

STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN PERFORMING CREATIVE DRAMA: DRAMA IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION CLASS

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Abstract

The primary goal of this research is intended to report how the students' engagement in performing creative drama. Further, the discussion also takes into the issues of the problem that may exist during the session or phase of creative drama in drama class. The researcher used qualitative methodology to investigate the research questions. Documentation analysis and interview were used as the instrument of this present study. The fifth semester students of English Education Department were choosing as the main participants of this study. The students have performed creative drama, and have experience in preparing the session also the performance. The researcher point out the students' engagement in performing creative drama, such as warm-up activities, make-up character, script writing, the concept of role-play, poster or flyer publicity, producing creative drama trailer, promoting their drama using social media and rehearsal process. Students independently chose to work on different tasks according to their knowledge, abilities and preferences. Moreover, they were allowed to take on different characters and roles. Creative drama fosters and maintains students' engagement by providing an atmosphere which is full of fun and entertainment.

Keywords: creative drama, students' engagement, student's performance

Introduction

In recent decades, as has been pointed out in Suherdi's research (2018), students' learning engagement (SLE) has been the focus of educational research at least since the 1990s. A number of educational scholars have written about engaging students in learning process. In line with that, (Trowler & Trowler, 2010) examine the student engagement is the investment of time, effort and other relevant resources by both students and their institutions intended to optimize the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students, and the performance and reputation of the institution. Engagement expresses the behavioral intensity and emotional quality of a student's active involvement during a learning activity (Jang et al., 2010).

Maley (2014) suggests some useful activities for encouraging students to practice their English as follows. Firstly, students can be encouraged to practice speaking outside the classroom through rehearsal. then, lecturers can help the students by providing feedback on the activities they are working on or assisting when they

have language problems. Finally, students should be engaged in good speaking activities which can motivate them to play an active part in the speaking class. As educators, therefore, it is a huge challenge, which is how to encourage and enable our students to engage in the learning process. The specific research question is how the students' engagement in performing creative drama at school of teacher training and education in students' view?

Drama in Language Education

This course provides students with the opportunity to explore the contents of drama in language Education. To arrive at this objective, the core activities focus on the elements of drama, creative writing (composing a play script), characterization, make-up character, role-play, providing students with the information about drama in language education, and also hope to give students the opportunity to perform a drama in English Foreign language (EFL). Based on the topics to be covered in the whole semester, the students are expected to perform a drama as their project.

Creative Drama

The use of drama in education can be seen as an alternative to traditional teacher-led, scripted schooling and an answer to the challenges of our current postmodern knowledge culture, which aims at deeper conceptual understanding by preparing students to be more creative and create multimodal knowledge (Pieczena, 2013). Neelands (2011) who conceptualizes drama as creative learning explains that improvisation is itself a creative activity because it requires teachers and learners to imagine themselves and the world differently, making spontaneous decisions and responding to the unexpected. As Cremin et al (2015) show in their research that developing creativity in and through talk and drama creatively engaging readers and writers.

Creative Drama Exploration

Creative drama can show the student the way to be empathetic to the needs of others and consequently the student will be better able to form a value judgment (Annarella, 1992). Creative drama sessions proposed by Sağlamel & Kayaoğlu (2013) consisted of four phases: warm-ups, pantomime, improvisation, role plays and evaluation respectively. While the creative drama exploration at School of Teacher Training and Education (STKIP) Muhammadiyah Bogor could include:

Warm-Up

It is to familiarize students with drama in language education class; empowering self-confidence and help students get ready through some games, songs, videos.

Role-plays

Role-play is an effective technique to animate the teaching and learning atmosphere, arouse the interests of learners, and make the language acquisition impressive (Liu & Ding, 2009). Dundar (2013) mentions that role-play is anyspeaking activity when you either put yourself into somebody else's shoes, or when you stay in your own shoes but put yourself into an imaginary situation.

Improvisation

This session refers to ‘the creation of a situation in which characters speak spontaneously’. Drama and improvisation can stimulate creativity and enjoyment in educational processes - both for teachers and students. Both drama work and improvisational exercises can be effective in increasing creativity (Toivanen et al., 2011).

Scriptwriting

According to Wandor (2012), writing drama appears in various guises on creative writing courses: as ‘screenwriting’, ‘scriptwriting’, ‘playwriting’, ‘writing for performance’. This session phase refers to the students write develop an outline for the story and then write the first draft of the script. After that the lecturer gives feedback on the script using the Script Feedback Form. At the end, the students try to rewrite the script to get it right.

Makeup Character

With a little practice, even an amateur or classroom technician can learn the fundamentals of simple theatrical makeup. The principles of stage makeup and its application begin with knowledge of the materials and the tools used to apply them (Purnomo et al., 2020). The students are applying makeup for their own performance. They watch makeup tutorial videos and try to apply their makeup based on the character.

Students’ Engagement

Engagement to form curricula focuses on the ways in which students can help to form the courses that they study in higher education, whilst engagement to form communities focuses on the ways in which students can be involved in helping to shape the institutions and societies of which they are part (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015). To better understand students’ academic engagement, many researchers have investigated supportive socio-contextual factors (Skinner et al., 2008).

The difficulty for teachers involved in higher education is how to engage students in their learning in an emotionally challenging way while maintaining a classroom environment in which students feel safe (Heyward, 2010). Other study in applied theatre often draws upon critical pedagogy and constructivist methodology as a way to bring participants into direct engagement with their own learning experiences (Dawson et al., 2011). Based on the previous research, the researcher assume that the manner in which the students represent their views through engagement in creative drama is influenced by their previous session experience, learning styles, teacher’s instruction, classroom management, and knowledge about the course.

Method

The study aims to provide insight into the case of student’s engagement in performing creative drama through in-depth interview and document analysis. These methods are considered an appropriate to the research as this it will enhance a deeper understanding on the study objectives. Also, by this method, the researcher can obtain detailed information, analyze and report the students’ learning process in performing creative drama. The participants were all students who take Drama in Language Education course at the fifth semester of English Education Department at School of

Teacher Training and Education (STKIP) Muhammadiyah Bogor. The students have performed creative drama, and have experience in preparing the session. The data were analyzed by using document analysis (Bowen, 2009) and interview data transcription (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The research took place at school of teacher training and education (STKIP) Muhammadiyah Bogor.

The researcher used non-probability sampling technique. Non-probability sampling is a sampling procedure that will not bid a basis for any opinion of probability that elements in the universe will have a chance to be included in the study sample (Etikan, 2017). The sampling technique in non-probability was used is purposive technique. Purposive technique was used based on the researcher's assessment of knowledge or prospective informants or respondents to answer research questions. In general, samples that were considered capable of answering research questions people who were experienced or have knowledge related to the focus of the study.

In analyzing the data, thematic content analysis is perhaps the most common and effective method in this study. It can also be one of the most trustworthy, increasing the traceability and verification of an analysis when done correctly (Neuendorf, 2019). The following are the six main steps of thematic analysis of the transcripts. The steps are (1) read the transcript, (2) annotate the transcript, (3) conceptualize the data, (4) segment the data, (5) analyze the segments, and (6) write the results.

Findings and Discussion

This present research was purposively done to report students' engagement in performing creative drama. Additionally, the investigation was also conducted to figure out the problem that may exist during the session or phase in performing creative drama, the rehearsal process and drama performance.

Document Analysis

Analyzing documents incorporates coding content into themes similar to how focus group or interview transcripts are analyzed (Triad, 2016). There are two primary types of documents: 1) public record (transcript of the interview), 2) personal document (students' journal reflection), and 3) physical evidence (Photograph, flyer and videos).

Public Records and Personal Documents

(Journal reflection in Bahasa Indonesia (not edited))

_____ kami merasakan banyak manfaat. Mulai dari dapat berlaga didepan kamera walaupun masih begitu kaku dan polosnya, menyatukan pendapat dari berbagai individu, belajar menerima pendapat orang lain, kerja sama dan kejujuran, bahkan untuk dapat memoles wajah dengan riasan pun kami dapatkan dari mata kuliah ini. Banyak hal yang tidak diajarkan dalam teori, tetapi kita dapat mempelajari itu ketika diharuskan berkelompok yang dibebankan kewajiban yang berbeda-beda setiap individunya. Akhirnya kami seperti kecanduan ingin make-up terus, hobi membuat vlog pribadi, senang dengan **adventure** dialam bebas dan terbiasa menerapkan **softskill** yang kita dapat secara tidak langsung pada mata kuliah ini.
(p.2)

When the participants (p.2, p.3 and p.5) were further questioned about performing creative drama, mostly all participants mention that drama class was interesting subject in learning English language. Drama activities offer a framework for successful language learning because they provide a stimulating and positive learning environment and can help reduce classroom anxiety which can increase student motivation and participation (Sağlamel & Kayaoğlu, 2013).

I learned several aspects of drama, such as writing drama scripts that must always be revised in every scene, I also learned aspects of listening such as listening to suggestions from friends and listening to each other while talking in drama, I learned to learn good pronunciation, and practice to get my confidence in drama. (p.3), I am very happy to be able to take a Drama language Education class because in this class the way of teaching is very different from the others. Somehow whatever is taught by the lecturer are very interesting and many lessons and experiences of course. Very happy and grateful. (p.5)

Physical Evidence

Examples of the documents selected and the data analyzed are given in Images below. The session in performing creative drama, for instance; warming up, the rehearsal, makeup character performance, flyer and drama performance were analyzed together with data from interviews so that the issue would emerge across all sets of data.



Image 1 the rehearsal



Image 2 Makeup Character Performance

Character Makeup, as the name denotes, is used to create a character to the extent of changing a subject's physical configuration to suit the requirements of a script (Rossol, 2014). Makeup that is used to assist in creating the appearance of the

student's characters that portray during creative drama. The students were expected to do their own makeup, as they were expected to supply their own stage costumes.

The findings from this study suggest that students are able to perceive and examine creative drama and the session of creative drama positively and constructively if the teaching and learning of drama are aligned according to the interests of the students and, are based on creative, flexible and student-centered.



Image 3 the Flyers of Drama Performance

Social media sites have become invaluable and supporting tools in education. The students were promoting their creative drama project using social media, such as Instagram, YouTube and Facebook. The advantages of using drama-in-education in the classroom are manifold since it has the potential to promote learners' "imagination, creativity, critical thinking, flexibility and expressivity" (Nicholsan, 2009, p. 14) without restricting their own abilities and talents and without limiting their personalities (Kalogirou et al., 2019).



Image 4 Drama Performance

Performing creative drama in English language can be one such way to reach the learning outcome and students' engagement in learning English. Creative drama is sound pedagogy that reaches students of multiple intelligences and different learning styles. It is a multi-sensory mode of learning that engages mind, body, senses, and emotions to create personal connections to the material that improve comprehension and retention (Dooley et al., 2014).

The Interview

They were interviewed by the researcher with several questions to verify; Students' feeling (Number 1, 2, 3, and 5), the core activities: creative drama process

(Number 4). The data of the interview were recorded as audio files and digital data. The participants stated their thoughts as follows (**echoing the majority**, not edited):

1. Do you feel engage in performing creative drama? How do you feel?

I felt uncomfortable in acting and I can't express something with expression, especially for performing. This is my first time for directing drama. The ideas for the story I get from my personal experience. I have been thinking about this since I get this choice at the first time, when the lecturer said that in final exam, the students will perform drama. Initially, I feel pessimist about my idea, because we all have many ideas. But my position in this group as director, I think I have a policy of choice. After doing discussion with my groups, we agreed that we will use my idea for performing drama. (p.1)

I felt nervous when I wanted to perform, there was worry, fear of something undesirable happening (p.2), When I listen about drama of course it's rare for me, the first I felt so sad, why? Because in drama I've to practice more and of course the techniques of drama is not easy, I've to spend my time for thinking more what kind of drama that I've to choose and then is there drive for our group and how to connect each other and many more. Besides that, I was really happy because one of my experience for drama that ever after we begin practice every time. (p.9)

Some students (**p.1, p.2, p.9**), however, need a lot of help in acting and performing. An awareness of their shortcomings in some cases may lead decrease their self-confident, low motivation in performing drama. Thus, an appropriate way must be found between correcting and helping students improve their skills and not demotivating them and decreasing their self-confidence. On the other hand, some students (**p.4, p.13, p.14, p.8**) who have strong language skills and have minimal problems in acting mention that creative drama performance was one of their great experiences.

I really enthusiast with it. I myself had drawn up enough for drama performance, Start from physical, mentality, the genre and kinds of drama which later we would like to present. I Think deeply before my semester come to this subject what kind of drama that I would like to present (p.4) Of course, drama in the education class is very useful for mental testing, adding vocabulary and giving a lot of experience in it. (p.13); Yes, when drama, I feel happy and get a lot of knowledge about theater, about the cohesiveness of friends, about togetherness and everything becomes an experience. (p.14) Yes, project drama is an annual project in the English Education Department. In my opinion, this project is the most anticipated project because every process in this project is never easy, really out of the box (p.8).

2. Describe what it was like to work with your group. Did you get along with them? Why or why not?

Very extraordinary, my feeling like rollercoaster up and down, with various dynamic of discussion that appears, try to unite ideas from different people of course not easy but everything change as we go through the process until finally I become more aware on the personality of each member of my group and began to care each other. (p.7); I love my team, I don't know why. The feeling is so much, togetherness is number one for us. (p.8); When I work with my group there are certainly things that don't get along, but only for a short while we try to reduce each other's egos. The thing that keeps us from getting along is it's always too late to practice. (p.6)

I think in this drama I have responsibilities to conduce my friend in acting. The first steps that we do are collecting the ideas, and I collaborate with the script-writer for make a script. In the first week, we get together for the script surgeon. And then discuss about what will be added and subtracted to the script. Then, three days later, we are doing understanding the script and selecting the main cast, and after that we doing a depth of character, especially for the main casts. I choose the cast because I think they have ability in playing a character..(p.1)

Schenker, (2017) reports the further benefits of drama in foreign language education include students' increased capacity for empathy (Kao and O'Neill 1998; Marini-Maio 2011) and identity development (Daniels and Downes 2015; Hull 2012). In addition, drama supports the development of social skills, such as teamwork, time management, conflict-solving skills, tolerance, responsibility and reliability (Nünning 1998).

It has been argued that the freedom and challenge that students experience as a result of solving the problems that arise in designing and building their projects result in high levels of student engagement (Wurdinger et al., 2007). Echoing the majority, several students (**p.7, p.8, p.6, p.1, p.11, and p.12**) share their thoughts about their group in performing creative drama. Doubtless one of the key benefits of performing creative drama is the way it encouraged students to engage with the material covered in the course.

Luckily, I have good friends in group that have responsibilities to get a perfect performance. It works perfect because we helped by member of Teater. From them we know how to prepare a performance (p.11), Dengan berbagai dinamika yang ada ahirnya segala proses pun selesai, mulai dari pembuatan trailer, editing video, sampai dengan menyiapkan properties untuk menampilkan drama (p.12)

3. Describe what it was like to perform your scene. Did you feel prepared? Did you feel nervous?

I was appointed when the drama became the main character, initially I refused, because this is the first time I became an actor in a performance, did not have the skills, but all of them always supported and encouraged me to be able to do it all, finally I was ready and serious really practice, and the results are very satisfying, because the process will not betray the results. (p.2),

I'm the main character, so that's wonderful feeling for me because my group is the second group, when I watch the first group, I really nervous but when I go on the stage and try to get reach out the feeling and do the best that I can. (p.6)

Actually my performance is become a narrator. I'm not as the one of the actor there. My feeling of course nervous and I think I prepare well. (p.7)

The researcher find out that in order to perform a drama project, the students (**p.2, p.6 and p.7**) must not only understand the material of drama in language education but also find a way to engage, express their feeling, and communicate it creatively to the audience. Therefore, knowledge is not enough; creativity, imagination, and communication skill are required to make an effective drama performance.

4. Did you learn other aspects in English language while learning Creative Drama?

I learned several aspects of drama, such as writing drama scripts that must always be revised in every scene, I also learned aspects of listening such as listening to suggestions from friends and listening to each other while talking in drama, I learned to learn good pronunciation, and practice to get my confidence in drama. (p.5) Yes of course, I learn to write when revising drama script,

*learn to correct pronunciation when doing dialogue although there is someone who said this to me it is enough to doing dialogue with Indonesia accent to be easily understood, but I think it is a process for me to learn more in the pronunciation aspect. (p.7) **Of course yeah**, especially for the pronunciation. As the narrator I've to read some of the paragraph of the text. It is increasing my pronunciation (p.8) **There are lots of something that we can learn from drama in language education**, beside we learn how to listen carefully, pronouncing well and speak up in public situation we also learn how to fight an egoist mind from our each self (p.2)*

5. How do you feel now after performing your drama?

I feel so delighted and very satisfied with the performance. (p.1)

***What I feel after doing the drama is certainly a relief because** I have already completed this assignment. In addition, our longing for our habits that always gather, joke, eat, discuss, like having new friends and family. We also know each other with their respective characters, our ignorance becomes discovered. The point is togetherness that will not be forgotten. Gratitude is grouped with them with our own efforts, our own efforts, without the help of others. Yes, we are proud, we are happy. (p.6)*

***Very happy and calm (smiling)** because free from nervousness on the day after the show, free from practice schedule that often come home late at night, hmm.. but I realize through this drama project so many memories that we've made. Even now there are many small things that often make me remember again. When I practice dialogue, singing, praying in the hall, eating together, going to tourist attraction to make trailer, making trailer two times because of Aji's hand phone incident. I'm very grateful to be able to go through of all this process. Like that.. so the last is, thank you for the opportunities that you give for us to proceed, this project is more than just a drama, but there is a drama in drama with a variety of dynamic. Thank you M... (p.9) **Alhamdulillah I feel satisfied** although our performance it was not really good but I feel satisfied because all that's our effort. Anyway I got special feeling, that is togetherness. Togetherness is the expensive feeling that we found in drama (p.10).*

The atmosphere in performing creative drama encouraged the students to speak with their friends when students performed in English; they had a purpose for speaking. To work on a drama performance, students took on various roles as researchers. The students in the project gathered information about the theme. They studied related information by themselves from various resources such as texts, some books, Internet, YouTube, movies, and so on. Those data were analyzed and adapted into their drama project. These encouraged them to be autonomous learners. It is supportive with what (Stoller et al., 2006) mentioned that the component of project based learning increases students' research skills as the students are required to take some responsibility for their own learning through the gathering, processing, and reporting of information from target language resources.

Conclusion

For the purposes of the present study, the researcher distinguishes between students' objective and self-reported (subjective) engagement. The researcher report that creative drama fosters and maintains students' engagement by providing an atmosphere which is full of fun and entertainment. Interestingly, from the results of the study, it is found that the audience is one important factor that motivated the participants of the study to perform with enjoyment. One student mentions that she and her friends feel little nervous when acting on the stage in front of an audience; however, it positively encourage them to do their best and put in their best effort to play the characters.

The current findings also have implications for the lecturer in wrestling with the daily goal of supporting students' engagement during learning activities. For instance, when students show signs of engagement in creative drama, the lecturer are more likely to provide instructional support and hence to display greater support. Similarly, when students show signs of disengagement, teachers are less likely to provide this same sort of instructional support (Skinner et al., 2008).

Enabling the engagement of whole class in a creative drama performance is suggested by the participants of this research, as well. Some are recommended all the students, even the passive ones, be engaged in drama project. Although the results are found, the study reports here have limitations. It relies on qualitative analyses and future research could include narrative inquiry or phenomenological research design to expand and confirm the results of our study. It is hoped that creative drama contexts is recognized and further explored.

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