, but the children love it and never ask when it will be finished.

M: You mentioned about engagement. They participated very well, do you think the emotional engagement helps enrich the vocabulary they use? As you said, most of. the children knew the words but never use them to describe characters in such detail.

T: I think it does help them, I can see how you lead them to understand step by step. I think it is a very good method to help them to think deeply.

In this interview, the lead teacher agreed that emotional engagement helped the children to use language. However, she mentioned twice how good a method, in her eyes, it was to 'write children's words down and map out the profile' rather than comment on the drama itself. To her point of view, drama was helpful simply because it is very active. To my point of view, the drama worked very well not because of strategy or a set of teaching methods, but because it was so well structured and I made use of the kind of questioning that Joe Winston suggests. The drama took the children on an emotional journey, firstly establishing the garden as a place they genuinely enjoyed playing in. Then, when they were later forbidden to play there by the giant, they disliked him but were still willing to ask his permission in a friendly way. However, the giant's attitude to their presents made them dislike him even more and refuse to be nice to him. This emotional engagement was then made more complex as, in the partner sculpting work, they began to explore things from the giant's perspective. These two dramatic / emotional lines of development interacted throughout the teaching and enriched their language register as they struggled to make sense of their conflicting feelings. Meanwhile, I would argue that the questions I asked successfully led them to speak and organise their thinking logically.

After four sessions I interviewed the lead teacher again to discuss the children's language ability. She made two points: the first was that she thought language meant more than just speaking and listening. Actually, the children expressed themselves through their drawing, body language, voice and movements. These were kinds of language that could help the teacher, she said, to listen to the children, but which are easily ignored in the traditional classroom. She was very impressed with how we explored the giant and described this person through different means, making space for divergent opinions. She agreed in this interview that the drama had created a strong context and had presented chances for the children to express themselves and stimulate their motivation to speak. As their teacher, she observed that the children understood much more about this story through our drama sessions than they normally did with other stories. In the traditional classroom, she told me, the teachers normally focused on what they taught the children, rather than on what the children really understood. The second point she

made was more negative: that she did not see that drama clearly helped the children whose language ability was already good enough, because these children were already willing to express themselves; able to offer clear points of view; could retell the story in their own way; and knew how to tell it in a different tone and mood. These children, she suggested, were more confident to participate and express themselves without the need for drama. She thought drama was more helpful for the children whose language ability was less developed. This point was made quite forcefully, so we decided to focus on two girls during the rest of the term and evaluate their language development by the end of the project. One girl she chose was very shy and found it hard to express herself clearly and logically, so the lead teacher told me, I refer to her as Focused girl A. Another girl was a very confident speaker. Her mother was a presenter on local TV, and her daughter already had experience of presenting in front of others and was very good at storytelling, I refer to her as Focused girl B. I focused on these two girls and included questions about them in the interviews with the class teacher after every story to discuss questions about drama's effectiveness on developing language in children with different abilities. Later I summarised her observations and comments in the analysis section.

1.3 Moral thinking

1.3.1 Their understanding and feeling of selfishness

As stated in the previous chapter, I was essentially interested in working with the children to explore the idea of why people could sometimes act in a selfish way. In our four sessions, the children clearly showed a change in their attitudes toward the giant and his selfishness. Firstly, when I told them the giant had come back and closed his garden, they thought he was wrong to behave so selfishly. The reasons they gave me were:

· Teachers and parents have taught us that selfishness is wrong, and sharing is a virtue

老师和爸爸妈妈都教了我们自私是不对的，分享才是美德。

· We are children, the giant should not treat us in this way just because he is so 'big'

我们是小孩好吗，巨人怎么可以这么对我们呢，没有大人这么对小孩的，他都这么大了

· The garden should belong to everyone, not just to him alone.

花园本来就该大家一起分享，又不是他一个人的

Not surprisingly, most of the children thought selfishness was wrong because teachers and parents had told them so. Later, when I was in role as the giant and rejected their presents, crushing some of them, they all hated me (as the giant) and criticised my selfishness. I attempted to challenge them in role here:

A: Why you don't let us play in your garden?

M (giant): It's my garden, I have the right to decide whom I would like to share it with.

B: Why did you throw our gifts away?

M: I don't need them, these gifts are not for me, I don't like them.

B: Didn't your mum teach you that throwing others' gifts away is such a bad thing?

M: I said I don't think these are gifts, I have much better and more beautiful things in my garden.

C: Could you let us play in your garden?

M: No, I hate children, they are too noisy and naughty.

B: We are not. But you are.

M: I'm not, you played in my garden without my permission, that is naughty.

E: But we like it, why don't you share with us?

M: Will you share your toys with a stranger?

Many children: yes, of course, we do!

M: Well, I don't, because it's mine! I can decide what to do with it. I have very little time, now what's your question?

F: Is this your garden?

M: Yes, it's mine.

B: Liar, nobody would have such big garden when he was born. How did you get it?

M: My parents gave it to me.

F: Will you let us play in your garden?

M: No! Will you let others live in your house?

F: My house is too small for you.

M: I don't like your house, I like my garden. Anyway, I won't let you play in my garden and that's it!

After I was out of role, I discussed with the children what they thought of the giant. They were much angrier now about his selfishness and cold-heartedness, using very strong negative words to judge him, such as terrible/grumpy/evil/something wrong with

his brain/the most selfish man in the world/very very very bad. In the following activities, the children showed their dislike for the giant through their group work, making him very ugly. When I asked them what they observed, they described him as:

· He crossed his arms and his eyes have a ferocious gaze

他手交叉着，而且眼睛还恶狠狠的瞪着

· His smile is really deceitful, he must be complacent

他笑的很虚伪，他肯定得意的很

· He is gloating! The children cannot come in now.

他得意的很，现在孩子们都进不去了

· Such a terrible guy, freaky, adults don't treat children in this way.

可怕的人，变态，大人才不会这么对小孩

· He looks weird, like a monster

看起来很奇怪，像个怪物

· He must have some secrets

他肯定有什么秘密

The children contributed more descriptive words because they felt offended. Their anger made them shape the giant in this way and their sculptures helped them find the descriptive words they chose. This interaction was very clear during the whole session. At the end of the session, I asked them why sometimes people might not want to share something or play with others. It was not an easy question for them, so I repeated and rephrased it many times to push them to think. After quite a long discussion, they had given these reasons:

· When people don't like someone, maybe it is because they just don't know them and are very shy.

如果一个人不喜欢哪个的话，可能是因为这个人不了解别人，而且很害羞

· Maybe he really likes his things and doesn't want to share at the present time. It doesn't mean he won't share in the future.

可能是他实在太爱他的东西的，还没玩够，所以现在不想分享，不代表以后不分享

· If you don't ask permission, it's really rude to request someone to share with you.

  如果你没有得到别人的同意就分享别人的东西，那就太没有礼貌了

· Sometime some people are just very annoying, like children, for example. Sometimes children are very naughty.

  有的时候有些人就是很烦人，比如小孩啦，确实很调皮

· He is afraid that others might break his things.

  他担心别人把他的东西弄坏了

· If we don't trust someone, we don't share.

  如果我们不相信那个人的话，我们就不会分享

· If someone never shares with you, then why should you share with them?

  如果别人都没有和你分享，那你干嘛要分享给别人嘛

Simple role play or acting out the story cannot make children really think about issues from differing perspectives. Asking the right questions, on the other hand, can push them to think from different standpoints. The children here were exploring possible motives of a character's actions rather than making simple judgements. But this shift in moral sentiment was also carried along by the plot of the drama. I interviewed ten children after each session; they all disliked the giant after the first and second session, but six of the ten thought the giant was pitiful and felt sorry for him after the third session. Later, in the final session, all of them agreed that they liked the giant and felt sorry for him, but they did not deny the Giant was selfish, which was part of his personality. In the fourth session, all eighteen children demonstrated love and sympathy for the giant. When I asked them why they had changed their attitudes, they gave the following reasons:

· He had changed by the end of the story.

  故事的最后他不是变了吗

· He was a good man after all.

  他总的来说还是个好人

· He shared his garden with us, and played with us.

  他后来和我们分享了的，还和我们一起玩

- He realised his mistake.
  他已经意识到自己的错误了
- He liked children
  他喜欢小孩的
- He helped the little boy climb into the tree.
  他帮小男孩爬了树
- He was so funny
  他太搞笑了

When I asked them what they now thought of his selfishness, they said:

- He was not too selfish
  他也不是那么的自私
- He was selfish then but not now.
  他以前很自私，但是现在不了
- Sometimes other people do the same thing
  有时候别人还不是一样的
- Maybe he was just not happy at that moment
  有可能那个时候他只是心情不好
- The children were too noisy and annoyed him
  小孩们太吵了，烦到他了
- He loved his garden too much, he just wanted to protect it.
  他太爱自己的花园了，想保护好它
- Yes he was selfish but I like him.
  他以前很自私，但是我喜欢他

The children were now thinking of the giant in human terms. They were forgiving of him because of the ensuing relationship he had had with them. This relational responsiveness is reminiscent more of Gilligan's theorising than of Kohlberg's and I will return to it in the discussion chapter. The children attempted to explore why someone could act selfishly, rather than simply discussing whether selfishness is a good virtue or not.

1.3.2 The reflection on findings

I could see that the children had tried to understand the giant and his behaviour. The moral thinking here was not that children would simply know and condemn selfishness, but that they were also able to think from different standpoints and consider the ambiguity of human behaviour. However, the lead teacher thought the topic of death was too strong and serious for the children and had doubts about teaching drama in this way.

M: What you do think about the children's responses to the giant's death at the end?

T: I was so surprised, I don't know, it's too, I mean, we never talk about death with this age group of children. I don't know whether they understood or not. I just wanted to ask you, why your drama work included this topic? I think it's too strong and serious for them.

M: Actually, it was in the original story.

T: If we told the story, we would delete this part. I'm curious why you discussed this with children. How does it have any connection to selfishness?

M: Well, I think this is a very interesting question. My attempts were to discuss why people might be selfish, just like the giant, and wanted to know what did they think of his selfishness.

T: Oh, I see, that make sense.

M: Could you tell me what a teacher would usually teach children about a moral issue?

T: Quite different, but we do ask the children's opinions about specific events, like what do they think about the giant's refusal to share. Normally, we hope children will know what is right and what is wrong. They are too young to critically think about some complex situations, so it's better to let them know first.

M: So, now we have finished all the lessons, what do you think about their understanding of the giant?

T: I thought there were changes. Children are very kind and naïve, they showed great sympathy to the giant's death. I saw there were two girls who almost cried, they were very touched by the story. I think the death was too strong for them. You know, they are very young.

M: So you think this might not be suitable for these children?

T: I'm not sure ... Having him die was too straightforward a way to change their attitudes I think.

M: Do you think the emotional engagement developed the children's moral thinking?

T: What do you mean?

M: I mean the giant's death might have children engage in the story and think about.such a moral issue from a different perspective.

T: Well, maybe, it depends on whether the children have the ability or not, I'm not sure, maybe some children can.

According to my interviews with her, she mentioned two things that surprised her during my teaching. The first surprise was that I threw the children's presents away. She said that this was totally not what she expected, because it seemed too cruel for the children. If she had been me, she would have encouraged the children to say something politely and would have only then accepted their presents, having taught them how to be nice to each other. This, I suggest, will be a very common response from Chinese kindergarten teachers, who are very concerned to offer children positive role models of behaviour. It is a common misunderstanding of how drama works. It was precisely this behaviour that caused the children to be morally outraged - but it was still only play. I didn't actually break anything because the presents only existed in the children's imaginations. To have done what the lead teacher suggested would have served to turn the drama into a moral lesson for children and hence would have risked alienating their interest. It was the very surprise of the story at this point that engaged them more deeply. It also shows that teachers often have a very limited idea of children's ability to distinguish between play and social reality. Part of the enjoyment for the children was their feeling of moral superiority to a grown up at this point in the story. One girl asked if the Giant's mother had not taught him that it is very rude to throw away presents from others? Most of the children felt angry and surprised, but none cried as a result. Some boys even imagined they were superman to fight against the Giant. Just as importantly, this raises the issue of the aesthetics of the story and the drama. The lead teacher's suggestion would have in effect ruined the story. It would have ended it there and then. I believe that the children's emotional engagement depended upon their aesthetic engagement, something the teacher did not appreciate or understand. This was emphasised in her reaction to the scene of the giant's death.

The second surprise for the lead teacher was, indeed, that I had presented death in my teaching, which is rarely mentioned in kindergarten. She doubted that death was a suitable topic for this age group and thought it was irrelevant to the theme of selfishness.

But, as MacIntyre (2011) suggests, death is the moment when we can look back and offer some kind of judgment on the moral life of a character, in both fiction and in real life. The children were emotionally touched by his death and could offer an overall perspective in which they could recall how he had changed for the better - a lesson of hope and of comfort for them, I would suggest. By the end of the drama, the children expressed love for the giant, not just because he had changed and became 'good', but also because he was "funny" and "played with them" - he had become a man who "liked children". This is an example of the 'thickness' of the moral life as they perceived it - judging a person for the attention, care and love he showed for them, not just condemning him for one act of selfishness. The death of the giant thus had an aesthetic effect that also carried moral weight, as it allowed the children to look back on his life from a perspective that was at one and the same time emotionally and morally engaged. However, kindergarten teachers not trained in drama might well find it hard to appreciate the aesthetics of the form and will worry about surface features.

Therefore, I and the lead teacher had different understandings not only of moral education but also of the way drama works aesthetically as pedagogy. She appreciated their emotional engagement but could not relate it to the aesthetics of the story and of the form. I attempted to explain this, but she was not very clear about what I meant. However, I did consider her opinion that his death had been too straightforward a way in her eyes to change their attitude and wondered if I had over manipulated their emotions. It was something I would be more aware of in the following schemes I taught.

2．The Second Story: *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf*

Mr.Dong Guo and the Wolf is a traditional Chinese fable taught in the national Chinese curriculum in primary schools. The original story tells of an old scholar, Mr. Dong Guo, who saves a wolf from a hunter. When the hunter leaves, the wolf wants to eat Mr. Dong Guo, who blames the wolf for being ungrateful. However, the wolf says if Mr. Dong Guo was a really kind man, he would sacrifice himself; and also points out how it is a law of nature that a wolf eats humans, just as humans hunt wolves. Mr. Dong Guo then requests that they ask three adjudicators to see what should happen - an old jujube tree, an old ox and an old wise man. The old jujube tree said the wolf should eat Mr. Dong Guo, as human beings were naturally ungrateful creatures. When it was able to give

them fruit, the villagers loved the tree and protected it, but now it was old and barren the villagers had decided to chop it and burn it. The old ox also said the wolf should eat Mr. Dong Guo for the same reason. It worked for a family its whole life, but now it was too old to work, the family had decided to sell it to the butcher. Finally, they asked an old wise man who cheated the wolf into a bag, showing how Mr. Dong Guo had saved its life but in the process beating it to death. The old wise man told Mr. Dong Guo to never trust ungrateful people.

This fable is very famous in China, and the wolf is a symbol of ungrateful people who are tricky, cruel and selfish. However, in our national Chinese curriculum, only half of the story is told. Indeed, even I was surprised when I read the original version, because the most popular version omits the non-human adjudicators' condemnation of human beings, and only retains the human criticism of the wolf, thus making the moral more straightforward and a lot less ambiguous.

Our national curriculum has a very strong ideology underpinning it. Moral education is about teaching right and wrong rather than discussing moral dilemmas. Moreover, some topics such as: 'love our country'; 'celebrate the Chinese communist party's birth'; 'respect your teachers'; and 'obey your parents' are taught directly as rules in kindergarten. Like other fables, this story has a very clear moral judgement at the end: never deal with ungrateful people for, if you do, you will put yourself in danger. Before I taught these lessons, I interviewed the lead teacher about what she remembered of this story and its moral. She said that she too had never heard the part with the jujube tree and old ox, only the moral lesson her teacher had drawn from the story. I also asked the children whether they had heard this story before. Eight out of eighteen children told me they knew it but could not recount it clearly, only remembering the characters. Thus, my aim was to explore the story's ambiguities through drama by retaining the criticism of human ingratitude and seeing how the children would respond in a more open debate. I hoped that both the teacher and the children might be moved to reconsider this story, shaking up the moral didacticism they had been used to. In the event, I did not succeed in my aims and this was the least successful of all my drama schemes.

2.1 Lessons in summary

Session one

As the children were unfamiliar with the original version, I used traditional shadow puppetry to tell the whole story. The children could listen to it and at the same time watch it vividly. I divided the story into three parts: Dong Guo saving the wolf; the encounters with the old jujube tree and the old ox; and the wise old man tricking the wolf and beating it to death. After each section I questioned the children to check, recall and write down summary details. When the story was finished, I asked volunteers to retell it and wrote five key points on the board. I then divided the class into five groups and asked each to make a still image of these different points in the story. I concluded with an active retelling using the 'story wand'. This whole session helped the children understand the plot in terms of cause and consequence.

Session Two

In this session, we re-created the five key still images, with each group being asked to add one or two lines of narration for each. For the rest of the lesson we mainly focused on the experiences of the old jujube tree and the old ox. With background music, I asked the children to imagine they were seeds growing gradually, so they could feel the vitality of the young jujube tree. They also improvised short pieces of movement to show me how the children played with the tree and picked its fruit. Then, we recalled what happened when the jujube tree was old and heard the villagers wanted to chop and burn it, exploring these feelings through discussion and physicalisation of the emotional words they suggested. We made more key images and then, by adding one or two lines, step by step I encouraged them to act the story out by standing in a circle and showing the images group by group, like slow-motion. Later we repeated these activities to explore the old ox's encounter. At the end of this session, we discussed the judgments of the jujube tree and old ox on how humans had treated them and I asked the children whether they agreed with them or not.

Session three

In the third session, we focused on the arguments between the wolf and Mr. Dong Guo. Firstly, we listed the reasons why the wolf should eat Mr. Dong Guo, and the reasons why he shouldn't. Secondly, I told them I would be in role as the old wise man and listened to the wolf and Mr. Dong Guo's arguments. As it might be very hard to make

a decision, I told them I would need their help. Later, when I was in role as the old wise man, I attempted to challenge them by using the jujube tree and old ox's arguments. Finally, I divided them into groups of 5; each group could make a new ending of the story to show me what might happen after our exploration of the moral issue. I hoped to see they had developed a different way of thinking towards the issue of ingratitude.

2.2 Language Learning

In terms of language learning, I focused on whether the children could understand the complex plot, especially the causes and consequences, and on how much detail they could provide. They were encouraged to retell the story at home with actions to see whether drama could help their storytelling abilities.

After the first session, the children offered the following summary of the opening section of the story, demonstrating their understanding of cause and consequence:

    a.   The hunter hurt the wolf

    b.   The wolf met Mr. Dong Guo

    c.   Mr. Dong Guo decided to save the wolf

    d.   Mr. Dong Guo told the hunter to go the wrong way.

    e.   Mr. Dong Guo saved the wolf

    f.   The Wolf wanted to eat him, because it was hungry

However, when I asked them what happened in the next section of the story, they could not offer any coherent answer and were very confused about why three adjudicators were called upon, which did not appear to make sense to them. Thus, I changed my question: who did they meet first? Most of the children could answer this: the old jujube tree, but evidently needed this simple, direct question to help them remember. However, much further confusion followed, as the following extract from the classroom talk demonstrates.

M: Can you remember what the jujube tree said? Did it agree that the wolf should eat Mr. Dong Guo or not?

Many children: No, the wolf shouldn't

A: Why I remember the jujube tree said yes!

B: Yes, yes! The jujube tree said the wolf should eat Dong Guo! You are wrong.

(some of the children start to look confused)

C: Yes, the jujube tree said human beings treated it very badly.

D: But this was not Mr. Dong Guo's fault.

E: Let the teacher tell us yes or no!

(As they kept arguing, I had to stop my teaching for a while)

The responses to the next section, with the old ox, were very similar and I more or less repeated the process. However, even though most of the children were able to answer my questions, they were not be able to retell the whole story by the end of the first session. When I asked for a volunteer to do this, two boys tried, but could only tell the story of the wolf: how the wolf was hurt; how it was saved by Mr. Dong Guo and how it was punished at the end. One boy actually mentioned the old jujube tree and the old ox, but he couldn't remember what reasons they gave for the wolf to eat Mr. Dong Guo:

"…they met the old jujubtree, and asked the jujube tree, and, and the jujube tree said yes, you can eat Mr. Dong Guo, and also the old ox….
他们见了老枣树，然后呢，老枣树说，老枣树说它可以吃，你可以吃东郭先生，然后他们又看了到了老黄牛…"

When I watched my video recording, I realized the children had been sitting for half an hour. They did like storytelling, but some children were beginning to whine, playing with their chairs, talking to other children and so on. Two or three children complained about why I kept asking them questions and showed a very impatient attitude. However, they still could not remember and understand this complex story. So I had to write the five key points for them, rather than ask for their ideas:

a. Mr. Dong Guo saved the wolf
b. The wolf wanted to eat Mr.Dong Guo
c. The jujube tree thought the wolf should eat Mr. Dong Guo
d. The old Ox thought the wolf should eat Mr. Dong Guo
e. The old wise man asked the wolf to curl up in the bag and then he beat it to death, saving Mr. Dong Guo's life.

Their still images were based on these five points, but they needed a great deal of help from the lead teacher to create them. When I reflected on this session, I thought it was too long - almost 60 minutes to finish all the activities - and contained too much information. There was also a very poor rhythm to the lesson. Most of the time I was lecturing rather than discussing and listening to them. There was too much siting down. They needed lots of help from the teacher during the drama activities and had limited time and space to imagine for themselves.

In the next session, I added more activities to help them understand the story physically. To address the problematic findings of the last session, I hoped to have them understand why the old jujube tree accused human beings of ingratitude. After all the physical activities, however, when I asked the children about the relationship between the jujube tree and the villagers, they evidently did not understand what I meant by "relationship". So I had to simplify my question and ask: what did the jujube tree feel when the villagers looked after it? They answered:

a. It loved the villagers
   它爱这些村民

b. Felt happy and grateful
   觉得很快乐也很感激

c. It might think the human beings should do that, because it gave them fruit
   它可能觉得这些人就该这样，因为它也给了他么果实呀

d. Happy and wanted to give them more
   高兴，还想给他们更多

e. Thought the villagers are kind
   觉得这些村民还多好的

When I asked them about the villagers' attitude to the jujube tree, they answered:

a. Thankful
   感激

b. We should look after it very well, otherwise it will be dead, and we won't have fruit any more.

我们的好好照顾它呀，不然它死了的话，我们就没有枣子了

   c. It's a good tree

       是颗好树

   d. Thank you, lovely tree

       谢谢你，亲爱的枣树

   e. It's a beautiful tree

       很漂亮的树

Actually, these responses demonstrate that they understood the relationship well, just not the term 'relationship' itself. This issue of developmental levels of conceptual understanding in young children is something I will address further in the discussion chapter, as it is very important in terms of asking them the right questions.

After we had explored how the villagers had treated the tree when it was old, I asked the children what the jujube tree felt now and they answered as below:

   a. It hates the villagers, they are so bad!

       讨厌这些村民，太坏了

   b. The jujube tree must be very sad

       枣树肯定很伤心

   c. Why must the villagers cut it down? Why cannot they leave it alone?

       为什么村民们把它砍了呢，为什么不留着它？

   d. It must be surprised

       肯定很吃惊

   e. There are so many trees, why did they decide to cut this one?

       那么多树，为什么非要砍这棵呢

   f. The villagers can buy wood to burn, why chop down the jujube tree?

       这些村民可以去买柴呀，为什么要砍枣树呢

The children expressed their understanding here in expressions of surprise, in their desire to question me rather than offer simple words or phrases and in their questioning of the need for the villagers' decision. When I asked them why they thought the jujube

tree had said that the wolf should eat Mr. Dong Guo, they answered:

a. It was disappointed, 'I treat you so nice, but you wanted to burn me, heng!'
肯定很失望，我对你们这么好，你们还砍我，哼！

b. It hated people
很讨厌人类

c. Because the villagers are ungrateful, ok, ok, eat them
因为这些村民忘恩负义，算了，算了，吃掉算了

d. Wait! It was not Mr. Dong Guo who wanted to burn it!
等等，又不是东郭先生想烧它呀！

This exchange ended our discussion. There was silence for a while, and I, too, suddenly felt confused. Where should I take this understanding? How should I respond to this last point? In the event I left things unresolved and we moved on to explore the old ox's encounter in a similar procedure, the children describing its feeling as:

a. very sad, heartbroken, it can't believe that!
肯定很伤心，心都碎了，简直不敢相信！

b. It was a family member. When it gets old, you should look after it carefully. Would you kill old people? So bad, so bad!
它都是家庭的一员了，如果它老了，你就该好好照顾它呀，你会把家里的老人杀了吗！太坏了，太坏了

c. It may be regretful and thinking it shouldn't have helped them so much in the past.
它可能后悔了，觉得自己不该帮他们的

d. It will hate this family
很讨厌这家伙

e. It wanted to escape and never see this family again
肯定想逃走，再也不要见他们了

f. It is in despair
很绝望

g. Human beings are so bad

这人也太坏了吧

Evidently, then, there was a lot of sympathy for the tree and the ox and the children could well appreciate that these were demonstrations of human ingratitude. But I still detected some confusion about how this informed the moral of the story as a whole.

At the end of our drama work, twelve of the eighteen children did the homework I suggested and their parents recorded what the children told them. These twelve children told very similar stories, which contained the following points:

a. The wolf was injured and chased by a hunter
b. The wolf begged Mr. Dong Guo to save it.
c. The wolf wanted to eat Mr. Dong Guo.
d. The wise old man asked the wolf to show him how it could curl up in a bag.
e. The wise old man then beat the wolf to death.

The very interesting finding was that, despite our devoting an entire lesson to the jujube tree and the ox, none of the children mentioned them in their retellings. Four children described the key scenes of the wolf and Mr. Dong Guo logically, and other children were not able to tell the whole story in detail, only focusing on one or two scenes. Not all of them were able to recount the story with a clear sense of cause and consequence, but they could all sequence the scenes they did describe in the correct order. They had no difficulties in reasoning and understanding the jujube tree and the old ox's situation and feelings, but they did not have an emotional engagement. According to my observation, the children did not like any of thew characters in this story; compared with the Selfish Giant, the children were able to describe the feelings from each character's perspective rationally, but were less engaged, showing impatience and confusion in response to my questions. This lack of emotional engagement impacted their willingness to express and retell the story in detail.

2.2.1 Example One:

This version, where the child can be seen acting out the story with her father, was the clearest and most detailed example.

(1)

The wolf knelt dawn in front of Mr. Dong Guo and cried with tears and a runny nose and begged Mr. Dong Guo: "Please, please help me! The hunter is chasing me and will catch me if you don't help! Please let me hide in your book bag. If I survive I will reward your kindness!"

(2)

Mr. Dong Guo was touched by its tears and decided to help the wolf. Then he took all his books from his bag and hid the wolf inside it. He tied it up.

(3)

When the hunter went away, Mr. Dong Guo relaxed and let the wolf out. The wolf stretched its body and stared at Mr. Dong Guo, very aggressive. The wolf said: 'Mr. I'm very hungry now. You are so kind, so let me eat you!' Then it wanted to attack Mr. Dong Guo.

(4)

Mr. Dong Guo found a wise old man and asked the old man to judge. (The old man) asked them to show him how the wolf hid itself in the book bag. The wolf thought the wise old man was right, so it curled up in the book bag again. Mr. Dong Guo tied up the bag. The wise old man beat the wolf by using his walking stick.

2.2.2 Example Two
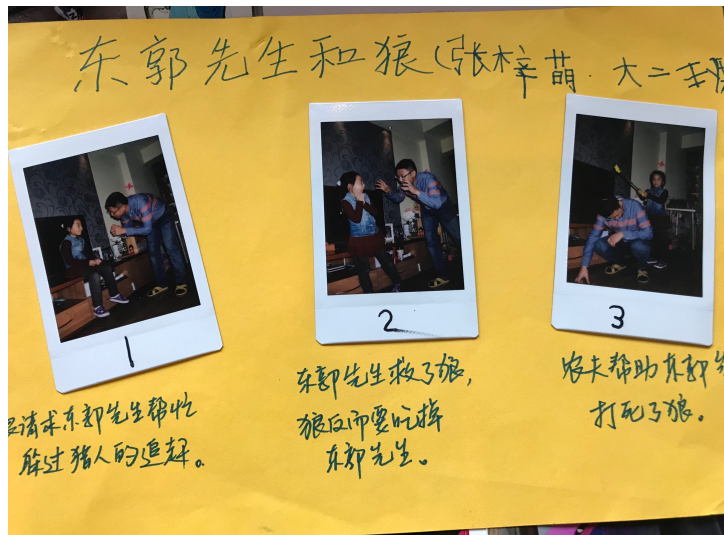
(1)

The wolf begged Mr.Dong Guo to help him to escape from the hunter.

(2)

Mr. Dong Guo saved the wolf but the wolf wanted to eat him.

(3)

The farmer helped Mr. Dong Guo to kill the wolf.

2.2.3 Example Three

(1)

The hunter found the wolf and hurt it.

(2)

Mr.Dong Guo bandaged the wound for the wolf.

(3)

The wolf curled up in the bag and the farmer killed it.

2.2.4 Interview with the lead teacher

In the interviews, the lead teacher said that the kindergarten did not conduct systematic assessment of children's language development, but they did evaluate children's language ability at the end of each term, based on the Guidelines of Learning and Development for 3-6 years-old Children. We also discussed the focused girls' language learning.

(1)

M: Looking at the work the children did at home, what do you think about their language learning through this drama work?

T: I think the drama did help them to remember the plot, because they did the work after your teaching. It is already three weeks passed and they can still remember the

sequence and some details, I think they did very well. Really, drama is very helpful to develop their language.

M: But they only remembered the wolf and Mr. Dong Guo, nobody mentioned the jujube tree or the old ox.

T: Yes, but normally our stories do not have so many characters. I choose simpler stories in the classroom. Like when they are younger, we choose stories with only one character. When they are in the middle class (4-5 year-old), we choose stories with two or three main characters. This story has many, let me count, about seven characters. That is too many for them to remember.

M: Normally, are they able to retell a story even without drama?

T: Well, normally we don't just tell the story, as you know, we have drama class. regularly, for this age group. Storytelling is a main teaching strategy in the classroom. We do use lots of drama elements to tell stories actively or ask them to act it out. It helps them to remember.

M: What do you think about their storytelling of Mr. Dong Guo and the wolf?

T: That's very interesting. You can see their body language was very cute, they told a very similar story but acted it out in different ways. Also they used some words to describe the facial expressions, feelings and thinking. They used adjectives. I think it was good practice for them.

The lead teacher, then, was generally happy with the children's language work but, on reflection, her comments were not very helpful in terms of commenting on language learning. She was vague - and I was too vague in my own questioning - on everything other than the sequencing of the plot. This at least was an objective that the drama had helped with, one that was relevant to the curriculum guidelines. I was rather too obsessive about the children's inability to incorporate the jujube tree and the ox in their stories and hence missed the opportunity to ask more probing questions. For example, she seemed to limit the complexity of stories to the number of characters in them and see development of story understanding in these simple numerical terms. This is surely questionable. For example, popular stories for very young children such as '*Solomon Crocodile*' or Julia Donaldson's '*The Gruffalo*' (very popular in China) have their principle characters meet a range of different characters along their journeys. '*We're Going on a Bear Hunt*' includes a family of four, a dog and a bear. The complexity of the story here that evaded the children must be in something other than the number of characters;

it was the role of these characters in the narrative. In '*The Gruffalo*', the plot proceeds in a linear and cumulative fashion, whereas here the jujube tree and the ox are a diversion from the plot's line of progression, offering an ironic moral perspective. The children could grasp the moral when considering the tree and the ox on their own but could not appreciate their ironic relevance to the main story. This is a perspective I have reached after due reflection. It helps me understand why the jujube tree and ox are omitted from versions for young children. This omission may serve to make the story more didactic, but also more comprehensible to them. It leads me to consider the importance of the stories we choose for young children when doing drama and the need to appreciate how stories work structurally as well as in terms of their content. This is something I will consider in more depth in the discussion chapter. Below, I consider other aspects of the moral issues I tried to explore with the children.

(2)

M: In the last story, we talked about XXX (focused girl A) and XXX (focused girl B)'s language learning. In this story, I mean, in the past four sessions, what do you think about this? Do you still think drama helped XXX (focused girl A) better?

T: Well, I'm not sure about it. I think your drama class did help XXX (focused girl A). she put her hand up to express herself more often. Normally she is very quiet and very rarely puts her hand up. Normally I have to call out her name to ask her to answer my questions. But I found she was often more willing to talk, very relaxed, and what she said was very logical.

M: Do you think drama helped her to improve her language ability?

T: Hard to say. I'm sorry, I do not mean your teaching is not good. But as a teacher, I don't know if it helped or perhaps it was because she liked the topic. You know children, if they like something they will be more willing to do it. Today, for example, she did not participate too much.

M: Oh, I feel she participated well, why do you think she didn't? You are their teacher, you must know better than me.

T: She did not smile a lot. She is a happy girl. Normally if she really likes something she smiles a lot. She was a little bit serious today.

M: But she answered the questions very well and she also put her hand up during circle time.

T: Yes, I noticed, but I guess something happened this morning. She was not behaving

like she usually does, did not say too much, did she? So I'm not sure drama definitely improves the language ability continually. But maybe you are right. Children are emotional sometimes. I do think she is more active in drama than in most other lessons.

M: I see. What do you think about XXX (focused girl B)? Do you think there has been any improvement or change in terms of language learning in the drama classes for her?

T: Well, she is a very good speaker, as I said. I did not see any obvious change or improvement. Maybe I'm not as professional as you, I hope you don't mind.

M: No, of course not. You are more professional than me, you've been kindergarten teacher for more than 18 years!

I would like to discuss two points here. Firstly, I did not agree with the lead teacher that the child was less engaged just because she did not smile. There is no direct connection between smiling and engagement. According to my observation, focused girl A shared her ideas, answered my questions actively and worked with others well. Secondly, I agreed that the focused girl B did not show any marked change or improvement. However, I think my use of the words 'change' and 'improvement' here were confusing as they led the teacher to think of something that could only be gauged by systematic assessment in a child who was already linguistically capable. I, too, was rather confused as I had not specified what kind of learning I was looking for. For me it was more general, in terms of engagement and willingness to express oneself. The teacher was being polite with me but still thought that it helped girl A more than girl B in terms of willingness to speak out and confidence to express herself.

2.3 Moral Thinking

As in 'The Selfish Giant', I tried to build up an emotional connection between the children and each character, to deepen their understanding, so we could discuss the moral issues in the story.

In the first session, I used different strategies to help the children understand the wolf's situation and feelings. After the storytelling, I played a chase game with them and asked them to only run on one leg, with one child - the chaser - taking on the role of the hunter. Then we discussed how the wolf would have felt at that moment?

a. It must be so scared to be hunted.

   它肯定很害怕要被抓住了

b. Very nervous, because it can't run fast.

   很紧张，因为它都跑不快

c. Doesn't want to be caught.

   不想被抓住

d. It hates the hunter

   讨厌这个猎人

e. It wanted someone to help it

   想要什么人帮帮它

f. It wanted to get away

   想逃跑

g. So worried about being caught

   太害怕被抓住了

h. Hopeless as the hunter was going to kill the wolf

   绝望了，因为这个猎人要把它杀死的

i. What should I do, what should I do? The wolf was just like ants on a hot pot, repeating this in its heart.

   我该怎么办，我该怎么办呀，它心里肯定一直重复这句话，像热锅上的蚂蚁

j. Very tired and doesn't want to be caught.

   太累了，也不想被抓住

According to their answers, the children could empathise with the wolf's feelings and its situation at this moment. Later, I had them work in pairs, one as the wolf and the other as Mr. Dong Guo. Firstly, they needed to make a still image to show the moment of their first meeting. Secondly, they had a chance to look at each other's work and discuss their feelings. They described Mr. Dong Guo's feelings as:

a. He must be scared and wondering where this wolf came from

   他肯定吓了一跳，然后在想这只狼是哪里来的

b. He wanted to find a place to hide himself

他想找个地方把他藏起来

c. He might wonder why I'm so unlucky today.

他可能想，我今天也太倒霉了吧

d. He just wanted to run away

他只想逃跑

e. Game over, game over.

完蛋了，完蛋了

f. He was thinking whether he should save the wolf or not

他在想到底要不要救狼

g. He wanted to ask the hunter to save him

他想让猎人来救他

However, when I watched my teaching through the video recording, I found I was asking them: 'Why didn't Mr. Dong Guo feel sorry for the wolf? Do you think the wolf is always bad?' Most of the children said yes, but two children said no. When I encouraged them to give me reasons, the children who said 'yes' told me because the wolf was cruel and ate people. Many stories tell us that the wolf is bad, like the 'Three Little Pigs' and 'Little Red Riding Hood'; wolves are caged in zoos so they must be dangerous to people, and so on. The children who said 'no' did not give any reasons. I also looked at my personal journal, which described my thoughts on that lesson as below:

In the first session, some children told me what they knew about this story. They seemed to have very strong impressions from 'bad wolf' stories which I thought might impact their understanding of this story during drama class. Today, I think they did not focus too much on bad or good wolf stories. Because of the drama activities, the children understood the wolf's situation and feelings. However, they did not show any sympathy for the wolf, and I didn't see any emotional engagement here. They have been told that the wolf is bad for a long time. But why does the wolf have to be bad? Sometimes human beings are crueler than wolves. As we know, wolves are caged in zoos by human beings rather than human beings being caged by wolves. Children's ideology has been shaped by the stories they know and what teachers tell them.

There is a tradition in drama education, in fact, for changing children's stories in which wolves are demonised as 'the other' - characters who are unremittingly bad. For example, Toye and Prendiville (2007) present a whole series of lessons in which they propose different ways in which this can be done. This approach to ideologically critiquing stories has been influenced by critical theory and the writings of post Marxist theorists such as Jack Zipes (2012). This is a subject for me to take up more theoretically in the discussion chapter. Here it is worth noting that, on reflection, I was attempting to change children's attitudes towards the wolf and I believe now that I made an inappropriate judgment. My stated agenda was that children should think independently and that someone needed to tell them that wolves are not always bad, and that person might be me. However, I now see that, in my questioning, I was actually trying to replace one ideological perspective with another, without realising I was doing so. And it is quite obvious that this approach did not work. If we consider once again my lesson on the jujube tree and the ox, after all the work described earlier, I ended by asking the children if humans should treat the tree and the ox the way they did and all the children replied no, they should not. There was no debate, they simply conformed to the moral agenda that I was obviously promoting in this session. Furthermore, their writing as demonstrated in the last section showed that none of this moralising was internalised by them into the narrative of the story that they went on to recount.

This conclusion is confirmed by the interviews I had with children after the second session. I interviewed ten children to find out what they thought about the old jujube tree and the ox's judgments through asking a few questions:

• When Mr. Dong Guo and the wolf asked the jujube tree whether the wolf was right to eat Mr. Dong Guo, can you remember what the jujube tree's answer was?

Three of them could not remember.
Four of them said the wolf should eat Mr. Dong Guo.
Three of them said they were not sure, as they remembered the jujube tree seemed to say the wolf should, but maybe it said it shouldn't.

• What do you think about the jujube tree's answer? Do you agree or not?

Eight of them said they didn't know.

Two of them said maybe it was right, but they also thought that 'eating people' was terrible.

It is evident that the children were very confused by my questions. If they seemed to understand the situation through the particularity of the focus in the drama session itself, then most were not be able to express this after the lesson had finished. This was one of the few occasions I noticed that the children were unwilling to be interviewed.

In the final session, when we were discussing why the wolf thought it should eat Mr. Dong Guo and why Mr. Dong Guo thought the wolf shouldn't, we wrote down their reasons:

Should

- The old jujube tree and the old ox said the wolf should
- The wolf would die if it had nothing to eat
- The wolf needs meat

Shouldn't

- Mr. Dong Guo had saved the wolf's life
- He was a good man
- The wolf could find other animals to eat

All of these responses are rational. Later I was in role as the wise old man and intended to challenge the children by using their thoughts from the last session.

M: Well, now you know the wolf and Mr. Dong Guo had an argument here. This is.difficult justice and I need your help. Do you think the wolf should eat Mr. Dong Guo or not?

A: No, of course not! He is human, a live person.

B: He saved the wolf's life, the wolf shouldn't eat him.

M: Do you remember what the old jujube tree and old ox told them? sometimes human. beings are more cruel and ungrateful than animals, or even plants, like the jujube

tree.

(silence, they looked quite confused and were thinking)

M: If the wolf doesn't eat Mr. Dong Guo, it may die, it was injured and very very hungry.

C: But the wolf can eat other animals, like rabbits, they like eating rabbits.

D: That was too exaggerated, I don't believe it will die.

A: Mr. Dong Guo can buy some meat for the wolf.

M: Well, there are no supermarkets or animals nearby.

E: They met the old ox before, the old ox was an animal, why shouldn't the wolf eat the ox?

M: Well I don't know. However, the old jujube tree and the old ox told the wolf that human beings are not trustworthy, so the wolf should eat Mr. Dong Guo. I think maybe they are right.

A: No!

F: Not all human beings are bad.

G: Mr. Dong Guo was kind, he saved the wolf.

M: So all of you think the wolf should not eat Mr. Dong Guo, right?

All of them: Yes! Yes! Of course.

M: Well, thank you for your help, I know what I should do.

After this interaction, we improvised to show possible endings to this story. I hoped they would create different endings according to their understandings. However, all the groups created similar endings, staying true to the original story: the wise old man tricked the wolf, and he and Mr. Dong Guo beat it to death. They performed the wolf's death in a very comical way. I then asked ten children whether they agreed with Mr. Dong Guo and blamed the wolf for being ungrateful. All of them agreed. It seemed to me that the drama neither helped the children to understand this complex story, nor did it generate any open debate about moral issues.

On reflection, I am thinking somewhat differently. I am struck by how sensible the children's responses are in the dialogue above compared to my own comments in role as the old man, who doesn't seem to be wise at all, unless we regard him as a 'devil's advocate'. The children are of course quite right in everything they say. Their cry of 'yes, yes, of course!' Brings to mind my own son's comments about the drama of the

five monkeys; of course they should run away from the crocodile, are they crazy? They were in effect saying 'Of course the wolf shouldn't eat Mr Dong Guo, are you crazy?' In trying to make a moral more problematic I succeeded in fact only in making it illogical and, most of all, inhuman. When examining the story in this naturalistic way - the drama was treating the story as if it were a piece of reality - the idea that we should vote for a wolf to eat a human - what is more, a human who had saved it - is ridiculous and the children appreciated that implicitly in the range and forcefulness of their responses.

2.3.1 Interview with the lead teacher

To my point of view, this drama work was not successful and did not achieve my teaching objectives. Very interestingly, however, the lead teacher thought this drama worked well in terms of moral education.

(1)

M: In today's session we explored the encounter of the old jujube tree and the old ox. What do you think about the children's responses to them?

T: I was surprised about this part, I don't think I learnt this part when I was young. This is not the version we are normally familiar with. But you can see the children sympathised with the old jujube tree and old ox. You know, kids, they are very quick to sympathise with weak people, animals or such. I think drama helped them to understand the other's situation. I was worried that they might not understand your meaning, but I could see they were fine, they understood. Especially, they understood their feelings in different situations. Without this part, this story might only be about how bad the wolf is. It will be very didactic, just teaching them not to trust bad or ungrateful people.

M: You mentioned that drama helped them to understand, in what sense? Can you explain this more?

T: I think this story is a little bit difficult for them, do you think so?

M: Yes, I agree with you.

T: I mean for this age group of children, it was a very complex story, like the villagers treated the jujube tree very well, but when it gets old, the villagers wanted to burn it. These were very contradictory attitudes for young children. You know, the stories we normally tell are simpler, like there are bad people and good people, the bad characters are always bad. But I think the villagers are not bad, they just, well, are very

complex. How should we say, very utilitarian. Yes, not selfish, they are adults, you know, very utilitarian. I think some children did not understand this, but they do understand the villagers treated the jujube tree and ox unfairly. I think the drama helped them to feel the jujube tree and old ox's feelings, so they realised the villagers' behaviour was not kind. I guess they wouldn't understand it without drama, it's too complex.

(2)

M: When I was in role and asked them whether the wolf should eat Mr. Dong Guo, they all thought the wolf shouldn't. What do you think about the children's responses here?

T: I think they learnt something, but I'm not sure about your teaching objectives.

M: What do you think they learnt?

T: Well, I think this story educates us about not trusting crafty people. They got it by the end.

M: Do you think they might also understand it without drama? I mean, you can tell the story, and by the end the wise old man concludes with the moral lesson.

T: I think it's different. I mean, yes, you can tell the story, but without experiencing something, their understanding would be different. You know, sometimes children know things because teachers and parents have told them lots of times. They may remember what we have said, but that doesn't mean they really understand.

M: You mentioned my teaching objectives; I planned to use drama to have them explore the moral issue of ingratitude from different perspectives.

T: I see, but I think it's a little bit difficult for them. I mean, even this word, without your drama teaching, they won't understand its meaning.

I have, in sections above, critiqued my teaching reflections informed by my data analysis. As I have said, I will expand this critique in the discussion chapter by referring to theoretical texts and by drawing it together with other relevant examples from different schemes. Below, however, I list three problems that I was left pondering immediately after this drama scheme had concluded, which informed the planning of the rest of my sessions.

2.4   The reflection on findings

2.4.1   Too complicated a story

Both I and the lead teacher agreed, in the end, that this story was too complex and difficult for this age group of children. This point was very useful for me, leading me to carefully consider what I should actually teach in drama to benefit children's moral thinking. They were quite confused about my intentions and I was asking too much of six year-olds.

2.4.2   Weak design of my teaching plan

Considering my responses to children's questions during my teaching, it is clear that I went into the sessions without a clear understanding of this story. My weak interpretation adversely affected the entire drama, leaving me to reconsider what kind of story would best suit this kind of drama work.

2.4.3   Another form of didacticism

The lead teacher thought this drama was successful because the children could learn moral principles directly through it, but I felt that the children were being highly controlled and led by my ideas, as I attempted to have them understand what I felt I understood. It was evident that I and the lead teacher still had different understandings of the purpose of moral education through drama.

3.   The Third Story: *The Kind Red Ogre*

This traditional Japanese story tells of a red ogre who wanted to make friends with some villagers. He was different from the ogres we usually meet in folk tales, being kind and naïve, though still with a horn on his head! In order to change their impression of ogres he wrote a warm sentence on a billboard, inviting the villagers to afternoon tea in his house. But when they arrived and peeped through a little hole in the window, they saw what looked like a terrible red ogre and immediately ran away. This made the ogre very sad, so he asked for help from his friend, the green ogre. In order to help his friend, the green ogre pretended to scare the villagers and asked the red ogre to beat him, so the villagers would think the red ogre was on their side. At the end, the red ogre became good friends with the villagers, but also lost his friend, the green ogre, who had to leave in order to prevent the villagers learning the truth about their little deception. This story would allow me to explore questions about friendship and who our real friends are.

Why this story

I was touched by the last scene, in which the red ogre reads the letter left him by the green ogre. I felt this story contained two themes: 1) what kind of person do I want to be? 2) how do I make a decision between two courses of action, both of which will bring about good results, but one excluding the other? These two aspects, I thought, would well match MacIntyre's theory of the virtues. Because of the problems I had encountered in *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf*, I taught this story to see whether these themes would be more identifiable by the children, as friendship and cheating are well understood by them. I included written as well as oral language in this scheme, to see if the drama could impact favourably on their writing.

3.1 The lessons in Summary

<u>Session one</u>

At the beginning, I asked the children if they had ever heard stories about ogres and what they thought they looked like. I then introduced the red ogre to them, describing him as unusual, kind, happy and naïve with horns. Each child then drew its face on a piece of A4 card and used this to make a mask, which they wore to show the different things the ogre did in his everyday life. In this way I hoped they would identify with this gentle ogre. I then told them of a nearby village and how the red ogre used to secretly watch the villagers work and play. We discussed what the villagers might do every day, and then made still images of their suggestions. In this way I established physically the context of the story.

<u>Second session</u>

In this session, I attempted to establish the problem. I told the children the red ogre had seen the villagers every day, and now wanted to make friends with them, to help them and play with them. I asked the children to contribute their ideas of what red ogre might do to help the villagers, based on the still images they had made in the first session. They did this by making a physical gesture in space, doing the same to show the villagers' reactions to this, with facial expressions being very important. In small groups they then made very small scenes to develop the moment when the villagers reacted to seeing the ogre for the first time, and explored through short monologues how the red ogre might have felt when he witnessed their fear and rejection.

<u>Third session</u>

We started with a few warm-up games to recall what we had explored in the last session. This session mainly focused on their written language. I told them the red ogre did not want to give up, so he decided to write a billboard to invite the villagers to take afternoon tea with him in his house. We discussed how he might show the villagers that he was a very kind, polite, trustworthy, harmless ogre. Most of the children could not write, so I acted as scribe for them. We also learnt the form of this invitation. Later we made images to show how the villagers might look at the billboard and what they might think. There was a very funny moment when the red ogre and the villagers looked at each other through a hole in the window. They scared each other; the villagers were shouting 'help', and the red ogre was shouting 'stop, I'm a kind ogre'. After all these failed attempts, the red ogre decided to write a letter to his friend, the green ogre, to tell him what had happened and asked for help. We wrote this letter together; once again, I acted as scribe.

<u>Fourth session</u>

We began by discussing what friends normally do, and made a picture book using our bodies. I divided the class into groups of two, each pair making a still image of what they do with friends and providing a sentence to go with it. I wrote the sentences on sheets of A4 paper, which I placed in front of their images, thus creating our whole class picture book on friendship. I then told the group the story of green ogre and his decision to visit red ogre, who helped him make friends with the villagers. Green ogre pretended to scare the villagers, upon which red ogre pretended to beat green ogre in order to win the villager's trust and persuade them he was good. We followed the story to create an improvised drama of this scene, and each group had their own ideas. We discussed what red ogre might think when he was pretending to beat green ogre. We then performed the activities of both sculpturing and thought tracking to explore the character's thoughts and feelings. Finally, the villagers trusted red ogre and visited him to thank him for his help. However, green ogre was gone, leaving a letter for red ogre; we read this letter together and discussed what red ogre might do.

3.2 Language learning

In this drama work I focused largely on how drama might help what the national guidelines describe as making children interested in writing and preparing children to write,

which they have to start doing once they move on to primary school. Moffett (1983) claimed that drama can be the 'matrix and seedbed' for later language development and Britton (1975) suggested it could help develop children's ability to use language expressively. We have seen examples of this in my previous analyses; we will see this again with this scheme of work, with the added dimension of how this fed into the early writing curriculum.

The children's first ideas about the ogre were to describe him as a 'Zombie', making reference to a popular iPhone game, or 'ghost', in reference to a Disney Cartoon. After the initial storytelling, they had more of a sense of an ogre, but could provide only a very limited description of him:

- With horns

  有角

- Sharp claws , sharp teeth

  尖尖的爪子, 尖尖的牙齿

- Prickly hair

  刺

All these were taken directly from the story I had told them, so I reminded them of the other words I had used: 'different', 'naïve', 'happy', 'little' and encouraged them to draw its face. I then asked volunteers to introduce their drawings to others. Below are examples of the language they now used:

- He has three, shining eyes and terrible teeth, but only two terrible teeth

  他有三只眼睛，是闪闪的眼睛，还有可怕的牙齿，但是只有两颗可怕的牙

  齿

- My red ogre has one sharp and poisonous horn, sharp teeth, a lot, scary but not very scary. He has small small eyes, lots of spots on his face, prickly hair.

  我的红鬼只有一个尖尖的有毒的角，嘴里全是尖牙齿，很多，非常可怕，

但是也不是很可怕，眼睛小小的小小的，脸上还有很多点点，是刺

- Mine has five horns, one two three four five, yes, five. This is his nose. He is smiling. Mine is cute, not terrible, even though he has five horns.

  我的有五个角，一二三四五，对的，五个，这是他的鼻子，他在笑，我的

  很可爱，他不可怕，虽然他有五个角

- These are his horns, mine has three. His eyes looks like hearts, here are his teeth, little and sharp but they don't hurt anyone.

  这些是他的角，我的只有三个，他的眼睛看起来像心的形状，这是他的牙

  齿，只有一点点尖，不伤人。
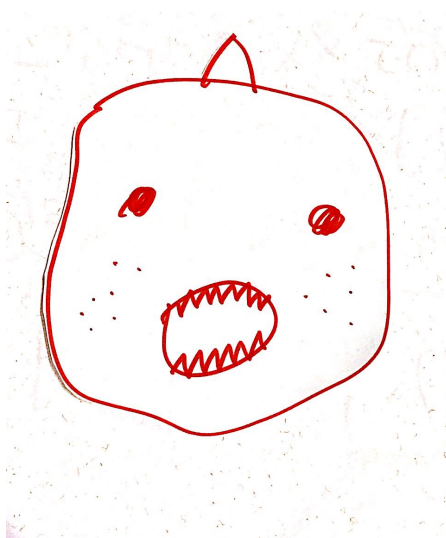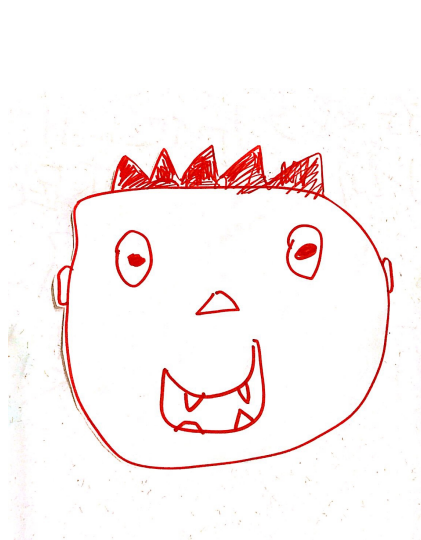
The drawings, then, evidently helped them to express their thoughts, make them visible and then find the language to speak them out. They spoke at some length, using descriptive words of their own, but very much in line with the ogre as I had earlier described him. Later in the lesson, when I had them making gestures of what the red ogre liked to do every day, suggestions included:

- I like riding my bike! And I ride it very fast

  我喜欢骑自行车，骑的很快

- I like swimming with my friend

  我喜欢和我的朋友一起游泳

- I like playing football, basketball, any ball game

  我喜欢足球，篮球，什么球都喜欢

- I like playing with my doll's house with my friend

  我喜欢和朋友玩娃娃屋

- I like running, running, running, running around

  我喜欢跑跑跑，到处跑

Both girls and boys could easily identify with the red ogre in this exercise - or could they? In fact, it is difficult to tell from their examples if they were talking of the ogre or of themselves (one ogre is decidedly female!) Nevertheless, when I then asked them if they liked the red ogre, most of them said yes and later wanted to take the masks home to show their parents.

The fact that they were, indeed, both identifying and sympathising with the red ogre was evident in their responses to my questions about how he felt when the villagers ran away from him:

- So sad, I just wanted to help

  太伤心了，我只是想帮他们呀

- Why are they are scared of me?

  为什么他们怕我呢？

- I don't want to hurt them!

  我又不想伤害他们

- The red ogre must feel heart broken, I tried to help but you were afraid of me.

  红鬼肯定心都碎了，我只是想帮他们呀，为什么他们要怕我

- My prickly hair isn't poisonous.

  我的刺又没有毒

- The villagers must not know he is a good ogre

  这些村民肯定不知道他是好鬼

- He never hurt any people

  他从来没有说伤害过村民们

- He never even hurt any animals in the forest!

  他从来都没有伤害过森林里的动物！

- he may be ugly and terrifying, but his heart is kind

  他可能是有点丑，但是他的心很好呀

I did not ask them to reply as if they were the red ogre, but some children did this naturally, indicative of an emotional connection and positive identification with him. Later, when we wrote the invitation on the billboard, they became very animated during the process, as the following lengthy extract indicates:

M: What shall we write at the beginning? How do you invite someone to come to your house for tea?

A: Come come, we'll have tea!

B: It's not a market!

C: I know, I know. Normally we will say 'dear someone'. We wrote a letter to our moms on Mother's day

D: I know how to write a letter.

E: But it's not a letter!

M: But we still need to address them at the beginning.

A: Just write 'dear villagers'.

F: No, no, no, 'dear, lovely villagers'. You have to be gentle, don't you forget? They are scared of the red ogre

M: OK, I can write it here: 'Dear, lovely villagers'. Then what should we write to see if they would like to have tea with the red ogre?

F: I should let them know we have the best tea in the world. Write something that looks very delicious!

H: Say we have cake!

E: Cake, dessert, fruit and different types of tea.

M: So what shall I write?

F: Dear, lovely villagers, I want to invite you come to my house to have tea, we have….

I: We have cake, dessert, fruit.

G: Maybe tell them we have toys? More attractive!

F: They are adults! They don't like toys!

M: Ok, let's write all the delicious things here first. What else do we need to write here?

G: Maybe we should tell them what we will do for them if they come?

A: They are guests and we need to welcome them, chat with them, prepare tea and so on.

F: So we tell them if you come to my house for tea, we will welcome you very much, share our delicious food and tea with you. We can chat together, so you can have a rest while you're here.

M: That sounds really good, very attractive to me! Shall I write it down?

(All of them: 'yes yes')

J: Your writing is not cute.

M: What do you mean 'cute'?

J: The villagers thought the red ogre is very terrible, so you should write something very cute to show them the red ogre is not terrible, he is cute

M: So how should I write?

K: I can draw a little heart here, I can help you.

M: OK, thank you.

(more girls: 'I can draw a little flower/ smile/ sun/ smiley mouth'. Then they drew a little heart for me)

F: We should also let them know that the red ogre wouldn't hurt them.

I: We can write: 'Don't be scared, I won't hurt you.'

G: And also write: 'I want to make friend with you. I'm a very kind ogre, I never hurt anyone, any animals.'

M: That's a great idea! Now we have quite a lot here.

C: You have to sign it: 'Your dearest red ogre.' Then this looks like a letter. See, 'Dear villagers' and 'Your dearest red ogre'.

M: Yes, it looks like a letter. But it is also an invitation.

J: Maybe add a smile here? Show them he is cute.

M: OK then, I'll draw a smile here.

The children's continuing identification with the ogre is evident from the amount of times the children use the first person here and from the excitement with which they contributed their ideas. The fact that they were imagining something that most children would enjoy - a feast of sweet delights - must have helped with this process. Their engagement was such that it was almost as though they were planning a real party!

As for the writing, there are a number of significant things to point out. They knew about the letter format from previous lessons, as they told me, but they applied the correct form of the letter imaginatively, within the context of what the red ogre was trying to achieve. They were very sensitive not only to the vocabulary they wanted to use but also to other ways in which they could communicate friendliness. And it is clear that this young group of children was already very aware of the use of emojis, typical of social media. They naturally introduced them into this invitation, insisting that I use hearts and smiles as an integral part of the communication. The letter is also very logically ordered and contains a clearly expressed persuasive function, attempting to entice and convince the villagers. Their vocabulary was limited - and perhaps I could have used this opportunity to help them find a better word than 'cute'. Nevertheless, they still managed to dictate a letter that I judged to be very appropriate to the task they were given. And they did so with enthusiasm and great attention to detail. Only an active, imaginative engagement could produce such motivation.

Dear lovely villagers:

I hope to invite you to come to my house for tea. I have very delicious cake, desserts and fruit here. If you come to my house, I will share all of these with you and chat with

you, so you will be able to have a rest here. I'm a good ogre and I won't hurt you. I never hurt people and never hurt animals. I'm a very, very kind ogre and I want to make friends with you.

Your dearest
Red ogre

亲爱的，可爱的村民们：

我想邀请你们到我家来喝茶。我有非常好吃的蛋糕，点心和水果，如果你到我家来，我会和你分享，和你聊天。你可以在我这里休息。我是个好鬼，不会伤害你的。我从来都不伤害别人，动物都不伤害的。我是非常非常善良的鬼，我希望和你们做朋友。

你最亲爱的
红鬼
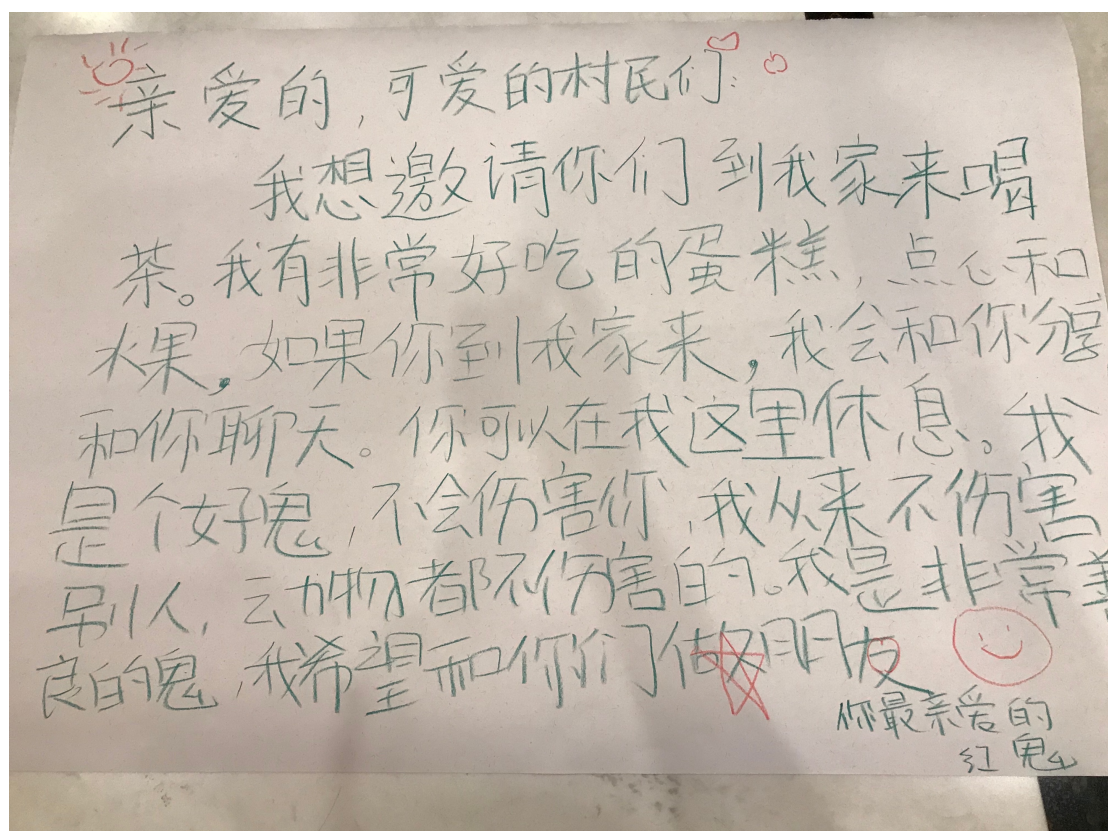
When I read the completed letter back to them, the children were very pleased with it and felt sure that the villagers would accept the invitation. I then narrated the next part of the story with the story wand, adding a chase game so they could experience what happened next physically. When I had finished this highly energetic game, I asked them: 'Is it funny?' One girl answered: 'I think it's not funny, the villagers were scared away. What else could the red ogre do? He must be very sad'. Then they started to discuss this without my prompting:

A: Why are they still afraid of the red ogre?

B: What should he do with all that cake?

A: We already said he is not a bad ogre, he is kind, kind.

C: (ironically) they don't know the words.

D: Maybe they don't want cake. We need to offer them more, offer them what they like!

A: They (the villagers) are cowards. I'm not afraid of the red ogre

E: Me neither, I would like to be his friend.

(many children: Me too, Me too)

M: Me too, I would like to be his friend. But why do you think the villagers are so afraid of the red ogre? If you see someone has a horn, prickles and maybe three eyes, what would you do?

A: He is terrible, he looks terrible, but he is not, he just looks like that

F: I saw the news, a man burned by fire, he looks terrible, but he did many good things.

B: I might be afraid of him, I wouldn't know whether he is good or not.

D: We wrote this on a billboard; didn't you see that?

B: That is a billboard, not the real person.

M: Do you mean the billboard did not help us know what kind of person he really is?

B: Yes!

H: But the villagers ran away, ran ran ran, without knowing he (red ogre) is good.

M: What do you think? (encouraging the quieter children)

J: (Shakes his head, not understanding what I mean)

M: What do you think about the villagers running away, afraid of the red ogre?

J: I'm not afraid.

Through the discussion, they showed quite a thorough understanding of the ogre's situation. They understood we should not judge others because of their appearance, but

they also understood the villagers' reaction to such a frightening looking ogre. Interestingly, one child also appreciated that just because the billboard sounded inviting, the villagers might not trust it.

Later I introduced the green ogre to them and we made a picture book from their group images. When I asked them what the red ogre might write to his friend to ask for his help, they wrote the following together.

My dear friend:

I need your help! (they requested this punctuation) I wanted to make friends with the villagers. I tried to help them to wash their clothes; play games with the children; lift heavy things for them, a lot of things! But they were scared of me. They ran away and don't want to come to my house for tea. They ran away again. I don't know what to do, they are still scared of me. Can you help me?

<div align="right">

Your friend in need of help
(very sad now and almost crying)
Red Ogre

</div>

我亲爱的朋友，

我需要你的的帮助！我想和村民做朋友。我想帮他们洗衣服；和小孩们玩游戏；帮他们抬重东西，好多事情，但是他们都怕我，吓跑了， 还不想来我家喝茶。他们又吓跑了。我都不知道该怎么办了，他们很怕我。你可以帮助我吗？

<div align="right">

你亲爱的朋友
（非常伤心而且都快哭了）
红鬼

</div>
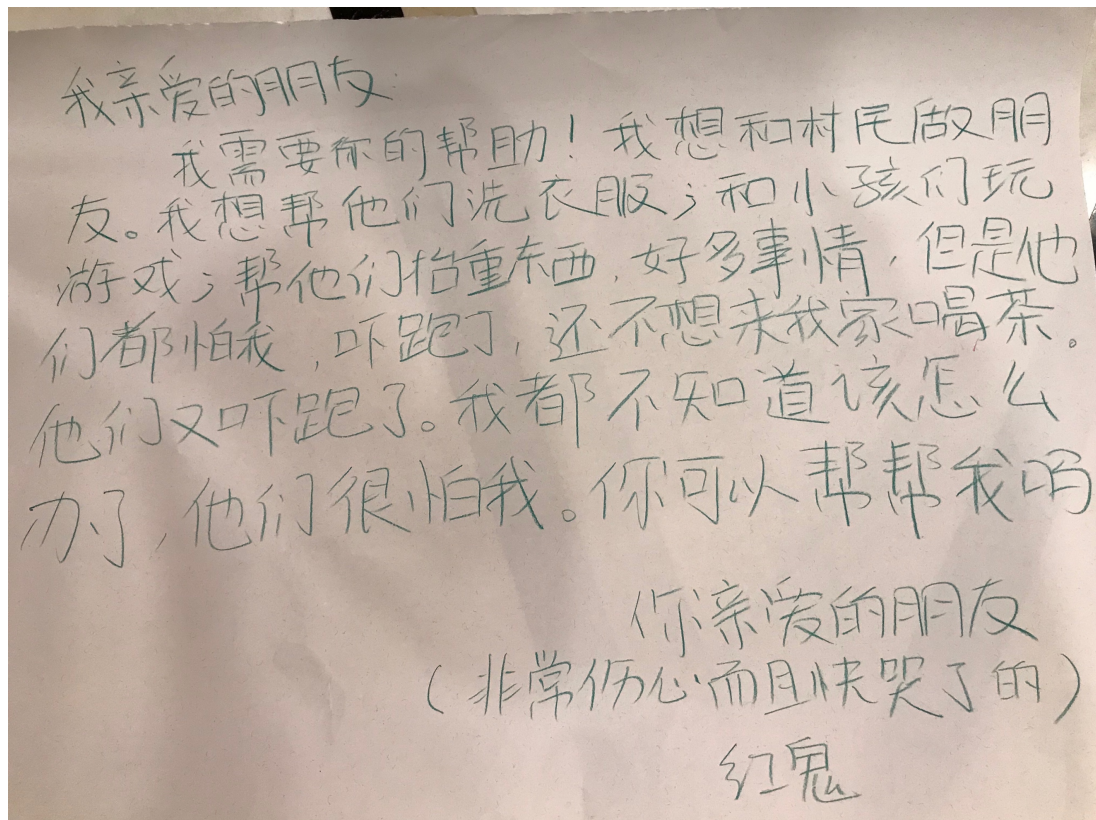
As with the first letter, there is a logical structure and a clear sense of audience and purpose. Also, one boy requested specific punctuation, the exclamation mark, as he said it means emergency. As with the girl who requested me to write 'cute', they understood what kind of mood should be implied here and, despite their limited vocabulary, they managed to express urgency in their short sentences.

3.2.1 The interview with the lead teacher

The teacher was very pleased with this drama work. She agreed that the children showed great willingness to write and was surprised at the logical thinking expressed in their writing. Normally, she told me, when the children wrote something, like cards or notes, it was just one or two sentence which had already been demonstrated by the teacher. They had never before attempted to write a letter with such a clear imaginative purpose.

(1)

M: Did the children ever write something like this (billboard) before?

T: Not really. The invitation letter, they wrote something similar to that, but very simple, maybe one or two sentences.

M: So what do they write?

T: The teacher will demonstrate it first, so it's like they fill a few words in the sentence, because they are too young to learn writing, and also it's not allowed to teach them writing.

M: But one teaching objective of language development in the guidelines is encouraging them to have an interest in writing and to prepare for it, so what do you normally do towards that aim?

T: Well, pre-writing is part of the policy objectives but usually focuses on writing their names or drawing.

M: So what do you think about the activities we did? Like writing the invitation and the letter together?

T: I think it was really good practice. It's like, well, like stimulating their interest. I can see they are very willing to write, it's good preparation for primary school.

The teacher makes it clear here that children of this age are not supposed to be taught how to write but that this is often interpreted as teaching them to write simple things, such as their names. She was particularly interested in this lesson, as it showed her that pre-writing could be more challenging and that her children were ready for an exercise that explored a number of issues about writing that teaching simple words did not. I suggest that these consisted of helping children understand how written language is different from spoken language; how it gives you time to consider important issues such as audience and purpose; how the tone and mood and style of what you write is as important as the content; and how all of this has a rhetorical function - in other words, all of this combines to help your writing achieve a particular purpose. I will discuss these issues in more theoretical detail later, in my discussion chapter.

(2)

M: Well, let's talk about XXX (focused girl A) and XXX (focused girl B), in this story, do you think drama is more helpful for XXX (focused girl A) in terms of language learning?

T: I don't know, I did not see any obvious difference? Did you see any difference?

M: Not really. They both enjoyed the story and activity, their responding is different, not one's responding is better than another.

T: Yes, I think so. I didn't feel any difference. But as I said before, I do think XXX

(focused girl A) is more relaxed and willing to express herself in drama class. She was shy girl, but she looks not shy in the drama class.

M: What do you think about XXX(focused girl B), do you think drama also helped her?

T: yes, sure, in some way, maybe, but her language ability has developed very well, maybe it's not very obviously, yes, I think drama also good her.

However, the lead teacher tried to be pilot, in fact she still thinks drama has less benefits for focused girl B. To the lead teacher's point of view, drama helped focused girl A better in terms of willingness and confidence of expression. Both of us agreed it is hard to see clear improvements of these two points, but I do think it is not my research focus.

3.3 Moral thinking

In this story, the green ogre helped the red ogre to gain the trust of the villagers through a deceitful plan. I wanted to know how the children reacted to such a conflict between two virtues, friendship and honesty. As we saw earlier, the children identified with the red ogre when we made the picture book together by using group images. They depicted the kind of activities they like to do with their friends, such as:

- riding bikes
- chasing one another
- swimming
- playing hide and seek
- playing football and basketball
- playing on their scooters
- telling jokes

Then we acted out how the green ogre intentionally made lots of mess in the village and how the red ogre pretended to help the villagers by beating the green ogre. An interesting moment was when one boy acted beating the green ogre, while at the same time whispering to him: 'I won't beat you hard, and you can run away.' He understood how the red ogre might feel a little guilty about beating his friend and tried to control the situation by acting well. Later, we discussed what they thought about the green ogre's behaviour. Generally, they understood the logic of his plan but also thought that

harassing the villagers was not necessarily a good choice.

- He did this for his friend, but the way he did it was stupid.

  他这么做是为了他的朋友，但是这个办法也太笨了吧

- The red ogre tried many ways and all of these failed, green ogre had no choice.

  红鬼试了那么多办法都失败了，绿鬼也是想帮他，没有办法的

- He just pretended, not really hurting them.

  他只是假装，又不是真的打

- Anyway harassing others is not right. What if the villagers found out the truth?

  但是这么去捣乱是不对的，要是他们发现了怎么办！

- The red ogre and green ogre are the same kind of creature and much better matched to be friends with one another than with the villagers. They should have given up this idea.

  嘿，红鬼和绿鬼才适合在一起呀，他们是一类的，跟村民做朋友也太麻烦了

  吧，我才不得和他们一起玩呢

- If the beating is not hurting, it's alright. The red ogre is helpful to the villagers anyway.

  如果打得不重伤不到人也没关系，反正红鬼也帮了他们的呀

- Why not find another way?

  就没有别的办法了吗

- Maybe he can make just a little mess, not so much mess, just a little.

  也许他可以轻点，不要太夸张，一点点就好了

- They've tried to be nice, but the villagers did not trust the red ogre. What else can we do? It's ok, we did not really hurt them.

  他们已经想尽办法要友好了，村民们有不信，能怎么办嘛？我觉得没啥，他

  们又没真的伤人

Even though their answers varied, the children showed that they absolutely understood the situation and the conflict it portrayed. My aim in this exercise above was to see how they responded to it rather than offer me better solutions. I believe that here many children showed that they could think for themselves and consider alternative suitable actions. As I have tried to make clear, I consider moral education through drama to be about understanding difficult moral problems more deeply and thinking about the best ways to act in difficult situations in order to live a good life. MacIntyre's theory of the virtues being at the heart of the moral life helps us understand the moral problem I identified in this story. It is an example of how, when faced with a dilemma in which two 'goods' contradict one another, we have to find the better way forward, even though this will always lead to one 'good' being sacrificed - in this case, the ogres' friendship. I could have done more to explore this from the point of view of the green ogre. He is the one who sacrifices his friendship in order to help his friend and in one version, he cries at the end of the story. This version is actually called '*The Green Ogre who Cried*.' However, compared with the drama of *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf*, I was heartened by the children's obvious moral engagement with the problem I had asked them to consider and with their ability to think through it rationally. It was a clear example to me of their emotion and reason working together.

Although I did not ask the children to consider the problem directly from the perspective of the green ogre, by following the emotional rhythm of the story, I did so indirectly in the final letter writing activity. He told the red ogre that he was happy for him now he had made friends with the villagers, as this had been his wish, but it was necessary to keep this a secret. In order to do so, the green ogre would have to leave him. He hoped the red ogre would enjoy the time he spent with his new friends. When I read this letter out loud, two girls were almost in tears and one boy said that the green ogre had shown that he, not the villagers, was the red ogre's real friend. Then we discussed what a friend is. The children said:

- The people who are not afraid of you and who help you
  那些不怕你还愿意帮你的人

- Someone who understands you
  理解你的人

- Someone who will do good things for you without asking you for something

  不求回报帮助你的人

- Like the green ogre

  像青鬼那样

- Someone who cares about you

  在乎你的

- Who helps you when you are in trouble

  有困难的时候帮助你的人

- Knows what you really need even without you telling them

  不用说都知道你真正要的是什么

- Knows your inner words

  知道你的心里话

- Someone who likes you, even though others might think you are not good

  喜欢你，就算别人觉得你不好也喜欢你

- Someone who thinks everything about you is good

  喜欢你的人，觉得你哪里都好的人

Friendship for Aristotle was a key virtue, and a major contributing factor to living a happy, moral life. I will examine this in more detail in the discussion chapter, but for now I will just point out how the children's reflections on friendship above reflect both the story and their own experience. To me they are quite rich and thoughtful reflections for children so young. They vary but complement one another, illustrating how children can consider and understand friendship as a 'thick' rather than a 'thin' concept.

Later the children created different endings to the story. Even though they all thought the red ogre needed to find the green ogre and ask him to come back, they had different ideas about how this could be done:

- First the red ogre can tell the villagers the truth and then ask the green ogre back.

- He can find the green ogre and then have an adventure with him.

- The red ogre can live with the villagers for a while and then live with the green ogre for a while.

- The red ogre needs to write a letter to the green ogre and convince him to come back.

Their spoken language and logical thinking was generally better than in *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf*, as they could identify with the desire of the red ogre for friendship and wanted to find a compromise so everyone in the story could be happy.

The teacher told me she was very touched by this drama work, commenting on how well they could think from the red ogre's point of view but also care about the other characters, the villagers and the green ogre. She was most impressed by the moment when she observed the boy pretending to beat the green ogre but whispering to his friend, asking him to run away. Such a moment in the drama work warmed her heart. She told me the children loved their masks and saw them as their little friends. Her responses here verge on the sentimental but they do point to what a Chinese kindergarten teacher can value in drama when it works well and how children can surprise them by demonstrating their common humanity, what Aristotle called their 'orectic' potential - their natural ability to sympathise and care for others.

4. The Fourth Story: *Issun Boshi - The One Inch Boy*

This drama is based on a Japanese folktale as told in a beautiful picture book by Iconori, published in Germany in 2014. The story is very similar to those of Tom Thumb and Thumbelina, about a boy who is born tiny and never grows. His parents over protect him but, at the age of fifteen, Issun Boshi leaves home determined to become a normal sized young man. He meets a giant ogre who tells him if he wants to grow up, he has to bring a beautiful treasure to him which he will find in the grand house of a nobleman in a nearby city. Issun Boshi agrees but, on reaching the city, he meets a princess who had never smiled for a year, and she is amused by his tiny antics. Her father had promised a reward to the person who could make her smile and this is given to Issun Boshi. The princess likes him so much she lets him stay with her. However, Issun Boshi is sad that he cannot marry her, because he is treated like her toy rather than a real man. One

day, when he takes the princess on a walk in the forest, they meet the Giant ogre, who claims the princess as the treasure he was seeking. Issun Boshi uses his weapon - a needle given to him by his mother - to defeat the giant ogre. The ogre swallows him whole but Issun Boshi stabs his intestines til the ogre coughs him up and flees in pain and terror, after Issun Boshi has seized his magic hammer and grown to a normal size as a result. He can now live with the princess happily forever.

Why this story?

Issun Boshi is only tiny but he wants to grow up, a symbol of growth, of the promise of one day controlling your own life and joining society as an adult. However, the story suggests we will encounter difficulties before this can happen, difficulties that children can implicitly understand: someone bigger and stronger than us might bully us; our parents might over-protect us; we are too young to have what we want when we want it. To my point of view, these conflicts were worth exploring with the children as part of their moral education, as they are all about what kind of person I want to be and how I should achieve a better life. However, this might not be seen as moral knowledge as such by the average kindergarten teacher. Furthermore, the picture book I used had very simple narration, giving the children lots of space to use their own language to retell the story; not only using pictures, but also combining them with drama, using their voices and bodies in group work and improvisation.

4.1 Lessons in summary

<u>The first lesson</u>

In the first lesson, I introduced the little boy to them through the use of a small finger puppet. We then explored where he lived and what he did, as I attempted to engage them within the imaginative context of the story. We sat in a circle and acted out what he might do in his daily life and how this would be different from our own actions. We also created improvisations of how he might play with animals. Later, I was in role as his mother and told them that Issun Boshi wanted to find his own fortune and was insisting on leaving home. I told them I worried so much because he was too small to live his own life safely, thinking that actually, this might be what their parents would have told them. As his mother, I said I hoped the children could agree with me and help me convince Issun Boshi to stay at home. To challenge them, I then took on the role of Issun Boshi to explain why I wanted to leave. At the end of the lesson, we listed the

reasons why he should and shouldn't leave, a process I had used successfully before and that I drew from Winston (2000). I concluded the lesson by telling them of the decision Issun Boshi made.

The second lesson

This lesson was mainly focused on the tiny boy's adventures. The picture book briefly narrates how he sails down river in a rice bowl given to him by his parents and then crosses the forest with it on his back. I placed a blue cloth on the classroom floor to represent the river, encouraging the class to think about what sounds he might hear as he floated downstream. These might be from animals or other aspects of the forest beside the river. Later we created the forest using our bodies, then acted out how he crossed through it and what he might meet there. This part of the tale was not clearly told in the book, so the children had space to create their own versions of the story here. When he met the giant ogre, through a playful game, we attempted to use our bodies and gestures to show the contrast between the Giant ogre and Issun Boshi - big and small, strong and weak, heavy and light, and so on. At the end of this lesson we discussed what they thought of Issun Boshi's personality and what they liked about him.

The third lesson

After Issun Boshi had made a deal with the giant ogre, he went to the city and found his fortune there. This lesson started from closely observing the picture of the city as illustrated in the book and noting some of the details it contained. Later I discussed how he might make the princess happy and smile. The children were encouraged to tell jokes to make others smile. We also acted out Issun Boshi's first meeting with the princess through the convention of the "story wand'. When Issun Boshi decided to stay with the princess, we created still images in groups to portray how they lived together. This could be seen as a stage of growth for the boy, as he was already looking after someone he cared for.

The fourth lesson

This lesson was about how Issun Boshi defeated the Giant ogre. Through very playful games, we depicted how the boy fought against the giant by using his needle. We played more games that helped the children explore how Issun Boshi felt about growing up into a normal sized young man. At the end of this session, I divided them into groups

of four or five, adding an extended ending to the story by telling what Issun Boshi might do in the future. This was also a chance for them to show what they might want to do once they grew up.

<u>The fifth lesson</u>
Sharing their storytelling to each other.

4.2 Language learning

I mainly focused on how the children expressed their understanding of the story through different kinds of expressive language, amplified by the use of activities such as still image, movement, circle discussion, group work and improvisation.

In the first session, after a few games of experiencing being "small", I had the children sit in a circle and started with the sentence "I can….", asking them to complete it as if they were Issun Boshi, saying what they could do first, then acting it out. They found it easy to make the sentence, but hard to act it out properly. For example, one girl said "I can help my mother thread the needle", but she acted the action out as she would normally do it. So I reminded her: 'how small is Issun Boshi?' She showed me her thumb, so I then asked her how big the needle is. She showed me the length which was the same as Issun Boshi's height. At that moment, the other children realised how Issun Boshi might do it. One boy voluntarily showed Issun Boshi carrying the needle on his shoulder and said 'Issun Boshi must carry the needle on his shoulder and hold the thread with his hands, and do it like this". I realised asking them how Issun Boshi might do all these things was more effective than asking them to say what he could do, because their spoken language actually helped them to act it out properly, giving them clear instructions, and vice versa. Without the detailed description, the children found it hard to imagine exactly how the one inch boy would act; and acting helped them find the language they needed.

- he crawled into his mom's ears, dig dig dig, and pushed earwax out of her ears, very hard..

  他跑到妈妈的耳朵里，挖挖挖，然后把耳屎推出来，非常用力的样子

  (he showed me how Issun Boshi pushed earwax through his two hands)
- like a spider, he hangs himself on to a piece of string and jumps into the key hole,

like this

像蜘蛛一样，把自己吊在绳子上，然后跳到钥匙的洞洞里，像这样

(he stretched his arms as wide as he could to show me how Issun Boshi attempted to unlock the door if he was actually inside the key hole)

- He helped his mom pick up rubbish from cracks in the floor…lifting it, very heavy, push push

帮妈妈从地上的缝缝里把渣子拉起来，要这样子，因为非常重，然后推推

推。

(he used his arms to hug the trash and used his shoulder to push it）

In the next activity, I encouraged the children to think how Issun Boshi might play with animals. They found this activity much easier to act out immediately, with little need for any instruction. They showed me how Issun Boshi rode on a cat and gripped its ears; how he hid in a horse's ear and peeped out when the horse was running; how he rode on a bird and commanded it to fly in the sky. They seemed to have no difficulty in imagining that they were very small creatures when asked to play with animals.

Later, Issun Boshi decided to find his own fortune and left home. In the story, he brought a needle and a bowl, floating in the river and crossing the forest. I presented a blue cloth in the middle of the classroom, then told them how Issun Boshi took his 'boat' (the bowl) and floated down the river, hearing sounds from the forest nearby. They told me he could hear the sounds of a bear, a tiger, a snake, a monkey, birds, elephants and so on, making the sounds of these animals as they spoke them. When asked to think be-yond animals, they mimicked the sounds of nature, such as rain, wind, thunder, a sum-mer day and so on. Actually, they did not use much vocabulary in this activity, but according to their storytelling recording, this was the most impressive part for them and every child spent quite a long time describing what Issun Boshi heard, as the transcript will show later.

Another very impressive moment for the children was when Issun Boshi first met the Giant Ogre. In one game we made the sound of the ogre, which I told them was terrible and loud: tikikikiki. After this, we tried out different tones of voice for tikikikiki to

demonstrate a different kind of giant - cunning, dangerous, tempting, for example. They had no difficulty using their voices in this way. Importantly, this activity greatly impacted on how children later chose to create a dialogue between the ogre and Issun Boshi in their recorded storytelling. By choosing different tones to play with the sound 'tikikikiki', the children were able express different moods and intentions. This helped them retell the stories in different ways. I shall give examples later.

When Issun Boshi went to the city, there was a page showing him in a very crowded market. I asked the children to imagine what he might experience in such a big and crowded market, and divided them into groups of four or five. Firstly, they created a still image to show who Issun Boshi met with and a very clear moment of what happened there. Secondly, when I clapped my hands, they could move and show what happened next. Finally, they could add dialogue. There were five different improvisations created:

- Issun Boshi was chased by dogs and then hid himself under his bowl
- Issun Boshi was chased by dogs but used his needle to get rid of them
- Issun Boshi was trying to protect himself from being stamped under people's feet
- Issun Boshi was almost crushed under the wheels of a cart
- Issun Boshi escaped from children who wanted to catch him by hurting them with his needle

The children did this activity very quickly and were able to act out many details using appropriate facial expression, tone of voice, gesture and movement. In the first lesson of this term, they had found it very difficult to work in groups and needed lots of help, but in this lesson, what I and the teacher observed was that they were already very familiar with group work and able to do it very well. In one group, there was a child on the autistic spectrum. Normally he was very quiet and participated only occasionally. If he need help, the class teacher would help him. I observed how his group worked together:

A: what do you want to do?
(other children had no idea)

A: How about we play as the dogs chasing Issun Boshi?

B: I've got an idea! I can play the dog, and run run run.

A: Ok, great, you are the dog. What do you want to play?

C: (girl) I don't want to be the dog

D: (girl) I don't either.

A: How about you? (He asked E, the boy with autism)

E: (just smiling)

A: Can you do it like this? (mimes the dog with a long tongue)

E: (mimes it)

A: Good! Very good! (to C and D) you can be people who are walking in the market. Or do you want to be Issun Boshi?

B: Come on, the dog is funny! See (mimes the dog)

C: Well, ok, but my dog has ears (puts her hands on her head)

D: I don't want to be a dog

A: ok, you can use your thumb to pretend to be Issun Boshi. I can be a dog as well. Shall we try? (asks E) You can do it like this (shows him). Good, good, you did very well. Teacher, we are ready!

In my personal journal, I later wrote:

Today, their group work was so incredible and impressed me very much, especially the group that E joined in. This was the first time E didn't need any help from the teacher. Other children waited for his responses, understood he that he needs more time to react, showed great patience towards him and also reacted to him very positively. E was smiling all the time during the group work. A understood how to help E understand the situation and encouraged him to try out some ideas. Importantly, A kept asking for others' opinions and accepted their arguments. It was the first time I didn't need to help any groups and could just focus my observations on one group.

Later when I interviewed the lead teacher, she agreed that she could see the development of their ability to work in groups and was surprised how well the boy worked with others, and how well they worked through asking questions. The children were capable of deciding what they wanted to represent and how they wanted to do this by themselves. Later in their storytelling, every child retold this part of the story differently

according to their group work and the personal roles they played in it.

Later, when Issun Boshi met the princess and tried to make her laugh, I asked the children how we might do this. Most said by telling a joke, so I encouraged them to tell any jokes they knew that might make the princess laugh. In this activity, the teaching objective was to have them practice the skill of storytelling (jokes are a kind of storytelling, after all). Because of the time limitation, only five children shared their joke with the others, three of them telling one that clearly related to their personal experiences, but only two children managed to make the others laugh. Two of them tried to tell jokes that they had read in books, but they couldn't do this logically or clearly. Later, these two children retold this part in their recorded storytelling. This is an example of how their personal experience of the drama impacted on their selection and recall. This also included the games we played. I adapted The Keeper of the Keys, with the ogre guarding the princess and Issun Boshi trying to steal the key to set the princess free. Seven children's storytelling record mentioned this part. This was an activity I asked them to do for homework after we had completed all the drama lessons. Ten of the eighteen children completed this homework and I offer three examples below. Two are what I judge to be the best versions, the other being the shortest.

4.2.1 Example one:

Focused girl A

Length of redording: 5'19"

Long, long ago, there were a farmer and his wife, who really wanted a child. Even if he was very small, they would love him and take care of him. One day, they did have a son, born only as small as a thumb. They gave his name as: Issun Bosi (wrong pronunciation). Issun Bosi one day wanted to play outside, even though he was only as small as a thumb, but he had grown up, he wanted to see the outside world. His mom did not want him to go out, but, then, she still let him go and play outside. Then Issun Bosi crossed a stream. He came to a stream, he used his bowl as a boat, used his needle as an oar. He landed, heard some sounds. Si~ao~then tikikikikiki. (he) met a monster. The monster asked him (grumpy voice) : Do you want to grow bigger as other normal children? Issun Bosi was thinking. Then the monster asked again: (lower voice) Do you want to grow bigger as other normal children? Issun Bosi was still thinking. Then the monster asked again (lower and impatient): Do you want to grow bigger as other normal

children? Issun Bosi answered: yes, I want that. So the monster said: (changing the mood, happier) You want to, but I have a deal. You have to go to that city. There is a house, find a treasure, your dream will come true. Issun Boshi went to that city, found that house, opened it and looked, a princess inside. The princess was already alone, lived here alone for one year, never smiled. Because she thought everything was not funny. Sometimes, she heard the dogs bark outside; sometimes she heard someone selling things, heard someone carrying pole. When the princess saw Issun Bosi, (she) really wanted to laugh. Issun Bosi asked: Princess, do you have treasure? The princess said: I don't have treasure. Then Issun Bosi said: Princess, could you give me the treasure? Because there is a monster, in that forest, he told me to take the treasure to him. The princess said: I don't have treasure, go somewhere else to find it. Then, the princess said: If you can tell me two stories, and make me laugh, then you can take me to the forest to find the monster. Then Issun Bosi told the princess two stories, and made her laugh, then he took the princess to that forest. Then, when they were walking, suddenly that princess met the monster. The monster said: Issun Bosi your dream has come true. (low voice) In fact, the princess was the treasure! Issun Bosi said NO NO NO! The monster locked the princess into his house, placed the chair, put the key under the chair, sitting on the chair and snoozing. Issun Bosi crept to the chair, (walked) under the chair, took the key, said: Run! Princess Run! The monster was very angry, caught Issun Bosi, swallowed him, swallowed him into his belly. Suddenly, he remembered he had a needle on his back, he stabbed the monster by using his needle. The monster was suffering, then the monster vomited him out. Then, then I finished, thank you everyone.

很久很久以前，有一位农夫和他的妻子，很想要一个儿子，哪怕那个儿子很小，他们都会细心的照顾着他。有一天，他们真的生了个儿子，儿子生出来，只有大拇指那么大，他们就给他取名叫 Issun Bosi, Issun Bosi 有一天想出去玩，他虽然还是只有大拇指那么大，但是他已经长大了，他想出去看看外面的世界。他妈妈不想让他出去玩，之后，他，他还是，他妈妈还是让他出去玩了。

然后 Issun Bosi 穿过了一条小溪，他来到了一条小溪，他用碗当成船，用针当成划板，他上了岸，听见一些声音，siiiiiii, oau, 然后是 Tikikikikiki, 遇见了一个怪物，怪物问他：你想变成一般小孩那么大吗？Issun Bosi 想了想（更低沉的声

音）你想变成一般小孩那么大吗？Issun Bosi 还在想。怪物又问：你想变成一般小孩那么大吗？Issun Bosi 说，我想。怪物于是说：（改变了语气）你想，但是有个条件，你要去那边那个小村长，那边一个屋子里，找一个宝藏，你的梦想才能实现。Issun Bosi 就去了那边那个小村庄，找到了那个房子，打开门一看，里面有一个公主。公主已经，一，一个人，一个人在这里住了一年了，从来都没有笑过，因为她觉得那些事情都不好笑。她有时候听见外面有狗叫，听见有人卖东西，还听到有人在挑担。当公主看到 Issun Bosi 的时候，就很想笑。Issun Bosi 就问了：公主，你这里有宝藏吗？公主说，我这可没有宝藏。然后，Issun Bosi 就说，你能把宝藏给我，因为那边有个森林里，有一个妖怪，他说要把宝藏拿过来。公主说，我这里可没有宝藏，你去其他地方找吧。然后，公主说：如果你能给我讲两个故事，能逗我笑的话，那你就可以带我去那个森林里，找那个怪兽。然后 Issun Bosi 给公主讲了两个故事，真的逗公主笑了，然后他就带公主去了那个森林。然后，他们在走的时候，突然那个公主碰到了那个妖怪。妖怪说：Issun Bosi 你的梦想实现了！（低沉的声音）结果，那个公主就是那个宝藏，Issun Bosi 说 No No No, 他怎么追也追不上他们两个，怪兽把公主关在一个屋子里。抬了个板凳，把钥匙放在板凳的下面，他坐在上面打呼噜。Issun Bosi 他就悄悄的走到那个板凳下面，那到了那个钥匙，说：公主快跑。妖怪很生气，就把 Issun Bosi 拿起来，一口吞到了肚子里，突然 Issun Bosi 想起来他背上有一个针，他用针刺到了怪兽的肚子里面。怪兽疼痛不忍，然后怪兽就，一口把 Issun Bosi 吐了出来。然后就，就讲完了。谢谢大家。

4.2.2 Example Two:

Focused girl B

Length of recording: 5'36"

A father and mother, they wanted a child, they said, if I can have a child, that would be so happy. So, their dream came true, they had a child as small as A thumb, Issun Boshi. The father and mother all loved him very much, but he said, one sentence, dad and mom, I want to leave this city. Then dad and mom gave him a bowl and a needle, then he left. Then, he left. Then he walked walked, walked a long, long time, found a river. Sometimes the river (was) fast, sometimes the river (was) not fast, sometimes the river (was) wide, sometimes the river (was) narrow. Issun Boshi put his bowl on the water, sitting in it, floating and floating, floating and floating, floating and then, he heard strange sounds, strange sounds that disappeared gradually, (he) heard here a strange sound, strange sound that gradually disappeared. (He) heard, heard there a strange sound, strange sound that gradually disappeared. He heard a strange sound which came from in front, a strange sound that gradually disappeared. He was so frustrated about the sound. Slowly, slowly, he floated, floated, and finally floated to the land, met a beast. The beast told him: you go to the small town to find treasure, if you find the treasure, I can transform you into a normal person as big as normal people. Then, he went to the forest, met many beasts. He (Issun Boshi) had an idea, then, he saw lots of people, then he was afraid they might step on him. One place said: Fruit! Fruit! One place, had sounds: wow wow wow wow wow. Finally he crossed there, then, he found the princess, then the princess said: could you tell me any good news? The news others brought back was not interesting, then, I haven't laughed for one year, I've been living here for one year. Then, Issun Boshi, then, the princess said, how did you come here? Then, he said: I came here by myself. Then, she told him, if you told me this news, then, then, I will go with you to where the beast lives. Then Issun Boshi said, but I already told you. Then, Issun Boshi took her to (the forest). Then the beast said: Congratulations! You found the treasure. Then, that beast, ran off so fast, so fast. You should know that Issun Boshi just was as small as a thumb, how could he run so fast? Then, he (the beast) locked her into a cage, then, the beast fell asleep and snoozed, like this: ha~hu~ha~hu~ha~hu. Then, one inch boy Issun Boshi, ran for a long time, a long time, long time, very very long time, long time. Then, he quietly saw that a key was under the chair. Then he quietly stole the key and opened it (the cage). Then, he opened the

door (of the cage), and said: Run! Run fast! Then, the beast was very, very angry, then, he swallowed him into his belly, swallowed. You see, here was so black, not any bright space. Then, he took his needle, stab stab stab stab stab stab stab stab stab stab stab (getting faster and stronger). Then, that beast, was so annoyed, like this, ha~ha~tu~ha~o~. Then, he vomited, vomited Issun Boshi, vomited out. Then, Issun Boshi run away. Then, the beast was suffering, so hurt, so hurt even when Issun Boshi came out, hurt hurt hurt hurt. Then, then, I remembered it was finished, nothing happened after this. Oh, then, then Issun Boshi beat the drum, he beat it once, and he got bigger, beat one time, got bigger, but he thought he was not strong enough, he wanted to get stronger, then he beat one time, then, then finished.

母亲和父亲，他们想生个孩子，他们就说，如果我能生个孩子，那该多好。结果，他们的愿望实现了，他们真的生了一个只有大拇指那么小的一个孩子，Issun Boshi. 母亲和父亲都很喜欢他，可是他说了一句，爸爸妈妈，我想离开这座城市了，然后呢，爸爸妈妈给他带了一个针和一个碗，然后呢，他就走了。然后，他就走了，走了特别久特别久，遇到了一条长河，有时候河会很急，有时候河会不急，有时候河会很宽，有时候河会很窄，Issun Boshi 他把碗放到水了，坐到碗上，飘啊飘，飘啊飘，飘到这里听到一个怪声音，怪声音慢慢的消失了，听到这里又有一个怪声音，怪声音慢慢消失了，听见，听见他的前面有一个怪声音。怪声音突然慢慢的消失了，他呀，就一直在纠结这个怪声音。他呀，他就慢慢的飘到陆地上，结果遇见一个野兽，这个野兽对他说，你去那个小镇里找那个宝藏，如果你找到那个宝藏，我就把你变得想正常的人那么高，那么大。然后呢，他就进去了，有好多野兽。他其实想了个办法，然后呢，他看到很多人，然后呢他怕人踩到他。一个地方有人说：卖水果啦！一个地方呢，又有声音：汪汪汪的叫的声音，他终于路过这了，然后呢，他找到那个公主说，然后那个公主说，你可不可以给我讲一个好消息，那些人带回来的好消

息没啥意思的，然后我一年都没有笑过了，我住在这里都一年了。然后呢，Issun Boshi，然后呢，那个公主就说，你是怎么来的呀，然后呢，他就说，我是自己来的。然后呢，她就给他说，你给我讲了这个消息的话，然后呢，然后呢我就跟你一起去那个野兽那。然后那个 Issun Boshi 说，可是我已经讲了呀，然后呢，Issun Boshi 就带她去了。 然后呢，那个野兽就说，恭喜你，找到了这个宝藏了。然后呢，那个野兽呀，就赶紧往里跑，跑的可快了，你想呀，那只有大拇指那么小的，哪追的上嘛。然后呢，他就把她关在一个笼子里，然后呢他就坐在一个板凳上打呼睡着了，就这样子：ha~hu~ha~hu~ha~hu，然后呢，那个大拇指的 Issun Boshi，他跑了好久好久，特别久特别久，然后呢，他偷偷的看见了一个，那个凳子下有一个钥匙，然后呢，他偷偷拿了这个钥匙把它打开了，然后呢，他打开了门，说： 你快跑。然后呢，怪兽就特别生气特别生气，然后呢一口就把他吞进了肚子里，吞进去了。你看这一片黑漆漆的，什么空白都没有，然后呢，他就拿着他的那个，一只戳戳戳戳戳戳戳戳，然后，那个野兽，烦的不得了，就这样子，ha~ha~tu~ha~o~，然后呢，他一下子吐出来，就吐了一个 Issun Boshi 出来，然后 Issun Boshi 就逃走了，然后呢，那个野兽疼的不得了，出来了都还疼，疼呀疼呀疼呀，然后，后面的，我记得后面就没有了，完了。 然后呢，那个 Issun Boshi 就敲一下那个鼓，就变大了，敲了一下，就变大了，又敲了一下，变大了些，他还觉得不够强壮，还想变强壮些，然后他又敲了一下，然后呢，然后就完了。

4.2.3 Example Three

Length of recording: 2'16"

A little boy was as small as a thumb. He went to animals, forest, heard, heard a monster's sound, titi,kiki, walked, walked, saw a, that was a monster's voice. He (the monster) said you go to a little house and find the treasure. Then the little boy agreed, then he, left the forest, that animal's forest. Then he saw a house, something was inside. Then, he felt it was so strange, so, he used the needle that his mother gave to him. He used a needle to stab the door. Then he came into the house. Then, the monster wanted the pearls, then he went back, went back to the old place. Then that monster, the blue monster, blue eyed monster said, said, yes, I want this, then finished.

一个小拇指那么小的小人，他还，他来到了一个动物的森林，听到，就听到有点像怪兽的声音，titi,kiki, 走呀走的，就看见了一个，原来是怪兽在叫。他就说你给我来一个小屋里的宝藏，然后那个小男孩就答应了，然后他就，就离开这一片森林了，那个像动物的森林。然后看见一个小屋子，里面有什么东西，然后他就，莫名其妙的，他就，就用妈妈给他的针就，把们戳了，然后他就进去，然后，原来怪兽想要那个珠子，然后他就回来，就走到他原来的地方，然后那个怪兽，那个蓝色的，蓝色眼睛的怪兽就说，就说，就是这个，讲完了。

Eight of the ten children told the story quite lengthily, taking more than four minutes, two of them only telling part of the story at about two minutes long. I interviewed the lead teacher, who was very impressed with this and made three main points here. Firstly, the children had never before tried to retell a story which had taken four weeks to explore. She thought the children would not remember it and was surprised that most of them could recall a range of details, including sounds, the different characters, actions and their causes and consequences. Secondly, she was very pleased that the children told different versions of the story which was exactly what she had hoped they might achieve. Normally, the teacher encourages children to retell stories using their own words, but most of them would repeat what she, the teacher, had said. They may change

some words or sentences, but whether the children could repeat the story or not would be evaluated as part of the language assessment. Finally, she agreed that drama was very helpful for those children whose language ability was not very good, but she still insisted that she could not see drama effectively helping those whose language ability was already very good.

4.2.4 Interview with the lead teacher:

M: What do you think of their recordings?

T: I'm really surprised. When I got it, it was the fifth week, it's more than one month, I thought most them might forget the story. Maybe some children whose language ability is good might be able to do this homework, but I thought most of them could not. Well, I'm very surprised most them did. They remembered, after five weeks, they remembered.

M: Did you hear the recording of XXX (focused girl A)and XXX (focused girl B)? Their storytellings were both more than five minutes and quite clear; B's ((focused girl B) story missed some parts, but was clear enough. Have they been able to tell five minute stories in this way before?

T: Maybe, I'm not sure. B (focused girl B) might be able to do that. Her language ability is better than most of the children's. But A, no, I don't think so, I have no impression she did such good work before, at least not in my classroom. She never told any story in this way, I'm very surprised. Really, you know, she has a strong accent, not very clear, but she told the story very clearly, even better than B (focused girl B).

M: So do you think the drama had effectively helped A to develop her language learning?

T: Yes, sure, I think so.

M: Then how about XXX (focused girl B)? We discussed this at the beginning of the term, as you said you cannot see very clear benefits for B's language learning when she participates in drama. What do you think now?

T: Of course you are the expert.

M: Oh, no, I'm just a researcher. You are more experienced than me and know them better.

T: Yes, I may know them better than you, because I was their teacher and have known them for three years.

M: So do you think drama benefits B's language learning?

T: Well, it, it really depends. I mean, she is a very active girl, and always shows positive attitudes when she participates in drama class. She has no problem expressing herself, telling others her opinions and describing what she knows or has experienced. Well, I saw she was very happy. Sure drama helped her in some ways, but about language learning, I may miss some moments? I may have not noticed how drama helped her to express something she hasn't been very good at? To be honest, I did not see any difference.

M: Can she tell like a five minute story before?

T: Yes, she attended a kind of storytelling competition before and I think that one she had time to prepare. But she told a story like this one. This one she may not have prepared for. It was not very logical but I think she can do it.

M: Actually, she did very well. If someone could remind her, I think she could tell a longer story.

T: Yes, I think so. And you may notice the words she used are more formal and the tone she speaks was quite clear. Her mom is a TV compere.

M: But I think A's story is more complete?

T: Well, yes, but her pronunciation is not very clear.
M: Do you think B's language ability is better than A's?

T: Yes, because it's very standard mandarin.

Here, the teacher expressed her belief that good language ability equates to clearer pronunciation, a viewpoint I do not agree with. Pronunciation should be part of language assessment, but not the main aspect; for me, logical thinking, tone, detailed description, use of imagination and ability of structuring are also important aspects of language assessment. However, I agreed with her that I had not observed an effective impact on B's (focused girl B)language learning or, more specifically, I did not see any obvious changes or developments in her language ability. Does this mean drama may be more useful for those children whose language ability is undeveloped? I will discuss this point in a later chapter.

4.3 Moral Thinking

In this story, I focused on how the children reacted to the idea of becoming independent. This is not a didactic moral issue but it chimes with the idea of how best we should live

our lives, at the heart of the Aristotelian view of the moral life that has greatly influenced my thinking. When interviewing the lead teacher, she proposed topics such as friendship, empathy, social norms, politeness, honesty and so on. Independence and growing up were not seen as areas for moral education in her eyes. However, I felt this was a very apt story for this age range and wished to see how the children and also their teacher might respond to the issues it raised.

I approached this story of Issun Boshi with the idea that in some ways he represented children, the story being about how a little child can become the person he or she wants to be once they enter the world as an autonomous person. When I was in role as Issun Boshi's mother, I told the children of my worries and insisted that Issun Boshi should stay at home, even though he was already fifteen years old. Here was how children respond to me:

M: (in role as mother) I'm so worried and hope you can help me convince Issun Boshi to stay with me. You know he is only as big as your thumb.
(they were a little confused and silent)
M: Do you think he will encounter dangers if he goes out into the world?
A: Yes! He will be eaten by animals.
B: But he is very small and can hide underground.
M: Yes, I think he can, he is very clever.
C: But the bird can find him, fast fast fast, and eat him.
D: And the wolf!
E: And dogs. Dogs' noses are very sensitive. Even if he hides under the earth, it can dig up the earth and find him.
F: Cars! Very dangerous
E: Big holes, he may fall into one.
M: Yes, lots of dangers, that's why I'm so worried. However, he told me he really wants to go out into the world, because he is fifteen years old. How old are you?
All: Six!
M: See, his age is much older than you, but he is very small. Maybe he is right, should I let him go?
Most of them: No, he is too small!
G: But he is fifteen years old, he wants to do something by himself.

B: He cannot live in a box forever (they had made his room from a shoe box in class), it's so small.

M: I can build a bigger one for him. A bigger box

G: He doesn't want a box

E: He wants to go out into the world.

H: He wants freedom.

M: What do you mean, freedom?

H: He has to do something he likes.

M: But I'm his mom and have to protect him. Would your mom let you go out like that by yourself?

C: No, there are bad people who steal children!

D: Yes! My mom told me the news, some people steal children!

M: Yes, so even if he is unhappy, I have to keep him with me.

I: Do you remember? He can fly with birds.

M: Not every bird is so friendly.

D: He is older than us, fifteen years old is not a child.

G: When we grow up, we will need to live on our own.

M: Do you think fifteen years old is old enough?

D: Of course! Fifteen minus six is nine! So old!

M: So you think he should be independent? Live by himself?

Most of the children: yes!

M: What if he encounters dangers?

E: You have to try. Without trying, how could you know?

A: You must trust him

B: Or you go with him, but following him. Don't let him know

M: Well, go with him?

B: Yes, you're worrying him. So you let him go but go after him to protect him silently.

M: But I have lots of work to do.

E: Can you buy a phone for him? If he gets in trouble, he can call you.

M: The phone is bigger than him.

The children are only six years old. Issun Boshi is much older than them, they know this, but his small size brings them closer to identifying with him and the dangers he might face alone. However, they understand the necessity to leave home at some point

and are persuading the mother that she might have to compromise in some way rather than forbid her son to leave. On reflection, I did not really inquire into their ideas of independence as much as I might have done, or even of over protective parents, of which there are quite a few in China!

At the end of the scheme, they created different endings for the story depicting what might happen in the future. Here are some of their thoughts:

- He will take the treasure of the ogre and go back to his home where his parents lived.

  他会把妖怪的宝藏都拿着，然后会他爸爸妈妈的家

- He will stay with the princess.

  他会留下来和公主在一起

- He has the magic hammer and will go for more adventures, because he wants to see all the things he missed when he was a one inch boy.

  他都有魔法锤了，肯定要去冒险撒，因为他要看一下那些他还是很小的时候看不了的东西

- Now he is very strong and wants to see the big world, the many interesting things in the world.

  现在他很厉害了，所以想去看更大的世界，有很多好玩的事情的

- He might want to be the strongest hero and fight with others to prove he is the number one.

  他可能想成为最厉害的英雄，还要找别人单挑，成为第一名

- He will stay in the town and build a big house. He will have his own children.

  他会留下来，盖一座大房子，他还会有自己的小孩的

The children enjoyed imagining a future for Issun Boshi and fantasised different possibilities which evidently chimed with their own aspirations or dreams of a happy future life. For some it was a happy domestic life that mattered, for others finding further fame and success in other parts of the big world. These are the common themes of children's

literature which I will return to in the discussion chapter, with particular attention to gender. Here it is clear that, although Issun Boshi was definitely male, girls had no difficulty identifying with him in his smallness and his dreams of independence. They were by no means uninterested in his story and could bend his tale to their own dreams and desires.

After this I interviewed ten children, asking them:

- What do you think about Issun Boshi's adventure?
- Do you think it was a good decision for him to leave home?
- If you were Issun Boshi, would you make the same decisions as him?
- What do you think about the dangers he faced on his journey?
- Do you like Issun Boshi? Why?

All of the children thought his adventure was 'cool, funny, wonderful or very great'! I could tell during the interviews that they all admired Issun Boshi's adventure and thought he had made the right decision, as he was rewarded in the end. I then asked them: what if he hadn't been rewarded in this way? Very interestingly, five of the children thought it was still worthwhile, because he had seen many interesting things and had a very happy time along the way, which was more important than any reward. What they meant was that the process, the journey, was what justified his choice of how to live, rather than seeing this as entirely dependent on the success and riches he managed to obtain. This is very much in line with the Aristotelian idea that the happy life is the one spent on a quest for the happy life. I will return to expand on this further in the discussion chapter. Two of the children thought it would be rather a shame if he did not get rewarded; it had been a very hard journey and he had conquered so many troubles on the way, surely he deserved the rewards at the end? The remaining three children thought that his real reward was becoming grown up, as this was what he had really wanted. All of these responses are thoughtful and have an evident moral centre, that the classical Greek idea of the 'Morality of Happiness' will enlighten in the next chapter. What I would like to point out here is that such quest stories as Issun Boshi, of which there are many in the world, where a hero sets out as little more than a child and ends up as an adult, strike genuine moral chords in children and that drama can help them

vocalise them.

Eight of the children said they would like to do the same as Issun Boshi, but two girls said they would not, because they were afraid of monsters. However, they still liked Issun Boshi and thought he was very brave. In terms of the dangers he had faced, boys tended to see them as a challenge and said they would definitely solve all the problems just like Issun Boshi, maybe even better than him. Girls, on the other hand, thought they would never encounter such dangers in the future, and so were not concerned about them. All of the children liked Issun Boshi.

This drama was not concerned with moral dilemmas as much as the previous drama work. Instead, it was intended to focus on the key character's choices. Despite the children's interest and engagement, I was later concerned about my inability to think on my feet and provoke deeper thinking in the children. I noted this in my personal journal:

When I saw they were thinking, I felt I should ask them something to deepen their thoughts, but I did not. I didn't know what questions I could ask to lead their thinking, especially when I was in role as the mother. When they told me I could go with Issun Boshi, I just did not know how I should I respond. I hoped to know what kind of life they might choose, but I could not think of good questions to ask to explore this.

4.3.1 The interview with the lead teacher

On the completion of this scheme I interviewed the lead teacher to discuss her opinions about the moral thinking in this drama work:

M: What do you think of the children's engagement during the process?

T: Very good. They loved Issun Boshi so much, and you can see how beautiful the houses they made for him were.

M: Do you think they identified with Issun Boshi?

T: Of course! You can see there was one box, XX stuck her photo on a little bed. To them, I can see they kind of felt they were Issun Boshi.

M: What do you think about this topic in this story?

T: What do you mean?

M: I mean initially, I chose this story because I think it is a very good story to think about moral issues in terms of what kind of person I would like to be. I hoped to discuss

this topic.

T: Well, that may not be what I thought. It's a good story. But did you decide this topic, or was it the topic of the story?

M: Well, I thought it was the theme of the story. Absolutely that is just what I thought, what do you think? You may have a different idea.

T: I never thought about this, I thought it was a good story, because the plot was very interesting and the character was very cute. Especially the boys love adventures, but it's quite good, because girls are also interested. Very balanced.

M: So do you think it is a good story for moral education?

T: I'll have to think about that. Maybe it can teach about courage. They can be like Issun Boshi, very brave and also smart. He can look after himself. It's a good model to learn something like this.

M: What normally do you think in moral education?

T: Well, we don't have specific moral education in our curriculum, but we do have this part in our society area. Normally we use stories to teach them morality such as honesty, politeness, friendship or respecting parents and so on. So I don't understand what you mean by the moral theme of this story.

M: To me, I thought this story discussed independence. So I would like to explore this with children.

T: Oh, independence. I never thought, well, is it part of moral education in the UK?

M: Well, it is not part of the curriculum, but I think this is a topic they will discuss.

T: I see, so different.

This interview casts an interesting light on the points I have already highlighted, about stories for boys and girls and the limited vision of many teachers about what moral education through stories might or should consist of. What moral concepts should we try to have children think about? Which are suitable for specific age groups? How do we decide what to teach when these are not specified in the curriculum? It is time to return to theory to inform these reflections in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion

In this section I will discuss three main problems that occurred in my research. In addition to language learning and moral thinking, there was an incident concerning the improper interpretation of a story which impacted on my drama teaching and research results. In terms of language learning, my focus here will be on the different concepts of 'language learning' held by myself and the school teacher; at the same time, I will discuss how drama benefits children's use of language. In terms of moral thinking, I attempt to discuss the different approaches to delivering moral thinking advocated by the school teacher and I, as well as analyzing what should be taught as valid moral knowledge in a drama setting. The final aspect under consideration will be the importance of deep interpretation of the story used in drama, which I will discuss next.

1. The right use of story in drama teaching

1.1 The different features of fairy tale and fable

In my field work. I chose one poem and four stories to combine with drama. *The Selfish Giant* is a famous fairy tale from Oscar Wild, *The Kind Red Ogre* and *Issun Boshi* are classical Japanese fairy tales, while *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf* is a traditional Chinese fable. As I have described in my analysis, the children demonstrated stronger emotional connections with *The Selfish Giant, Kind Red Ogre* and with *Issun Boshi*, but much less emotional engagement with *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf.*

The most problematic teaching was with *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf*, a very famous fable from the Ming Dynasty, its original title being *The Wolf of ChungShan* (Tang, 2009). Before I started my teaching, the lead teacher told me of her doubts about the suitability of this story for this particular age group of children, fearing they might be too young to understand its moral. However, rather than delivering a specific moral lesson, my intentions were to explore a perceived moral conflict, generate open debate, observe how the children reflected upon the moral issue and change their perceptions. In fact, as my analysis showed, I failed to achieve my objectives. Further reflection led me not only to theorise this failure but also to consider what makes for successful story drama work at this age.

1.2   My misunderstanding of fable

The drama of *Mr Dong Guo and the Wolf* did indeed seem to help the children under-stand certain complex moral situations in the plot and the different perspectives of each character at specific moments in the story, but did not help them to put all parts of the story together and did not provide them with any coherent understanding of the drama as a whole. Actually, I asked them very suggestive questions:

Why didn't Mr. Dong Guo feel sorry for the wolf? Do you think the wolf is always bad?

Here I was attempting to have them think that humans are sometimes more evil than wolves, if they recalled what the villagers and farmer did to the jujube tree and the old ox. What I failed to appreciate is that the genre of this story is a fable, a more complex version of the kind of story that western cultures find most famously in the stories of Aesop. Fables feature animals and other aspects of the natural world as representative of various very human behaviours (Benjamin, 2015; Ballaster, 2005; Warner, 2014). This kind of animal fable will 'mock the follies and vices of human beings and display along the way the effervescent cunning and high spirits of the fairytale genre' (Warner, 2014). The different animals in fables are not really representing animals, then, but together and in oppositional roles, the complexity of human desires, vices, and qualities that often reveal or exploit human delusions. As Warner (2014) explains, such 'person-ification of animals' normally exposes the darker side of human beings. In the words of Ballaste (2005):

Fables transport their consumers into other places, other times, other bodies, other species, in order to instruct those consumers about where they are, who they are, and what they are. (p.2)

Thus, in this story, the wolf, jujube tree, the old ox, Mr. Dong Guo, the old wise man and hunter represent different and typical kinds of Chinese social types. Mr. Dong Guo, for example, is the typical scholar of ancient China - weak, pedantic and too kind. A wolf in such a story represents a force of nature that he is foolish to tamper with. In fables, wolves are not open to conversion from the primal danger they present to human beings. My tampering with this convention of the genre of fable made the story illogical

and hence incomprehensible to the children. They could understand the specific context, perspectives and emotions i presented in certain activities, but these served to make the resultant story as a whole quite baffling to them.

If we look at the story in terms of action, then we can see it does not conform to the kind of moral principles that children are taught. They are taught not to be violent to humans or to animals, but the wise old man saves Mr. Dong Guo by killing the wolf. They are taught to be kind, but Mr. Dong Guo puts himself in danger precisely because of his kindness to the wolf. The jujube tree and the old ox suffer at the hands of humans and get no reward for their sacrifices; the savage appetite of the wolf triumphs over Mr. Dong Guo's compassion. Fables, then, are not about teaching good action but about distinguishing between wise and foolish action. My drama failed to appreciate this. I hazard to think that it might well be this lack of appreciation that caused the failure, rather than any lack of ability in children of this age to appreciate the fable's agenda of cunning and folly. But that would take further research to find out for sure.

1.3 What characterises a good story for young children

Bruner (1990) insists that a good story should subjunctivize the readers' experience, opening up their imaginations to new and indeterminate possibilities, allowing them to negotiate meaning from their own interpretations of the author's symbolisation of reality. As he puts it:

To make a story good, it would seem, you must make it somewhat uncertain, somehow open to variant readings, rather subject to the vagaries of intentional states,   undetermined. (1990, p. 54)

Apart from the story of Mr. Dong Guo, the children were much impressed by the dramas that arose from the other stories. In *The Selfish Giant*, my analysis demonstrates how the children became emotionally engaged and showed great sympathy for the Giant in the end. In *The Kind Red Ogre*, children could sympathise with both the Red Ogre and Green Ogre and could relate the story to their own understandings of friendship. As for

Issun Boshi, they liked the one-inch boy so much they were able to retell the whole story in the drama teaching, which greatly impressed the head teacher. Four months later, she told me that most of the children could still remember the Giant and Issun Boshi, but were unclear about *Mr. Dong Guo and the wolf*, even thought they had actually spent a great time with their parents acting out the story at home.

Drama has often been argued as a means to open up stories and make their agendas less certain, in the way that Bruner argues a good story ought to. Toye and Prendiville (2000) and Winston (1998) both use this argument to justify their own approach to using drama with traditional stories for the purposes of moral education. However, my research demonstrated to me that this argument is not enough on its own. Good stories for children, with a moral agenda they can engage with, are likely to deal with issues pertinent to children's psychological development. In this, of course, I am greatly influenced by the work of Bruno Bettelheim (1991) and also Joseph Campbell(1968).

On a surface level we can see that *The Selfish Giant* considers the issue of sharing and not sharing that children will have to face every day in their kindergarten; the Kind Red Ogre deals with friendship, something that children are also familiar with in their daily lives. But Bettelheim's point is that stories - particularly fairy stories - work through symbolism at a subconscious or pre-conscious level. He insists that fairy tales are timeless, as they deal with the universal human problems that children will inevitably need to grapple with as they grow but that they are not at a stage of development to rationally understand and deal with as yet. Such problems, he suggests, include narcissistic disappointment and issues to do with self-worth which can bring anxiety and pressure to their inner lives. Importantly, he suggests that children have to understand that they are not as perfect as their parents may wish and that all humans have a dark side which is not essentially evil.

Bettelheim has been criticised by critical theorists such as Zipes (1979) and Tatar (1992), who critique his idea of universalism in terms of gender and culture and also his Freudian interpretations of the tales and their therapeutic function. However, his stressing of a story's symbolic resonances and the importance of the language of its

imagery is a useful counter to simplistic, superficial readings, particularly for the early years teacher. According to Bettelheim, the moral function of a fairy tale is to help a child to accept the problematic nature of life without being defeated by it, to know themselves better and to prepare for the future. In this sense, although the Selfish Giant helps the children consider issues of sharing and not sharing, it does so within a symbolic framework that includes an abuse of power in the figure of the Giant that they, as children, are too small to challenge; and opens up a story where he actually learns to share through a journey of human rejection and eventual redemption. These symbolic features of the tale are uncertain, in Bruner's sense of the term, as their meanings are indeterminate and open to interpretation. But they are also strongly suggestive of issues beyond children's powers to resolve in their real lives; and which can be seen to be resolvable in the world of the story. In this sense, *The Selfish Giant* suggests to children that people can change, that things can get better and that children can be a force for good in the world, as it is the figure of the child that eventually melts the giant's heart.

The giant, then, goes on a moral journey in the tale - from selfishness to sharing, from a cold to a loving heart - that the drama I taught attempted to replicate. It is the appeal of the journey that holds the children's attention in such stories, not the moral issues of selfishness, ingratitude and so on. Many good stories for young children actually use the geographical form of a real journey as symbolic of growth from childhood to adulthood in a way that echoes not only Bettelheim's theories but also those of Joseph Campbell (1968).

Issun Boshi is very typical of such a story in which the protagonist leaves on an adventure to find good fortune and, in the process, reaches adulthood. It features what Campbell calls "the call for adventure" (1968), an adventure connected with the three ultimate questions: who am I, where should I go and how can I live a better life? The connection with Macintyre's theory of narrative and moral thinking is very evident. The adventure can be taken by the protagonist or 'hero' of the story, on a quest for something of great value for them. Although the existence of universals in traditional stories have been criticised, I view this calling for adventure as representative of the universal need for children to develop curiosity and a desire to live a good life in the face of the inevitable challenges life will bring to them.

Campbell's attention is on myth rather than fairy tale, identifying stories in a number of cultures that feature the same structure. Initially, the hero is threatened or unsatisfied with their current situation and then goes on an adventure from the known world to an unknown world, one that offers challenges and dangers, troubles and trials that must be overcome if the rewards are to be obtained. Although he analysed myth, such patterns or structures can also be identified in fairy stories, where the rewards usually are marriage, treasure, social status or power according to the historical period in which the tale originated. In our modern time, these desired aims may well change, but the desire for a call to adventure and the search for something meaningful in our lives is still a feature of many popular stories in all societies and cultures (Zipes, 2006, Warner, 2012; Tatar, 1999).

In my drama, when I asked the children why Issun Boshi insisted to go into the outside world, they mentioned:

a) freedom;

b) To find out at how big the world is;

c) To see what he can do by himself;

d) To find a friend;

e) To find a one-inch girl to marry;

These answers are unsurprising and demonstrate things that mattered to the children, because they are typical of what matters to most humans - freedom and independence; knowledge; and the need for love and friendship. After five weeks, the children all made up their own stories of Issun Boshi and told them to their parents. This was seen by the lead teacher as the most successful aspect of all my teaching because she could not believe that from within the one story structure, children could make up so many versions, all containing their own ideas. On the one hand, the drama demonstrably gave the space for children to experience imaginatively and act out their own ideas, sharing and developing these with others; on the other hand, the story provided a stable, logical and appealing structure which framed and gave form to these ideas. The village market, the forest and the Ogre were all part of this appealing, challenging 'unknown world' that offered various predicaments that Issun Boshi had to confront and deal with. In their different versions, some of the children had him challenge the ogre, or provoke him, or make a bet with him, while others had him react with fear and initial submission.

In the market, some children played with danger, others had him try to avoid danger. These responses connected with the children's own attitudes and feelings and were, I would argue, shaped by their gender and their individual experiences as well as by their experience of the drama.

The drama offered the children uncertainty and imaginative space, but the story offered them the necessary security of structure. The power of fairy tale, then, is not just as a vehicle for escapist fantasy; the word 'adventure' is rather like the words 'once upon a time', an appeal to free our imaginations and get ready to go on a symbolic journey. In their adventures in my drama sessions, when they worked well, the children were invited to bring their own interests, concerns and curiosity into play, rather than be told what they should know and experience. At its best, the children were enabled to become active meaning makers, to make sense of the story for their own purposes (Haase, 1999).

1.4 Combining traditional stories with drama

As explained above, Bettelheim's point of view has been challenged by many scholars. Darnton (1999) argues that Bettelheim's interpretations are based on specific versions of the fairy tale, that the so-called deep meanings he perceives are not convincing when we turn to other, different versions. This means that the universal human problems or general inner problems he argues for are mainly formed and interpreted by a single author, in a single version of the story and by Bettelheim himself. Indeed, Zipes (2006) insists that these fairy tales were shaped in specific times and societies, by the authors' tastes, status and attitudes towards children. The meanings are neither universal nor timeless, as these are historically and morally prescriptive which contemporary readers need to be aware of and able to revise. For example, the female virtues that Perrault and the Brothers Grimm admired in their own eras have been politically challenged and socially changed in modern times.

Zipes's theories have been highly influential among drama teachers. Toye and Prendiville's book (2000) is a prime example of this tendency to wish to revise the tales to suit contemporary values. So, for example, they offer five different versions of a drama

for kindergarten teachers based upon Red Riding Hood, all of which are set on problematising the tale's portrayal of the girl as victim and the wolf as demonic. In one drama, they suggest that the teacher be in role as the wolf, frightened, telling the children that a girl in a red hood is bullying him to play tricks on her grandmother. Wolves, in particular, and trolls, are seen as standing for the 'other' by many drama educators; the one who is accused and punished but is never given a voice to provide their own perspective. Both Philip Taylor (2000) and Brian Edmiston (2002) use a drama based on the story of '*Alexander T Wolf*'. This is taken from an amusing tale by Jon Scieszka (1989), *The True Story of the three Little Pigs*, in which the Wolf proclaims his innocence in his different (and highly suspicious) retelling of the tale. In both these versions the drama is, however, very serious, focusing on prejudice and the human desire to find scapegoats. Similarly, Toye's and Prendiville's (2007) reworking of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* sets out to rehabilitate the troll as victim rather than demon, whereas Peter O'Connor uses the story as an allegory for colonial dispossession, with the troll eventually becoming a terrorist. (2013)

The problem for me with these blatant revisions is that they are essentially didactic, bringing along new moral perspectives which are intended to shape the children's responses in a particular and narrow direction. If I were to adopt this approach - as I attempted with *Mr Dong Guo and the Wolf* - I would be forcing the children to think as I do rather than opening them up to think critically for themselves, which has always been a stated intention of this research. The data shows that the children actually enjoyed the stories as they were, and only became puzzled and confused when i adopted this revisionist tendency with the drama of Mr Dong Guo. In this sense, I do not reject the implications of Bettelheim's theories out of hand. I do not prescribe to his specific Freudian readings or to his therapeutic agenda but I do find helpful his ideas that there are very general, if not universal, meanings that children pick up from the characters and symbols of stories. The children viewed the giant as an authoritarian and unfriendly adult who eventually became a kind and warm hearted old man; they identified with Issun Boshi as small, like themselves, ready to explore the big strange world, which contains dangers but also the possibility of fortune and fulfillment; they identified too with the red ogre, understanding what it is like to encounter unfair judgements, misunderstandings and unfriendly responses. Warner (2014) states that the storyteller and the

listener are both possible meaning makers, every listener potentially becoming a new storyteller (p.50). The text or written form is brought alive by the act of storytelling. Drama, an oral art form, does precisely this - it brings the story to life and the children can revise or play with how they understand the moral meanings without having to be forced in a particular direction by the teacher.

Reader response theory helps us understand how this works. In modern literary theory, the focus has been shifted from researching the author's intentions to exploring how the reader can reconstruct her own meanings in dialogue with these intentions as they are expressed in the actual text. This focuses more on the process of reading rather than on what a correct reading ought to be. However, there is a limit to what constitutes a reasonable, as opposed to an unreasonable, understanding of the text. Hans Robert Jauss (1982) introduced the notion of 'horizon of expectation' to explain this. In Jauss's view, the reader 'brings to bear the subjective, models, paradigms, beliefs, and values of their necessarily limited background' (Jauss, 2001, p.2) when interpreting a text. But as it is a negotiation between the reader's subjectivity and the text itself, there is a necessary boundary between what is a sensible and a non-sensible understanding of it. There is a limit to what words can mean, but to interpret these meanings is more like engaging in a dialogue between reader and author rather than listening to a monologue. Any flexibility of interpretation is boundaried by this horizon. The reader is essentially searching for deeper understanding rather than an answer to a problem. In this process, the horizon of expectation is flexible, but also developing, strengthening and enriching for the reader through engagement with the text. Iser (1980) also emphasised the active reading process, viewing the meaning of a text not as an object to be found, but as a process of construction between it and the reader. Importantly, how the reader connects their own experience and the reading act with the structure of the text will impact on their understanding of it. As Stanly Fish (1980) argued, literature is not an object but an experience, and sense is made in the reader's mind rather than in the author's words.

By taking into account these theories, I think the function of drama is to actively and positively help children make their own sense of a story and explore its possible meanings under the sensitive guidance of the teacher. I agree with Bolton (1979) that drama

is for understanding, and that this understanding includes the external world and also the internal world of the children. Stories act as a pre-text (O'Nell, 1982) to drama and offer a puzzlement (Booth, 1994) for us to start our journey; but, in my successful dramas, it was a journey that was also guided by the story as it unfolded. The challenge for me was to find space for the children to bring their own experiences and understandings into the drama context and to express them in dialogue with the story, without forcing them to passively accept single meanings imposed by me, the teacher. So in *The Selfish Giant*, one drama activity offered the children the freedom to imagine for themselves how the giant reacted when forbidding the children to enter the garden. For some he was angry and grumpy, for others happy, arrogant, lonely or coolly detached. In *The Kind Red Ogre*, the children made different endings for this story, containing their own expectations for the future; in *Issun Boshi*, they created new adventures for the tiny boy, derived from how they imagined this appealing, unknown world. Thus, drama should not follow the plot of a given story in a simplistic way. An important principle is to encourage children to play within what Jackson (1963) has called the 'creative gaps' it leaves, spaces to fill out with their own imaginations (cited in Winston, 2005). The educational agenda here may be to subvert the text, as Zipes (2006) suggests, or it may be to explore sub-textual meanings, making the story visual in order to examine its underlying moral values.

In *The Selfish Giant*, the lead teacher mentioned that she thought death was too strong a topic, not suitable for kindergarten children. However, when I staged the death of the giant through symbol in the drama class, the children did not express fear but love and forgiveness. This is an example of how we as teachers sometimes underestimate what children are capable of feeling. It also reflects the very different agendas of myself and this teacher, who believed drama should concentrate on vocabulary, sentences and motifs to help children understand a fixed meaning of the story. In the drama of *Mr Dong Guo and the Wolf,* I knew she believed I should be using the story to teach children about ingratitude, whereas I thought I was doing something more complex and subversive in trying to persuade the children to envisage the Wolf differently, to work against a closed point of view. In the event, as described in the analysis and further examined above, I failed to subvert anything. Subversion in itself is not necessarily a virtue in drama and I learned that the teacher ought to approach a classic text with some humility.

She should read it closely and learn to understand it first. This, however, implies that teachers need not only to be educated in the ways of using drama but also in the close reading of stories and a knowledge of the logics of genre. Otherwise her educational agenda may well be confused and confusing for children and lose its essential appeal.

2. Drama and Language Learning

My data leads me to discuss two main aspects of language learning through drama. First I will examine the different understandings of language learning between myself and the lead teacher and how these influenced our evaluations of the drama teaching. This will lead me to discuss how the drama lessons can be seen to have benefited children's learning in terms of vocabulary increase, communication, storytelling, understanding abstract concepts and making sense of their existing experience - all of which involved a rich use of language.

2.1 What do we mean by language learning?

Throughout our interview, the lead teacher made it clear that she thought drama was helpful for children's language learning, because it had increased their vocabulary. She did not appear to consider language learning as a complex process, manifested through spoken interactions between myself and the children. Nor did she ever refer to the children's responses to my questions or their communication in groups as evidence of language learning. Although learning vocabulary is important for children, it is surely a very reductive view of language learning to consider it as the sole or principle objective for teachers of this age group. For 5-6 year old children, the theorists I have read write of language learning in terms of meaning making and its usage in different contexts, rather than concentrating on the simple issue of learning vocabulary (Wells,1987; Bruner and Haste, 1990; Rosen, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). Moreover, in my drama lessons - for example *The Selfish Giant* - I did not teach the children any new vocabulary to describe the giant; all the vocabulary I wrote down, as the teacher said, was contributed by the children themselves. They were able to find it within themselves as the drama had created a strong enough context for them to search for suitable words to express their thinking. In this sense, language learning is clearly a complex behaviour rather than a straightforwardly cumulative process of word increase. Below I include a long quotation from Brooks and Kempe (2012) as it makes this point very clearly:

Even though normally developing children attain a basic grasp of their language during the preschool years, it would be wrong to suggest that language development is completed when children have acquired a vocabulary of about 5000 words and produce well-formed sentences. To view language as a system for transmitting information, using one's knowledge of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary, does not do justice to the purpose and richness of human communication skill...Children need to learn to do things with language, such as persuading, requesting, sharing, teasing, and concealing information. They need to learn how to initiate and sustain conversations, to produce coherent narratives, to be polite, to use humour, sarcasm, irony, and other non-literal forms of language. Children need to learn how to use language appropriately in different social situations and with different addressees; this aspect of language development is called pragmatics. (p.142)

Thus, language learning can be seen as a life-long process for everyone, adults and children alike. For this reason, language teaching in early years education should have a broad horizon, teaching vocabulary but, more importantly, guiding children to play with language in a structured way to enable them to learn through a wide range of linguistic processes. These will include: bridging their existing experience with imaginary experience in order to extend their linguistic horizons; working in the zone of proximal development (ZPD) so as to challenge their thinking and hence stretch and develop their language resources (Vygotsky, 1934); decoding information in specific social contexts (Bernstein, 1990); learning how to reference and make meaning (Bruner, 1996) and to become an effective communicator, expressing themselves and understanding others' intentions (Keenan, Evans & Crowley, 2016; Wilson & Sperber, 2014). Vocabulary, then, should be seen as a resource for children to communicate effectively rather than the ultimate aim of language learning for pre-school children.

That said, I do not wish to exclude extending vocabulary as unimportant for early years children. In fact, when I reflected on my teaching, I realized that one of its shortcomings was my failure to use drama to stretch and increase their vocabulary effectively. As I mentioned before, I drew vocabulary from them but failed to introduce new and relevant words to describe the giant when they were struggling to find suitable words to describe what they meant. As a drama practitioner, I thought 'teaching new knowledge' was not the province of a drama teacher's work; that drama should be used to create the

context or condition for language use, to actively and effectively bridge the gap between school education and their real life, and provide a space for children to demonstrate what they already knew. This concept of a drama teacher avoiding the teaching of formal knowledge - not only vocabulary, but also moral knowledge and performing skills - I now believe to be unhelpfully limiting. The lead teacher also pointed out my reluctance to teach children directly and, on reflection, I believe she has a valid point. Actually, the boundary between coaching, directing and guiding is a new problem for me - one that has emerged during my research - as I can see that, as early years children have limited experience, coaching and directing can be effective at times, perhaps even necessary for them to be challenged and make progress. The balance between directing and enabling, between learning through instruction and learning through experience, is an issue that I would like to explore further in a future study.

2.2　The gap between the school's Guidelines and the daily teaching.

The head teacher, then, was appreciative of the methods that I used to help the children list vocabulary and of the amount of words I was able to draw from them. As a reflective practitioner, I am more concerned about the questions that I asked to help children think; and their responses through formal or informal language. As the quotations used previously demonstrate, oral language development is broad and complex and I would like to focus on just two points here: the first is the gap between the aims of language development in the national curriculum of Chinese early years education and the daily teaching I witnessed. The second, related point is how language use was different for children between their usual lessons and drama class.

From my observations and interview with the headteacher, I found there was a gap between the aims of the guidelines and daily teaching. I will illustrate the teaching aims of the Guidelines of Learning and Development for 3-6 Year-old Children in terms of language development with reference to one scheme of work in order to examine this problematic aspect in the kindergarten. As I have stated the main objectives of language learning in my literature review, here I will explain the detailed aims of language learning for my research age group. There are three key objectives for language development outlined for 5-6 year old children, the age of my research group. Children should learn to:

1) Like storytelling and reading by:

a) Concentrating when reading picture books.

b) Sharing stories and talking about them.

c) Showing interest in words and knowing that words have specific meanings.

2) Attain a junior level of competence in reading comprehension by:

a) Being able to recognise the main content of a story.

b) Predict what happens next and make up their own story based upon the story's plot.

c) Having their own opinions about a story.

d) Becoming able to feel and recognise the aesthetics of literary language.

3) Be willing to write and learn basic writing skills by:

a) Showing willingness to tell a story through drawing or symbols.

b) Being able to write their name.

c) Being able to position their writing correctly.

Through these guidelines, we can see there is a stress on oral language, specifically on storytelling and communication skills. Thus, the lead teacher told me that storytelling was a principle teaching approach in daily lessons. Here is one example of a scheme of work for language learning around the story of *The Giving Tree,* which is written by Shel Silverstein, telling the very thoughtful story of a tree that sacrifices itself so a little boy may fulfil his wishes. When the boy was little, he had a very happy time playing with the tree. However, when the boy grown up, he wanted more and more: a big house, money, marriage, a good career and so on. Every time he wanted something, the tree cut itself to help the boy make money, until all it had left was its trunk. At the end of the tale the boy returned to the tree, too old to want anything more, but the tree had died. What is interesting is that I can clearly see the negative point of the story - that the boy's desire ruined their relationship - but the teacher I interviewed saw only the positive point: that the tree sacrificed itself without any complaints. This is a reading of the tale that has clearly been shaped by our culture and society. I translate it into English here and have also attached it in the appendix. Also, the lead teacher has permitted me to publish their scheme work.

2.3 Example of their language teaching:

Learning objectives:

- Understand the content of the story and share opinions confidently.
- Feel the sacrifice of the giving tree and understand that giving is a from of happiness.
- Feel the cares of families and friends.

Teaching resources:

- Media
- Pictures, white board.

Activities:

1) Preparation

Show children the pictures of a tree

Ask: What kind of tree do you think it is?

Show them the picture of the boy.

Ask: who is he? What has happened between the luscious tree and the boy? Say: Let's read the story!

2) Understanding the story

a. Read the part when the boy was little.

Ask: what do you think of their relationship? Why?

Conclude: Yes, the tree and the boy loved each other! They played with each other, how happy they were!

b. Read the part when the boy was older.

Look at the picture and tell the story.

Ask: why did the tree feel lonely?

Say: The boy took all the apples from the tree, why did the tree still feel happy?

Conclude: Because the tree helped the little boy fulfil his wishes, it was happy.

c. Have the children put the pictures in right order and tell the story from when the boy was young to when he became middle aged and old.

Have them share the story in groups and retell it.

d. Enjoy the whole story, feeling the giving of the tree.

The teacher tells the whole story.

Ask: what kind of tree do you think it is?

Conclude: It is a giving tree: when the little boy took all its apples, it felt happy; when the boy chopped off its branch, it felt happy; when the boy chopped up its trunk, it felt happy; So giving is a kind of happiness.

3) Identify the emotions, experience the cares of their families and friends.

Ask: In our lives, we have lots of giving trees. Who do you think is a giving tree in your life? Why?

Conclude: Grandpa, grandma, dad, mom and teachers are all giving trees. Will you want to be a giving tree? What will you do to be one?

4) Finish activity

We can, I think, point to two significant gaps between policy and practice here. The first consists of a misunderstanding of what oral language learning is, a disjuncture between the policy guidelines and the school's way of teaching. The second is the distinction between traditional classroom teacher-pupil talk and effective dialogic teaching. The example of language learning provided in this scheme of work is neither conversation nor dialogue, but a closed system of questioning and answering; however, the lead teacher considered this as child-centerd learning, as giving freedom to the children to express themselves through structured questioning and response. Alexander (2002) argues that this kind of activity will not help children's language development because the teacher is taking control and the pupils will likely be inhibited from suggesting an answer, as there is evidently only one right answer they are supposed to provide. Nor does it help children initiate dialogue or maintain communication. When it comes to using language to make meaning, this kind of learning is very limited (Kempe, A. & Holroyd. Jan. 2004). The lead teacher spoke of speaking and listening only in terms of questioning and answering. This is limiting to children's listening engagement as well as ignoring children's talk with others, rather than solely with the teacher. She paid no account to the pupils having opportunities to initiate talk and ask their own questions

(Prendiville and Toye, 2007. P. 42).

This scheme, typical of the school's approach to language learning, specifically oral language learning, lacks forms of more open enquiry, proper discussion and also proper risk (Prendiville and Toye, 2007; Alexander, 2005). The lead teacher evidently valued security, clarity and measurability rather than ambiguity and risk. She appeared to judge successful oral language learning in terms of the children's ability to learn vocabulary from a story and to answer the teacher's questions correctly and in a polite manner. That was why she appreciated the learning outcomes of the Giant's profile, because the children provided a list of formal words to 'answer' my question. However, if we only evaluate whether the children can give proper answers through a formal use of oral language that the teacher expects from them, we are ignoring a range of other factors that influence language competence and language development. Researchers such as Gordon Wells (1982) have indicated that there are marked differences in children's language use in different social contexts. There is a clear distinction for children between home language and school language and children may be highly competent users of language at home, with family and peers, yet far less competent when it comes to the limited forms of discourse they experience in the traditional classroom (Wells, 1982; Tizard and Hughes 1984; Wood 1980). School discourse is more likely to be teacher-initiated rather than child-initiated and narrowly transactional, less like the kind of experiences of real-life communication that children are used to (Robinson and Robinson, 1982, 1983). As Neelands points out (1984,1991), drama is ideally suited to bridge the gap between language use inside and outside the classroom by involving children in imagined experiences that reflect real life communication yet, nonetheless, have learning agendas built into them to stretch children's thinking and hence their language competence.

2.4 How drama can be seen to have benefited the children's oral language learning in order to meet the aims of the Guidelines

2.4.1 Willingness to express

The guidelines require the school to establish a secure and relaxing environment for the children to express themselves and be willing to communicate and share their ideas. However, I hardly saw the school language teacher achieving these goals because of their severe and narrowing control. In my drama teaching, however, the children were

all willing to express themselves. In *The Selfish Giant*, they were very eager to blame the giant for his selfishness and were very keen to convince him to let the children play in his garden. In *The Kind Red Ogre*, the children were very engaged in the discussion about how to ask for help from his friend, the Green Ogre, and in trying to convince the villagers to believe that the red ogre was actually very kind. In *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf*, they very much enjoyed acting out the wolf and the hunter and creating the dialogue between them by themselves. In *Issun Boshi*, most of the children retold the story and actively added, through spoken language, many details relating to the different senses. Therefore, I would strongly argue that drama increased the children's willingness to express themselves and to share. This was not just them 'having fun', as the teacher pejoratively called it. The main reason for their active, oral involvement was that drama offered them a strongly defined, motivating context with a very clear purpose to the language work, a purpose that always made human sense to the children. They had to use language to convince, to show their anger, to persuade, to make a deal, to solve a problem, to make others believe them, to be humorous and so on. Thus, I feel confident to argue that drama can focus on the *pragmatic* level of language learning, which refers to the use of language to achieve communicative goals rather than concentrating on the formal level of semantics and grammar, which focus more on developing knowledge of word meanings and combining these words into meaningful sentences (Keenan, Evans & Crowley, 2016, p.214). The children were also more willing to talk because in our drama work we dealt with people's troubles rather than abstract concepts, matters which held an emotional charge that children could appreciate and feel instinctively, such as friendship, independence, selfishness and so on. As Wagner (1998) insists:

during drama, children's language about human concerns predominated. It was more abstract and generalized than language at other times. The children's learning was enhanced by the opportunities they had to reflect on their actions. (p. 36)

2.4.2 Communicative competence

To become an effective communicator is an ultimate goal for both children and adults, because this competence takes a long time to develop. It requires children:

"*to have to follow the conventions of turn taking, to provide appropriate amounts of*

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relevant information, to adjust the content of their utterances to the state of knowledge of their conversational partner, to repair the dialogue when a break down occurs, and to provide a coherent narrative." (Ninio & Snow, 1996)

Thus, maintaining conversation with other people should be seen as a crucial skill that children need to acquire (Keenan, Evans & Crowley, 2016; Kempe, A. & Holroyd, 2004). However, according to Sehley & Snow's (1992) research findings, even 7-12 year old children found it difficult to maintain a conversation for longer than four minutes, with most of them finding it hard to supply a suitable topic of mutual interest and to sustain the flow during the conversation. Keenan, Evans and Crowley (2016) suggest two requirements to maintain effective conversation. The first is to engage a listener's attention and the second is to respond appropriately to feedback provided by a listener (p. 232).

Drama actually benefits children's communicative competence beyond encouraging this kind of conversational dialogue, through how the activities are dramatically framed and also how they are structured. I found how I framed the drama very important for engaging in active communication with the children, enabling them to pick up on my clues and cues rather than following my instructions. For example, when I told them that Issun Boshi decided to have his own adventure and float down the river, crossing through the forest, I asked them what kind of sounds he might hear and how he might respond to these sounds. Later, I went into role as Issun Boshi through the use of a finger puppet, after placing the symbol of a river across the classroom floor. I observed as the children sat around the river spontaneously and made lots of sounds of the animals who lived in the forest. I naturally responded to these sounds when I heard them, sometimes pretending to be afraid, sometimes relaxed, sometimes curious. The children were very interested in my responses, so everyone tried to make different sounds to test my / Issun Boshi's reactions. Within such a clear frame, the children knew how to take turns, select different sounds to maintain the make-believe context and make positive exchanges to keep up the spontaneous play. The frame established the rules to help all of us cooperate together. Wagner (1998) calls this 'metacommunication' and she says:

"even young children are able to negotiate meanings during dramatic play in a highly sophisticated way, using metacommunication strategies to maintain the psychological

"frame"of the play. This frame is a set of shared organisational principles that builds a context for the interaction of the children. They signal to one another in a wide variety of ways." (p.38)

The structure of drama is also very important to help children maintain effective conversation. Neelands (1984) concludes that there are three stages in structuring drama. The first stage is matching the group to the material - in my case, knowing the average ability of my group of children and introducing a suitably appealing story context to them. The second stage is establishing the dramatic context. For me, this involved being clear about the theme and focus of the drama lessons. The third stage is framing the dramatic context, so we explore the problems, conflicts or deeper meanings of the story through drama. But I would like to add one more stage, which is reflection. By taking a reflective and reflexive stance after each session, including the children's reflections on the story and the activities, this helped me adjust my teaching and improve my schemes of work.

This structure, across the whole of my fieldwork and applied to each session, enabled the children and me to engage in conversation. Importantly, this structure also followed the emotional structure of the drama schemes, for example, getting to know the principal character in the story step by step, from different perspectives and in the context of different relationships. This structure also coincides with Bruner's (1983) concept of scaffolding. With my questioning and focusing of the conversation, the children could generate deeper understandings, generated through oral language. As Halliday (2007) suggests, language is the essential condition of knowing, the process by which experience becomes knowledge (p. 328). Therefore, even though we spent four or five weeks exploring one story and each session was between forty-five minutes to one hour in length - much longer then their usual lessons - the children were still very engaged and had no difficulty remembering the details when we reflected upon the work. The lead teacher saw this as one of the key proofs that my drama work was successful. I believe the frame and structure of the drama work were key in helping the children to maintain the children's attention.

Another key factor was that drama supplied more opportunities for the children to engage in child-initiated speech through group work. At the beginning, they found it very

difficult to work in groups independently, one reason being their lack of this kind of learning experience. As we can see from the example I provided earlier, their normal classes were highly controlled and dialogue was initiated by teachers, the children being expected to work out (or often guess) what the teacher wanted them to understand.

There was one particular piece of group work that I observed that I shall discuss here. In this class, one boy was confirmed as being on the autistic spectrum. He could not communicate as the other children, or do any drama activity, but he was very happy to participate and listen to the others and observe them. When I first came to this class, no children wanted to work with him in a group, because he found it so difficult to cooperate with others. In fact, other children treated this special needs child very kindly but always felt frustrated when working with him. Although he was not one of the key children I chose to focus on in my research, I could see plainly by the end of my time teaching the class that he had shown great improvements in group work. Here is an example taken from when another four children were working with him, creating a still image of Issun Boshi running in the market. He is child C in the exchange below:

A: I want to be Issun Boshi.

B: I don't want to be the dog.

A: I'm Issun Boshi.

C (silent, looked on and smiling, listening very carefully)

D: I don't want to be the dog either.

A: C, let's ask C. Who do you want to be? The Dog? Issun Boshi?

B: He cannot understand.

D: C, do this, this, me, look at me. This. (C did not do what he was asked, just looked at D)

A: C, can you try? (moves his body) Hands up, ok, good, hold, good good good, very good, smile? Like me, zi zi zi zi zi (sound of smile) yes! Good good good.

B: So C is the dog, I want to be Issun Boshi.

A: Ok then, you are Issun Boshi, I stand by C. C, follow me.

C: Follow them

D: I'm the biggest dog! I will catch you!

A: Great, let's try again. B, you can be the dog here. D, you are Issun Boshi, stand here. I will work with C. C, you, me, this, follow me.

Here we can see the children actively modifying their speech to communicate with the autistic boy, very intent on getting him to understand what they wanted so he could join in with them. They communicated not just through oral language, but also using gesture, sound and tone of voice. Here we can see a clear relationship change as boy A temporarily assumed a leadership role in this group to help complete the task successfully, adapting his language to make boy C understand his intention. Kempe and Holroyd (2004) define this as modality, which 'plays an enormous part in successful communication because it is an essential means of negotiating relationship and positioning one's audience' (p.43). Actually, at the beginning of my fieldwork, boy A had been in a group with boy C, but he never tried to communicate with him. As the term progressed, however, I noted that he adapted himself to find ways to do so whenever working with boy C. I would argue, then, that drama offers children opportunities to practise their communication skills rather than being taught them as a form of instruction. The guidelines stress that teachers need to 'create the suitable context for children', but such contexts can be difficult to create in the traditional classroom. The drama activity gave the children a very clear task to achieve, a sense of purpose, while the story provided them with interest and motivation.

2.4.3 Perspective taking

Playing in role is one of the main strategies used in drama class and has been related to perspective taking in children's language learning (Toye and Prendiville, 2000). There is no doubt that perspective taking demands a high linguistic level and is a crucial development for children (Piaget, 1926; Bruner, 1983; Vygotsky, 1986; Halliday, 2007). I would argue that simply acting out a story or imitating the teacher does not help children take on different perspectives and gain deeper moral or human understandings. *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf* was an example of a failure to achieve this through a faulty teaching design.

Drama benefits perspective taking through complex processes that I observed happening that cannot be simply reduced to one activity, such as 'performing' or 'playing in role'. Children constantly used their bodies actively in physical representation, through improvisation, still image making and storytelling, in preparation for more focused work. For example, in *The Kind Red Ogre*, they were only asked to help me write a billboard and letter in the voice of the red ogre after this kind of drama work had helped

them understand his perspective and intentions. This is also a process for the children of making sense of their learning experiences. As Booth (1998) suggests:

when students are "being" as well as "doing," the potential for the exchange of thought and language grows, and they can negotiate between their own knowledge and the "as if-what if" world. In drama, language controls and influences both the real and the imaginary situations and relationships. (p.71)

At the same time, when playing in role, the children were beginning to use specific types of language to play their roles successfully. In the process, they argued, explained, described, persuaded and assisted, all of which can be seen as helping them to become aware of the different social functions of language, as well as giving them experience of different perspectives on various situations, whether in role as, or talking to, an ogre, a giant, a one-inch boy, a prince or other characters that featured throughout our drama lessons.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, reflection out of role on character, situation and possible ways forward in the story were integral to the children gaining knowledge through language. Without proper reflection, the children might not have had time to process what they were experiencing.

2.4.4 Storytelling skills

In Issun Boshi, more than half the children recorded their storytelling based on what they had experienced in the drama. The lead teacher thought this was one of the most successful results of my drama teaching and is also a specific requirement in the guidelines. Storytelling skills differ from communication skills, as they require 'maintaining a coherent plot line up to a climax, tracking sub-themes, and providing evaluations of the narrated content' (Brooks & Kempe, 2012. P.153). Drama helped the children tell the story as it enabled them to integrate their imaginary experience into the content of the story, a meaning-making process through dramatic activities that they themselves had been engaged in building (Booth, 1994). Meanwhile, narration required the children be aware of different times and space within the context of a developing plot and to distinguish through language here from there, before from after, cause from effect (Tomasello, 2008). And as we saw previously with reference to the moral theories of

MacIntyre (2011), storytelling of this kind is a principal means through which human beings develop their moral understandings by considering how moral processes work out through particular events as they happen in particular social contexts.

3.   Drama and Moral Thinking

In my research I focused on how drama can benefit children's moral thinking within the context of Chinese early years education. I hoped to explore the way that drama could differ from our traditional practice of moral education, which mainly concentrates on the transmission of moral rules rather than children's actual moral development. In addition, I wanted to see how children would respond to exploring various moral issues through drama in an attempt to see how drama might be positioned in relation to moral education in Chinese early years education. The four stories I selected were intended to help children explore selfishness, ingratitude, independence and friendship. I will now reflect on issues relating to this focus of my inquiry as stimulated by my data analysis.

3.1 What do we mean by moral education?

I shall begin by looking again at the failure of the drama lessons on *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf*. Even though my misunderstanding of the genre of fable confused the children, my data still showed that they understood the moral rules in the story to do with ingratitude. Although I was disappointed with my failure to engage the children in a moral debate, the lead teacher was very happy, as I appeared to have delivered what she thought was the appropriate moral lesson. In other words, despite watching me teach, she still saw moral education through drama in conventional terms. There are two theoretical reasons why I disagree with her.

Firstly, I believe that moral education should focus on the process of children's moral development rather than on simply reinforcing a set of moral rules. Keenan, Evans and Crowley (2016) suggest that knowing right from wrong is a process of internalization, and that moral understanding also reflects and relates to cognitive, emotional and behavioural components. They propose that moral understanding is a process of learning through the categories of: operant conditioning; reinforcement and punishment; observation; modelling and imitation (p.311). In the processes of operant conditioning, reinforcement and punishment, children's moral behaviour is taught externally through parents, teachers or other significant adults in their lives and can be increased through

rewards and decreased through punishment (Skinner, 1953). Most of the time, an inductive discipline strategy is seen as a very effective way to help reinforce moral behaviour in children, as Hoffman (1975) suggests, which aims to combine disciplinary action with a proper explanation of why some behaviours are not acceptable. Keenan, Evans and Crowley (2016) explain that this is very helpful for young children to gain control of their behaviour, and 'see the effects of their behaviour from another child's perspective, thus increasing their empathy for other children who may have been the victims of their poor behaviour' (p. 312).

However, according to my interview data, I found that kindergarten teachers normally explain why children should behave morally, drawing from their own perspectives rather than from the children's, and used the language of universal moral rules rather than explanations of others' feelings. Although according to Keenan et al these processes are at the very beginning of moral learning, they seemed to be viewed by the lead teacher as the whole process of moral education. In fact, the more effective means of moral learning actually happen *within* the processes of observation, modelling and imitation. Imitation is seen as a crucial process in the socialization of moral behaviour and standards (Bandura, 1986). Many researches have shown that children are more likely to copy models of behaviour if such behaviour is warm and responsive (Yarrow, Scott, & Waxler, 1973), and, if the children are encouraged to try out such caring behaviour, moral behaviour is more positively developed (Eisenberg, Fabes, &Spinrad, 2006). Once this has been learned through modelling, positive reinforcement will be increased when it occurs, and many moral acts will become internalized, which means that children will start to behave morally without the presence of teachers and parents (Mussen and Eisenberg-Berg, 1977).

The point here is that moral understanding and development is complex and processual, rather than the result of a simple transmission of moral rules. According to Bandura's research (1986), 'moral rules or standards of behaviour are fashioned from information from a variety of sources such as intuition, others' evaluative social reactions, and models' (cited in Eisenberg, N.,Fabes, R.A.,& Spinrad, T., 2006). Thus, a school teacher's behaviour and caring attitudes are important resources for moral education, as are, crucially, parents' actions and behaviours and children's interplay with their peers. As Ban-

dura (2002) insists, morals are governed by self-reactive responses and other self-regulatory processes, rather than by dispassionate abstract reasoning. Piaget (1965) and Kohlberg (1969) also propose a stage-like moral development which corresponds to cognitive development, the active construction of moral behaviour enabling moral development to occur, rather than being forced to obey rules. According to their theorising, simply obeying the rules that the teacher enforces keeps children on the first level of moral development, defined as preconventional morality by Kohlberg. The head teacher, then, had only very limited objectives in moral education for this age group of children. To her point of view, moral rules needed to be taught efficiently, and she saw the value of drama in this field solely in these narrow terms.

The second argument I want to repeat here is that, from the outset, this research has not seen moral education as only related to teaching right and wrong. However, in my interview questions, I failed to question the class teacher's understanding of the purpose of moral education for young children. Did she have a simple, straightforward view, like the head teacher? Probably, as Chinese schools are very authoritarian in their management structures. In any case, internalised moral action is likely to be extremely difficult for many six year-old children. Thus, my reflections left me still pondering about what the key aims of moral education for kindergarten children ought to be and what justifications there might be for placing drama as part of moral education. I shall discuss three findings here and provide further reflection.

3.2 The moral conventions of culture

In the scheme *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf*, I attempted to use drama to stimulate an open debate about ingratitude. More specifically, I attempted to discuss with the children an incident that appeared to suggest that ungrateful behaviour is perhaps not always wrong, depending upon the particular context. After my teaching I saw the failure of the lesson in terms of my weak design of the scheme of work. Later, I began to think that the children and the teacher were right to emphasise that ingratitude is wrong, a particularly apt rule for young children to absorb. My problem lay in setting an inappropriate moral dilemma in terms of the children's age, as well as misunderstanding the genre of fable, as explained earlier. The lead teacher may well have had a narrow perspective on moral education, but she is surely right to want children to internalise certain moral codes, necessary for society to function, before seeing them as sometimes

problematic. This returns us to MacIntyre (1981) and his re-emphasis on the language of the virtues, one of which gratitude surely is. He pointed out that the ethical language of contemporary society is in some disorder, that we 'possess indeed simulacra of morality and continue to use many of the key expression, but we have largely or entirely lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality' (p. 2). We inherit particular social and moral traditions and that is our moral starting point. Before I started my teaching of Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf, I thought I would critique traditional understandings of both ingratitude and moral education; however, when I reflect now, I think I did not challenge any traditions, but that the story itself did.

If we look back to ancient China, since the appearance of Confucianism, this social ideology has impacted on our society for thousands of years (Zhang, 2010; Li, 2018; Shen, 2011; Fung, 1948). The core morality or virtue of Confucianism is human-heartedness, which means loving others, and has been taught as the most fundamental of all virtues - indeed, it is often seen as the perfect virtue (Fung, 1948). As Confucius explained:

the man of jen is one who, desiring to sustain himself, sustains others, and desiring to develop himself, develops others. To be able from one's own self to draw a parallel for the treatment of others; that may be called the way to practise Jen (human-heartedness). (cited in Fung, p.43, 1948)

Since then, many followers of Confucius have developed the concept of human-heartedness and view it as fundamental for human society and for the administration of the state (Zhang, 2010). Based on this tradition, another famous Chinese philosopher, Mo Zi, proposed the theory of 'All-embracing Love' (Shen, 2011; Fung, 1948). To his point of view, killing a robber is killing a man; if one can love all the people in the world, then we can achieve peace and harmony (Fung, 1948, p,124). Love, peace, obligation, social responsibility, altruism and self-sacrifice are key words in our tradition and culture. This combination between politics and moral education is a crucial feature in Chinese society (Li, 2018). Since the first Chinese kindergarten was established at the beginning of The People's Republic of China until the 1990s, 'loving people, loving country, loving community' were still the main objectives of moral education in Chinese early years education (Li, 2018). Within our traditions and culture, should Mr. Dong

Guo save the wolf or not? Should the jujube tree help the villagers or not? Should the ox work for the poor farmers or not? The answer will always be yes. However, the story tells us, no; that blindly practising such 'love' to everyone cannot on its own shape how we live our lives. But what kind of people are worthy of our love or our kindness? It serves as an ironic commentary on such blind adherence to virtue, instead introducing a wise level of scepticism as a critique of the traditional virtue of 'loving others'.

MacIntyre (2011) has argued that a society's moral values will vary according to the agreed needs of individuals and their relationship to their society. For example, courage is always a central virtue in Heroic Societies, because it is not simply a quality of individuals, but a quality necessary to sustain a household and a community (p. 122). However, courage was not seen as the principle virtue in Medieval Europe, because of the social changes that Christianity had brought about and the dominant status of the Church at that time. Thus, the Christian virtue of charity was preached as the crucial virtue. That there should be conflicts between different virtues is inevitable, he proposes, but we need to understand them and how they manifest themselves in specific contexts if we are to come to lead a properly moral life. This he expresses in Aristotelian terms: what kind of person do I want to be and how can I make my life better? It is exploring this kind of conflict of virtues that we find in stories that Winston has argued to be a key way of using drama for the purposes of moral education (1998).

Taking all this into consideration, I think one way of viewing the moral dilemma in *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf* is not to focus on ingratitude but to consider the tension between altruism and self-interest, between love of others and love of the self. Whose life is more valuable and who has the right to decide? Looking at it this way, it is fair to consider that this was not at all a suitable dilemma for the children to explore. If not, what moral issues are suitable and what constitutes valid moral knowledge in an early years curriculum?

3.3 Emotion and morality

According to my data, the children identified more with moral issues in the other stories: *The Selfish Giant, Issun Boshi* and *The Kind Red Ogre*. This means the children recognized and could discuss the moral issues these stories raised. According to my

data, the evidence is that these young children could make connections with moral issues but primarily through emotion rather than through moral reasoning. Both Piaget (1965) and Kohlberg (1969) concentrate on moral reasoning, testing whether different age groups can make rational moral decisions with logical explanations. Kohlberg's approach, placing universal moral principles at the summit of moral development, has famously been criticized by Gilligan (1982), who insisted that caring for others should be seen as equally important in moral development. To her point of view, Kohlberg's theory did not only imply gender bias, but was also deeply lacking in the language of care and emotion. My data would support the idea that appealing to children's potential for caring can encourage them to think of other's feelings and from others' perspectives, an ability that is a crucial aspect in children's cognitive as well as affective development. In *The Selfish Giant*, the children explored the personality of the giant through emotional engagement and shared their feelings about selfishness at different moments in the drama scheme. Weinreich-Haste (1983) views this as the kind of 'moral feeling' that can also lead to positive moral action. She argues that Kohlberg's work leaves very limited space for feeling, and suggests that any 'unidirectional relationship between cognition and action, which also gives little place to affect, is inadequate' (Meadows, 1992). She regards the use of hypothetical moral dilemmas as designed to conceal the role of feeling. There are other extremely important emotions related to morality, notably sympathy and empathy. Eisenberg (2006) defines empathy as:

an effective response that stems from the apprehension or comprehension of another's emotional state or condition, and which is identical or very similar to what the other person is feeling or would be expected to feel' (p.647)

 and sympathy as:

an affective response that frequently stems from empathy, but can derive directly from perspective taking or other cognitive processing, including retrieval of information from memory. (p.647)

Both emotions are related to prosocial behaviour and feeling for others. Keenan.T, Evans.S & Crowley.K (2016) think perspective taking is an important correlate of empathy. Piaget (1965) and Eisenberg (2006) both see taking another's perspective as a higher level of cognitive development, which can also impact on moral development.

Evident in my research, the children demonstrated love for the Giant that inspired feelings of forgiveness; a feeling of loneliness which led them to reflect upon who is their real friend; and the desire for freedom, which led to reflections on independence when they played the role, and adopted the perspective, of Issun Boshi. Most of the time, the vivid contexts of the stories connected with the children's emotions first and it was this connection that helped them make moral judgments and decide upon appropriate moral action.

3.4   How drama benefits children's moral thinking creatively

In Kohlberg's (1969) famous experiment, the Heinz Dilemma, in which a desperate husband steals a drug he cannot afford to help save his wife, he used interviews to find out how children responded to such a moral dilemma and used the results to help develop his six stage theory of moral development, that consistently related to age. I hypothesize that if this experiment was to be conducted through a proper drama activity, the children's moral thinking might well sound more mature. To explain this hypothesis of mine, I present three points below, each of which is informed by my research findings.

3.4.1   Drama can help simplify complex moral issues

Although the drama as a whole was unsatisfactory, there were some successful aspects in *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf*. After their initial introduction to the story, the children demonstrated a lot of difficulties when attempting to retell the tale, struggling to understand the changeable relationship between the jujube tree and the villagers, and between the old ox and the farmers. However, the dramatic activity enabled them to feel the life and joy of the jujube tree and the old ox, so they could make an emotional connection with these 'characters'. Later we created dramatic images to show their relationship, enabling them to focus on details and sharpen their ideas. As Colby proposes:

Drama by its very nature has the power to 'yoke' the competencies of the other domains to the moral reasoning task, thus allowing those with greater visual/spatial or kinaesthetic intelligence to bring their talents to bear on the problem. (1982, p. 24)

Therefore, drama can deconstruct moral issues into many specific moments that the children could gain insight into. Furthermore, the emotional experience helped them

actively to make decisions and take action. For example, in the group work of making still images, the children were capable to decide which moment they should select according to the task and story, and then how to show such a moment by using their body, facial expression and different heights.

3.4.2 Drama can change a didactic moral lesson into a more open debate

In the stories of *Issun Boshi* and *The Selfish Giant*, I was in role as one of the characters attempting to challenge the children's points of view. In role as the Giant, I actually mirrored what they might themselves say when they didn't want to share their toys. I was, in effect, acting as a child refusing to share. The result was that the children assumed an authority role, more adult than my own, educating me as to why it was wrong to be so selfish. This activity provided an opportunity for the children to argue forcefully for a specific moral value. My own responses were intended to provoke them into clarifying and testing their own moral reasoning. Similarly, in *Issun Boshi*, I took on the role of the mother, trying to convince Issun Boshi to stay at home, and thus guide them into clarifying their own attitudes about independence and freedom. This kind of dramatic dialogue between the teacher and the children proved to be an effective means of scaffolding the children's moral thinking, through mirroring them or challenge their point of view.

3.4.3 Drama can provide rich resources for children to make moral judgements

A drama can be structured to provide children with strong content to inform a moral debate or argument. A small example of this can be found in *Issun Boshi*, where the children created short improvisations to show how the miniature boy played with animals in the outside world. Then, when I was in role as his mother, they were able to use the experiential content of this dramatic play to convince me that they could manage the outside world safely. So their experience can be used as valid knowledge to support their argument. Another example is, when I was in role as the Giant, they evaluated his character evocatively, largely from my facial expressions, attitudes, tone of voice and body language. All of this human information proved to be a resource that evoked an emotionally driven moral response to his personality at this early stage of the drama.

To sum up, my research indeed helped me to practise the theories that I initially agreed with, but also revealed the problems in its practice. As I stated in my literature review

and methodology, my research aim is to reflect on professor Zhang's work critically in the Chinese early years education context. However, I also unconsciously made a number of mistakes; for example, I intended to criticize our traditions of moral education, but instead adopted yet another didactic mode of moral education; meanwhile, because I insisted drama should not be used to teach formal knowledge, the opportunity to help the children learn more formal linguistic knowledge was lost. I argued that Professor Zhang ignored the importance of questioning; however, I now realise it must be one of the the most difficult teaching skills as well as one of the most important and needs practice to develop. I do not rate my own achievements very highly here. I appreciate that there have been weaknesses as well as some strengths in my practice and in my research. As I insisted before, this research was not intended to prove that my own understandings or practices are better or worse than others, but to help deepen my understanding of the challenges and problems of practice and to improve my own skills, both as a teacher and as a researcher, in the future.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

In this research, I have attempted to explore how drama can be seen to benefit children's language learning and moral thinking in the context of Chinese early years education. As a drama practitioner, I have attempted to analyse this through examining my own practice, with reference to appropriate and relevant theories, and critically reflecting on the problems and achievements I was able to detect in my own teaching. My hypothesis was that drama can indeed benefit children's language learning, but I did not know how to explain to early years teachers where the benefits might be located and how it can be seen to be situated within the curriculum context of Chinese early years education. I was, therefore, particularly interested in how kindergarten teachers would perceive or appreciate these benefits. Furthermore, as drama often offers opportunities to think about moral issues from different perspectives, I attempted to demonstrate how a proper use of drama might contribute to moral education in Chinese early years education. In fact, language learning and moral education are considered as two principal aspects of Chinese early years education, so this study can be seen as particularly pertinent in contemporary China.

During the process of my research, I personally have learned a great deal, gaining deeper understandings of how - and how not - to teach use drama in this context and for these purposes. As I wrote in my introduction, drama education is not a new concept in China, but is lacking in rigorous academic research based on properly considered practice. So far, none of the Chinese universities have established this area as a major at master level, not even Shanghai Theatre Academy or the Beijing Academy of Drama, the only two higher education institutions that have established it at undergraduate level. And the quality of these courses is seriously questionable. Due to a lack of academic support, the dean of the dramatic literature department of Shanghai Theatre Academy admitted to me that fewer than 30% of undergraduate students who choose to study drama education leave with a clear understanding of how to teach it or choose it as a career. There are still many arguments about whether drama education should belong to drama or education departments, which means that confusions about its nature and pedagogy still persist. Thus, I hope my research can offer a convincing and useful account for drama practitioners and school teachers to consider its potential, with

clear illustrations of how they might apply it themselves. For established practitioners, I hope they might reflect seriously on how I have used and theorised it, not as the only way to teach but as a properly researched and well-argued example of how it can be seen to work. I hope my research can show the advantages of drama as well as the limitations of my own practice. Such limitations can serve to demonstrate the complexities involved in teaching it well, but also help teachers avoid some of the mistakes I have illustrated in my own teaching.

1. Strengths of the research

There are three main strengths to my research. Firstly, as a Chinese drama practitioner, my research brings theory and practice together in a properly reflective account, where one can be seen to illustrate and critique the other. As I wrote in the literature review, the weaknesses of currently published academic and theoretical reflections on drama education in China have impacted on its credibility within both practical and academic circles. In 2009, I finished my master degree in Drama and Theatre Education at Warwick University and later, in 2011, I started my Phd study as well as my own theatre company. Over these years, I have focused on exploring how to apply drama education in China in different ways. While extending the influence of my theatre company, I have, throughout this doctoral study, been deepening my understanding of theory and practice, intending to fill the gap between theory and practice in Chinese early years education. No previous research that I could find has clearly explained for a Chinese audience how drama can contribute to language learning in kindergarten classes. In doing so, my own study also challenges the narrow ways that kindergarten teachers can be seen to understand it and, in the processes, fail to address aspects of the curriculum guidelines that they are meant to follow. This I see as one of the strengths of my research.

Secondly, my drama teaching has demonstrated a successful way of working with early years children. The research shows that teachers acknowledged that my teaching did indeed help the children's moral thinking and language learning and agreed that it also helped them understand the nature and purposes of drama education better. By the end of term, the lead teacher said she realized the importance of interaction between the teacher and the children. Before I did my research, the school's approach to drama teaching was more focused on performing skills and a set of narrowly defined teacher

objectives. My teaching presented a more child-centred approach, with children's thinking and talk at the centre of drama teaching. To sum up, my teaching made them realize the value of drama processes as opposed to a narrowly conceived product: drama as a child-centred educational process.

Finally, my research provided the school with demonstrations of how drama teaching can be evaluated, even though my research itself still had deficiencies. Before I started, the principal of the kindergarten said that one difficulty for them was how to assess the value of drama. Although they had established a drama curriculum, they had never been able to evaluate its outcomes due to lots of confusion of what should be evaluated, if they view drama as way of learning rather than performing art. My research showed them that performing skills were not the main way of integrating drama into the curriculum. If they concentrated on showing how it integrated with and supported the stated objectives in moral and language development, and included such aspects as group work and thinking skills, then they could find ways to relate drama to the national guidelines. For example, if the aim is on drama and language learning, the objectives of language learning in our Chinese guidelines should be viewed as the outcomes of the drama curriculum. Therefore, the school teacher could evaluate how the children's vocabulary increases; how they describe specific situations and characters; whether or not they can share their opinions in a logical way; how they use different emotions, opinions and points of view to communicate with other children and, finally; how they respond to the teacher's questions. All of these aspects are also the same teaching objectives of language learning in our national guidelines. By the end of the term, the lead teacher showed a very positive attitude towards drama as part of the curriculum and had a much clearer ideas of what could be evaluated.. One of the most positive results of my research for the school, then, was to show how they could generate a formal way of reporting on drama practice in the kindergarten and how a drama teacher and a school teacher can work together to generate learning. This is also a means for gaining additional government funding. After my research, another seven kindergartens decided to establish a drama curriculum and hire me as a consultant. Five of them were then able to gain funding from the local government and academic institutions to carry out research. Thus, as a drama practitioner, I am in the fortunate position to have practical opportunities to improve both my research and drama practices in the near future.

2. Limitations and weaknesses of this research

Despite having some positive outcomes, my research had some clear weaknesses to it.

2.1 Data collection

There were two main problems with regard to my data collection. The first was that I generated too much data. As this was a long-term project, interviews with the teacher and children and video recordings of each lesson took many hours to review, transcribe and analyse. It was extremely difficult to select useful information from such a huge data set and make sense of it. The second problem was the gap between my research intentions and the limitations of my research design in practice. For example, one of my intentions was to explore how drama could benefit the children's language learning, specifically their uses of language during the drama. Therefore, what words or sentences they used in specific contexts; why they used them in those specific moments; what their linguistic intentions actually were. So my questioning, children's responses and the later interviews with them to double check my own perspectives on the drama class were important. Unfortunately, I did not always manage to obtain clear recordings. I did not check my recordings early enough in the research process and only later discovered when I began to analyse my data that all too often I could not hear clearly what the children were saying. In the event, my personal journal and own words that I wrote down on the white board were much more useful for me.

Another problem was my limited space. There were 36 children in one class, so I had to divide them into two groups. When I taught one group in the classroom, another group played loudly outside. Thus, on many occasions my research group was very impatient during our discussions, because the noise outside distracted their attention.

2.2 Questioning

Before I started my research, I highlighted the importance of questioning in drama class, but it proved to be the biggest challenge and most difficult aspect for me in the research process. This weakness in my questioning was evident in three ways.

First, I found it hard to design effective questions in my schemes of work. The drama of *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf* demonstrates this most starkly, where my own misinter-

pretation of the story led to me asking improper questions during my teaching. By asking questions that did not make sense to them, the children immediately began to disengage. I found clear and well focused questioning to be a crucial aspect of good drama teaching - and good drama research - within the context of the reflective practitioner. This kind of questioning is uncommon in traditional Chinese classrooms and is something I clearly have to work on in the future.

The second evident weakness of my questioning was in my use of language. When I look back on my observations of the children's daily teaching in this kindergarten, the school teacher was clearly much more experienced than me in knowing how to communicate with young children. She had developed rich experience and close relations with them over time and the children always understood what she meant. She used simple, short and well-directed questions. During my teaching, I did reflect on children's responses to my questions and modified them to help them understand my meaning, but this sometimes took a lot of time and made the children frustrated, sometimes forgetting what the focus and purpose of these questions were. Selecting the appropriate language to use for specific age groups is still a challenge for me and requires me to know more about my participants in terms of their language levels, learning ability and previous learning experiences. I need to make a greater attempt to find the right level in any future research.

The third weakness of my questioning lay in my lack of interviewing skills. Both in interviews with the children and with the lead teacher, I often failed to lead our conversation in ways that penetrated any deep meanings. When I transcribed my interviews, I realised that I had missed many meaningful moments when I could have uncovered more useful information. For example, when the lead teacher mentioned that death is too strong a topic for young children; when she mentioned that language learning was about increasing vocabulary; when she suggested that *Mr. Dong Guo and the Wolf* was a good story to deliver a simple moral lesson; all these topics were exactly pertinent to my research focus and I should have pursued them with further, more penetrating questions, which I consistently failed to do. Perhaps I might have piloted my research questions with the teacher, but I am unsure how this would have helped as these were secondary, follow-up questions, hard to determine in advance. As for my questioning of the children, I should have found different ways of finding information from them and

relied less upon simple questioning and answering. This would have meant more classroom time with them, however, and would have necessitated more contact time for each drama topic.

Meanwhile, my interviews failed to find out what the children's intentions or real meanings about specific questions were. When I later transcribed my interviews with the children, I was shocked to discover how many times I asked irrelevant questions that were unhelpful for analysis relating to my key research themes. Other factors also impacted negatively on my data collection. For example, choosing the wrong place - the play area - to perform the interviews with the children. In this environment they found it really hard to concentrate on my questions and it was too noisy to talk to them for long. Most of their answers were ambiguous and it was hard to understand what they meant. More importantly, they showed very impatient attitudes to the interview. As the drama class lasted for 45 minutes, it proved to be very difficult to keep them in the classroom and conduct these interviews properly after such a long class.

3. What I have learned from this research

The whole research project has had an enormous influence on me, particularly upon how I think about drama teaching and about research itself. The reflexive and reflective methodology has taught me to maintain awareness and sensitivity whenever I am teaching; and my idea of research has shifted away from trying to prove hypotheses about learning through drama towards focusing upon my own practice in order to understand it better and consequently become a better, more exemplary teacher. I feel that now I can anticipate potential problems much better and can focus learning more confidently and clearly. I also feel I have an understanding of what kind of learning experiences drama is good at providing for young children. I appreciate the complexity of a good drama lesson and how it produces learning. I also understand how, within a kindergarten context, drama teaching needs to be a team effort between the class teacher, the drama expert and the school curriculum if it is to succeed properly. Its success will also depend upon the interplay of many other conditions, such as the class teacher's and the drama teacher's educational values; her teaching skills and understanding of drama strategies; the design of her drama schemes; the learning environment within the school and the extent to which the school appreciates and supports learning through drama.

The support, doubts and suggestions offered to me by the school presented another perspective to reflect on my research. This made the research process meaningful for the school and for me, generating potential benefits for other schools and other drama practitioners.

4. Who this research could benefit and in what ways

My research offers a first-hand experience and evaluation of how to apply drama in a Chinese early-years setting, focusing on moral thinking and language learning. My research has demonstrated that drama education can be evaluated and can be seen to fit the objectives of our national guidelines for an early-years curriculum. I think the findings of my research would benefit other kindergartens who wish to establish a drama curriculum but who are still uncertain how to do it. It also demonstrates the possible value of bringing an external drama practitioner into the school to work with early years specialists. It may prove useful for policy makers to consider the potential of drama education in kindergartens and support the need for further research.

5. How further research could build upon this dissertation

This research impacted my future research in two aspects. The first impact is to narrow down the research focus. In fact, the focus of language learning and moral thinking prevented the in-depth analyze and reflection. Rather than viewing moral thinking and language learning as different areas, I will consider moral thinking is part of evidence to support the outcomes of language learning. Indeed, whether the children have ability to think critically or from different perspectives, depending on whether they have ability to decode others' information and construct them into understandable and useful information in their own way, this ability has very close connection with language learning. To my point view, our way of thinking may should not be sperate from the use of language. What I intend to do, is to rethink and clearly define what is language learning and what aspects are the main body of language learning that should be evaluated. I think the better focus will help me get the deeper insight on how drama could benefit children's langue learning in what ways and how. I also would like to design clearer assessment to evaluate the functions of language in terms of instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative and informative which informed by Halliday's theories.

The second impact is change the way of working with the school teachers. As I complete my research, I have received support for two new research projects in two different schools. This new research will, I hope, improve on the existing study in two ways. On the one hand, I hope to design good drama schemes and improve my teaching skills. I will ensure that my questioning is more focused and more precise; that my use of language and moral themes are a suitable fit with the children's competences, interests and previous experiences. On the other hand, I would like to work more closely with the teachers to help them observe, in particular, the areas of language use for me rather than rely on video recordings. The data may then be more informed, more convincing and less dependent upon my own subjective understandings. The final aspect is to be more focused on specific learning areas specified in the national guidelines. I believe this will help me gain deeper understandings of how drama can benefit children's language learning in Chinese early years education.

6. How the research has benefited my own career

In the past ten years, my doctoral research and business have worked together. My research has helped me establish my own theatre company and teacher training centre. So far, I and my company have collaborated with more than 20 schools and have trained more than 1000 teachers in this field. My research has also helped me create a drama curriculum for 3-12 year-olds which is constantly being revised and adapted. I hope my research will encourage other Chinese drama practitioners and schools to embrace the advantages of drama education and explore its potential with confidence and without fear.

1. 机关三幼研究前采访

Interview with the lead teacher (my co-researcher) before the research

Date: 2015/03/17

Length: 20 mins 19 seconds.

Interviewer: Jie Cai (M)

Interviewee: The lead teacher, Miss Xu. (T)

M: 请问机关三幼是否有开展过戏剧课程呢？

Do you have a drama curriculum?

T: 是的。

Yes, we do.

M: 是什么上课频次呢？

How often does it run?

T: 每周三次

Three times a week

M: 一般时长多少呢？

How long for each session?

T: 大约就是 25 分钟左右。

About 25 mins.

M: 可否举一个例子来阐述一下上课的内容？

Could you please give me an example?

T: 大多选择围绕一个孩子们熟悉的绘本故事开展，比如中班戏剧课程《木偶奇遇记》，孩子们通过肢体造型、语言描述、同伴合作、绘画等形式，再现故事情景，续编故事内容。

Most of our drama lessons are based on a picture book story that the children are familiar with. For example, the middle class will listen to the story of Pinocchio, so the children will add more content to the story through gestures, language, group working, drawing and so on, to expand the story in their own way.

M: 机关三幼的课程设置是一个什么情况呢？园本课程包括哪些呢？

Can you introduce the curriculums briefly? What kind of curriculums do you have?

T: 园级大型主题活动、班级特色研究课程，比如美术、科学、戏剧，还有就是

其它补充性领域活动。

We normally organise theme based event for the whole kindergarten; meanwhile we run some characteristic project based curriculums for different classes, such as visual art, science, drama, and other supplementary activities of other learning areas.

M: 请问幼儿园在孩子的语言学习发展领域的课程呢？

Can you introduce any of the curriculum specific to language learning?

T: 专门的语言领域课程、四月阅读活动月及亲子阅读活动展演、"六一"班级表演汇报，及毕业典礼小主持 PK、大带小角色游戏等

We have our own language learning curriculum, also 'the April Reading Month Event', Parents-children Reading Activity and Performing of International Children's Day, Competition of Graduation Talk Show, role-playing games and so on to support the daily language learning curriculum.

M: 那你们的日常语言教学课程是什么呢？

Can you introduce more about your daily language teaching?

T: 日常教学中，主要以语言学习为主，比如学习诗歌或者儿歌、谈话、绘本、复述、仿编、语言游戏等，诗歌更多的是结合图片和简单的文字, 让孩子们明白诗歌的含义。谈话就是类似脱口秀，一般结合的节日，孩子们就可以自己准备稿子来分享关于节日的一些个人的想法。

A number of activities in our daily teaching focus on language learning, such as learning nursery rhymes or poems, learning conversations, reading picture books, repetition of stories, making stories and language games. With poems, we use very simple words and pictures to have the children understand the meaning of the poem. The conversations are just like a talk show, normally combining with the festival: they can prepare their script and share what they know about this festival.

M: 一般是如何对幼儿的语言发展进行评估呢？是否有评估测量表？

How do you evaluate the children's language development? Do you have any assessment table?

T: 目前还没有专门的评估量表。

So far we don't have any assessment table to evaluate.

M: 幼儿园是否有涉及思想品德方面的课程？一般是以什么形式开展的呢？可否举一个例子？

Does the kindergarten have any moral education curriculum? How are teachers teaching moral education? Could you please give me an example?

T: 我们没有专门的课叫做思想品德课，主要还是结合其他领域活动：社会、健康两方面开展。如乐于助人，可采用绘本分享、看图讲述、生活中的小例子为切入点开展，教导孩子一些好的品德或者良好的生活习惯，这也是幼儿园孩子非常重要的部分。

We don't have a specific moral education curriculum, normally the moral education will be crossed with other learning areas: society and health. For example, we use picture book stories, pictures with descriptions and the sharing of life stories as a starting point to educate the children on good moral conventions and good habits; this is very important for early years children.

M: 如果学校开展戏剧课程，您对课程的期望是什么呢？您希望戏剧课可以包含哪些部分？

If the kindergarten establishes a drama curriculum, what is your expectation? What kinds of aspects would you hope it contains?

T: 我期望的幼儿园戏剧课程，孩子们是没有压力的，是喜欢参与而敢于宣泄情绪、大胆创意的。课程可以包含：语言讲述、肢体造型、绘画创作、小剧场、梦幻哑剧、亲子剧团、剧情欢乐 show、心情变变变等。

I expect a drama curriculum can help the children relax, without pressure, willing to participate bravely, be creative and confident to express themselves. I think it can contain storytelling, body gestures, creative drawing, theatre performing, dreaming mime, parents-children theatre, happy shows, emotion games and so on.

2. An example language scheme of work used at the kindergarten

大班语言 《爱心树》

Pre-school class: The Giving Tree

活动目标

The objectives of activities:

1、理解故事内容，能大胆地表述自己的想法。

    Understanding the story plot, bravely expressing their own thoughts.

2、感受大树无私的奉献精神，懂得付出也是一种快乐。

    Feeling the self-sacrifice, understanding such sacrifice is one kind of happiness .

3、体会亲人朋友们的关爱之情。

    Feeling the care of families and friends.

活动准备

Preparation

1、多媒体课件

    Multimedia Courseware

2、图片、白板。

    Pictures and whiteboard

活动过程

The procedure

一. 导入

Pre-context

1. 出示课件画面：一棵树

Show them the pictures of a tree

教师：你觉得这是一棵什么样的树？

Teacher(asking): What kind of tree do you think it is?

2. 出示课件画面：小男孩

Show them the picture of the boy.

教师：这是谁？一棵茂盛的大树和可爱的小男孩之间会发生什么事呢？让我们一起来看看吧！

Teacher(asking): Who is he? What happened between the lush tree and the boy? Let's read the story!

二. 分段感受故事

Feeling the different parts of the story

1. 男孩在儿童期和大树的故事

The first part of the story, when the boy was little.

（1）观看课件画面，欣赏故事。

Looking at the pictures and enjoying the story.

（2）提问：你觉得大树和小男孩关系怎么样？为什么？

Asking: what do you think of their relationship? Why?

（3）小结：是啊，大树和小男孩相亲相爱，他们每天都在一起玩耍，多么幸福快乐呀！

Conclusion: Yes, the tree and the boy loved each other! They played with each other, how happy they were!

2. 男孩在少年期和大树的故事

The last part of the story, when the boy was older.

（1）观看图片讲述故事.

Looking at the pictures and telling the story.

（2）提问：大树为什么感到很孤独？

Asking: why did the tree feel lonely?

男孩摘走了大树所有的苹果，大树为什么还很快乐？

Thy boy took all the apples from the tree, why does the tree still feel happy?

（3）小结：因为大树帮助男孩达成了心愿，所以它很快乐。

Conclusion: Because the tree helped the little boy fulfill his wishes, so it was happy.

3. 分组排图讲述男孩在青年期、中年期、老年期与大树的故事。

Have the children put the pictures in the right order and tell the story when the boy was young, middle aged and old.

（1）幼儿分组排图、自由讲述

Have them share their story in groups and retell the story.

（2）将幼儿分组探讨结果集中展示、讲述。

Organizing the presentation and have them retell the story.

4. 完整欣赏故事，体会爱心树的付出。

Enjoy the whole story, feeling the giving of the tree.

（1）教师完整讲述故事。

The teacher tells the whole story.

（2）提问：这是一棵什么样的大树？

Asking: What kind of tree do you think it is?

（3）小结：这是一棵充满爱心的大树，当男孩从大树身上摘走苹果，大树很快乐；砍走树枝，大树很快乐；砍断树干，变成光秃秃的树墩，大树还是很快乐！

原来付出爱也是一种快乐呀！

Conclusion: It is a giving tree; when the little boy took all the apples from the tree, it felt happy; when the boy chopped its branch, it felt happy; when the boy chopped its trunk, it felt happy; So giving is a kind of happiness.

三. 情感迁移，体验亲人朋友们大树般的关爱之情。

Identifying the emotions, experiencing the care of their families and friends.

1. 教师：其实在我们身边也有许多"爱心树"，你觉得谁是你生活中的"爱心树"为什么？

Teacher(asking): In our life, we have lots of giving trees. Whom do you think is a giving tree in your life? Why?

2、教师：爷爷奶奶、爸爸妈妈、老师…都是我们的爱心树，你们愿意做一棵真正的"爱心树"吗？那你会怎么做？

Teacher(asking): Grandpa, grandma, dad, mom and teachers are all giving trees. Will you want to be a giving tree? What will you do?

四．结束活动

Finishing activity

3. The interview with the lead teacher after the four sessions of *The Selfish Giant.*

Date: 09/04/2015

Length: 28 mins 45 seconds.

Interviewer: Jie Cai (M)

Interviewee: the lead teacher, Miss Xu. (T)

M: 我们的戏剧课巨人的花园就结束了，不知道许老师对戏剧课的整体感受是什么呢？

Now we have finished all the drama lessons of *The Selfish Giant,* can you talk about your feeling about the drama teaching?

T：其实这个故事我以前也听过，但是这次你上了，还是觉得有打开了我的思路，果然蔡老师是专业的，我们可能平时就是更多的希望孩子们复述故事，但是今天我看到更多的是孩子们讨论他们的想法，这是我觉得特别好的。还有就是他们参与度还是很高的，看得出来很喜欢，外面那么吵，好像也没什么影响。

Actually, I've heard about this story before, but after observing your drama class, I felt a little bit different; it opened my mind anyway, you are professional, indeed. I think in the classroom we normally hope the children can repeat the story, but today I can see they had lots of their own thoughts about the story. I think it's good. Also, they participated very well, they liked it; it was quite noisy outside, but it seems they were fine.

M：刚才您说到这可能和平时语言课程或者戏剧课有所不同，那么对于在这个课程里，对孩子们的语言学习您是怎么看待的呢？

You mentioned it was a little bit different from the normal class, about the language learning, so what do you think about the drama class in terms of language learning?

T：我就觉得很好，就是可以拓宽一些思路，包括蔡老师问他们问题，也不是说只能用语言去回答，其实他们还可以用声音呀，动作呀，甚至表情，都可以去表达他们的看法，就是拓宽了我们对语言学习的一些理解，可以用的更多。平时其实我们也会采用这样的方式，但是可能说不是每节课，可能有侧重，怎么说呢，就是没有那么系统，比较散，用还是用了的。就会觉得在这样的戏剧课上，语言的学习很有整体性，能够把我们平时在课堂上忽略掉的再进行强

调，比如讨论呀，小组更自由的合作。

I think it was really good, you can think more; when you asked questions, they could reply not only through oral language, they could also use their voice, movements, gestures or even facial expressions to express their thoughts. It kind of enlarged our understanding about language, I would like to apply some of your methods. Well, actually, I think some methods we indeed use in our classroom or daily teaching, but maybe not in a very focused way - how can I say - not very systematically? Maybe not coherent? But we do apply in a similar way what I felt was, in your drama class, more integrated, maybe. Some strategies we may ignore in our daily teaching, like the discussions and freer group working.

M：那您对孩子们在整个过程中，对巨人这个角色的探索和看法，您有什么想法吗？

In the whole process, what do you think of the children's exploration about the Giant?

T：我觉得人物特别立体，就是你可以从很多方面去了解这个人，可能我们之前比较一带而过了，怎么说呢，人物要单一一点，我看这个过程，还是有个变化的，孩子们在不同的时候，有不同的感受和想法，这是很好的。就是这戏剧课吧，确实能激发孩子的想象力，他们表达的更多，意见也都很不一样，比较，怎么说呢，比较多元化吧。

I think the character is more vivid, it seems you can explore this person from different perspectives. Maybe what we did was too simple, very, how to say, from a single viewpoint. I saw the whole process, there was change (in the children's attitudes to the Giant), in different moments, they had different thoughts and feelings, it was good. So, drama can indeed stimulate the children's imaginations; they expressed more, had very different opinions, there was more, how to say, diversity.

M：那您觉得戏剧在孩子的语言学习中起到了什么作用呢。

What do you think about the role of drama and its effects on the children's language learning?

T：我觉得还是很好的建立情景吧，就是孩子们都很清楚什么时候干什么，然后老师的提问呀，任务呀，能激发孩子的想象力，可以在规定情境里自由发挥。尤其是平时班级里不怎么爱举手发言的孩子，还是多有积极性的。可能对那些语言本身很好的孩子来说，作用不是那么明显哈，因为平时也很积极嘛，本身表达也很好，但是对那些语言能力弱一点的孩子，就是平时都说不大清楚

的孩子，我看他们还是可以理解你的问题，表达的还是挺清楚的，也有自己的想法。我觉得这点还是很明显的吧。

I think in setting up a context, drama can set up the context very well, they were very clear what to do; then the questions, tasks, can stimulate their imagination, so they can express themselves freely in the setting context. I saw some shy children were very willing to speak, very active; maybe in normal classes they wouldn't put their hand up so actively. Maybe it won't be very helpful for the children whose language ability is good enough, I mean, not very obviously, because they are always very active and express themselves clearly. It was (drama) good for those children whose language ability was a little weak, I can see they understood what you said and expressed themselves very clearly.

M：那对于我的教学您能给予意见吗？

Could you please give me any feedback about my teaching?

T：我还是觉得您挺专业的。就是这个引导，还是很有经验。虽然说你不是一直教这个年纪的孩子，但是还有引导的很好。有一点我觉得因为这个人数更少，老师和孩子间的互动其实更多，我看孩子们说的比较多。平时嘛，你也知道，30 多个孩子，其实老师说的更多一些，还有可能我们教的意识中一些，更看重这堂课教了孩子什么，但是感觉蔡老师和孩子是比较平等的在探索，更关注孩子们想法，引导他们表达的更多。

I think you are very professional, how you guide them, very experienced. Maybe you are not a kindergarten teacher, not like us, teaching this age group for a long time, but your instruction is good. Also, I think there were less children in your group, so actually there was more interaction, I can see they spoke more. In normal teaching, as you know, there are more than 30 (normally 38) children, the teacher may speak more, or, I think maybe we are more focused on what we are teaching them, what the teaching result of the lesson should be, what do they actually learn, but I feel your teaching is more like exploration: more careful about the children's thoughts and encouraging them to express more.

4. The documents of

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(the part of language learning in terms of listening and expression which related to my research group and topic)

二、语言

Language

语言是交流和思维的工具。幼儿期是语言发展，特别是口语发展的重要时期。幼儿语言的发展贯穿于各个领域，也对其它领域的学习与发展有着重要的影响：幼儿在运用语言进行交流的同时，也在发展着人际交往能力、理解他人和判断交往情境的能力、组织自己思想的能力。通过语言获取信息，幼儿的学习逐步超越个体的直接感知。

Language is the tool of communication and thoughts. Oral language development is the most important period of language development for early years children and also greatly impacts other learning areas and developments; when the early years children are using language to communicate, they are also developing their competence of social behaiviour, understating others, decoding the communicative situation and organizing their thoughts. According to acquiring information through language, early years children can acquire decent experience.

幼儿的语言能力是在交流和运用的过程中发展起来的。应为幼儿创设自由、宽松的语言交往环境，鼓励和支持幼儿与成人、同伴交流，让幼儿想说、敢说、喜欢说并能得到积极回应。为幼儿提供丰富、适宜的低幼读物，经常和幼儿一起看图书、讲故事，丰富其语言表达能力，培养阅读兴趣和良好的阅读习惯，进一步拓展学习经验。

The language competence of early years children is developed through the usage of language and its process. The teacher should set up a free and relaxed communication environment, encourage and support them to communicate with adults and other playmates, have them be willing to speak confidently and get positive feedback. The teacher should offer them rich and suitable reading resources, and often read stories with them

together, tell stories, enrich their language expression; the teacher also should foster their interests in reading and good habits, and enlarge their learning experience.

幼儿的语言学习需要相应的社会经验支持，应通过多种活动扩展幼儿的生活经验，丰富语言的内容，增强理解和表达能力。应在生活情境和阅读活动中引导幼儿自然而然地产生对文字的兴趣，用机械记忆和强化训练的方式让幼儿过早识字不符合其学习特点和接受能力。

Early years children need corresponding social experience support, the teacher should enrich their social experience through activities, enlarge their language register, enhance their understanding and competency of expression. The teacher should guide early years children's interest in the characters naturally, the technical strategy and reinforcement of remembering the vocabulary is not a suitable teaching pedagogy and does not fit the nature of early years children.

(一)倾听与表达
The Objectives of listening and speaking

目标1 认真听并能听懂常用语言

3~4 岁	4~5 岁	5~6 岁
1．别人对自己说话时能注意听并做出回应。 2．能听懂日常会话。	1．在群体中能有意识地听与自己有关的信息。 2．能结合情境感受到不同语气、语调所表达的不同意思。 3．方言地区和少数民族幼儿能基本听懂普通话。	1．在集体中能注意听老师或其他人讲话。 2．听不懂或有疑问时能主动提问。 3．能结合情境理解一些表示因果、假设等相对复杂的句子。

Objective 1 Listening carefully and understanding the daily language

5~6 years old children:

1. Listening to the teacher and other classmate in groups.

2. Asking questions when they do not understand or are unclear.

3. Able to use more complex sentence, like causality sentences or hypothetical sentences, according to specific contexts.

目标 2　愿意讲话并能清楚地表达

3~4 岁	4~5 岁	5~6 岁
1．愿意在熟悉的人面前说话，能大方地与人打招呼。	1．愿意与他人交谈，喜欢谈论自己感兴趣的话题。	1．愿意与他人讨论问题，敢在众人面前说话。
2．基本会说本民族或本地区的语言。	2．会说本民族或本地区的语言，基本会说普通话。少数民族聚居地区幼儿会用普通话进行日常会话。	2．会说本民族或本地区的语言和普通话，发音正确清晰。少数民族聚居地区幼儿基本会说普通话。
3．愿意表达自己的需要和想法，必要时能配以手势动作。	3．能基本完整地讲述自己的所见所闻和经历的事情。	3．能有序、连贯、清楚地讲述一件事情。
4．能口齿清楚地说儿歌、童谣或复述简短的故事。	4．讲述比较连贯。	4．讲述时能使用常见的形容词、同义词等，语言比较生动。

Objectives 2 Willing to speak and express clearly

5~6 years old children:

1. Willing to discuss with others and express themselves confidently in front of others.

2. Able to speak the local language with clear pronunciation. The minority of children should be able to speak mandarin.

3. Retell the event logically, coherently and in consequence.

4. Able to use adjective and synonyms to express vividly.

目标3　具有文明的语言习惯

3~4 岁	4~5 岁	5~6 岁
1．与别人讲话时知道眼睛要看着对方。 2．说话自然，声音大小适中。 3．能在成人的提醒下使用恰当的礼貌用语。	1．别人对自己讲话时能回应。 2．能根据场合调节自己说话声音的大小。 3．能主动使用礼貌用语，不说脏话、粗话。	1．别人讲话时能积极主动地回应。 2．能根据谈话对象和需要，调整说话的语气。 3．懂得按次序轮流讲话，不随意打断别人。 4．能依据所处情境使用恰当的语言。如在别人难过时会用恰当的语言表示安慰。

Objectives 3 Acquiring the good habit of using polite language

5~6 year old children:

1. Actively respond to others during conversation.

2. Modify their mode and tone according to the people involved in the conversation.

3. Understand how to speak in turn and do not disturb others.

4. Able to use language according to the specific situation. For example, able to use suitable language to comfort others when they are sad.

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