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Welcome to Volume 9 of *Mask & Gavel*. 2020 has been a year of drastic changes with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing teachers and students alike to adapt to new methods of instruction and learning. These challenges are highlighted by **Aya Kawakami**'s article *Reflections on an Online Project-based Oral Interpretation Course: Seeking to Improve Student Emotional Well-being with a Parody Song Project* as well as **Chris Parham**'s *Description of a Theatre Review Writing Task in an Online University Classroom Setting.* I hope that both of these articles will serve as inspiration for teachers looking to adjust their classes to an online learning situation while still maintaining elements of performance.

In addition, **Chhayankdhar Singh Rathore** provides a useful guide to drama use in the classroom, specifically the Teacher-in-Role technique, with his article *Teacher-in-Role as a Tool for Scaffolding Role Plays in the English Classroom.* Furthermore, **Marcus Theobald** seeks to lend support to the use of performance in education through his study entitled *Conducting a Micro-Evaluation in an EFL Classroom for a Performance-Assisted Learning Activity.*

Finally, **Zach Strickland** provides a detailed plan for teachers to introduce debate to low-level students in *Speed Debate for Beginners* and **David Kluge** reviews *Starting Off with Role Play and Discussion* by Eric Bray.

Given all the challenges and extra work that we have faced this year, I would like to express my gratitude for all the hard work of our volunteer review and editorial staff. In particular I would like to thank **Robin Reid** for stepping in and taking on extra editorial duties while I welcomed the birth of my first child and began to adjust to the new demands of fatherhood.

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Reflections on an Online Project-based Oral Interpretation Course: Seeking to Improve Student Emotional Well-being with a Parody Song Project

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Abstract

In April 2020, the corona virus pandemic caused most universities in Japan, and the rest of the world, to go online. This article reflects upon the challenges faced in creating an online asynchronous oral interpretation class. Through the reflection, the need for sensitivity and attention to student well-being, particularly mental well-being, is considered an essential focus for the teacher, in addition to learning. The article introduces a parody song project created which focused on nurturing the emotional well-being of the students.

2020 年度前期は新型コロナウィルスの影響により日本においても多くの授業がオンラインで行われた。この論文では、ドラマの授業の中でも、特にオーラルインタープリテーションの授業においてオンデマンド方式で授業を行った試みを取り上げる。オンラインであるからこそ、学生の、特に 1 年生のメンタルケアに心を配る必要がある。この論文では、その点を考慮して行ったパロディーソングプロジェクトを紹介する。

In April of 2020, after delaying the start of the semester due to the corona virus pandemic, my university, much like many universities in Japan and throughout the world, made the decision to move classes online. Like most teachers, I began frantically trying to learn how to use a multitude of applications and platforms available and assess how best to teach communication classes online. As noted by my colleagues from across the nation, some of the

primary concerns for universities at that time were how to provide adequate education and assess attendance through this new online medium, particularly as students have varying degrees of access to computers and the Internet. Differing institutions in my region opted for synchronous online learning, asynchronous online learning, or a combination of both. Due to several issues, including access to steady Wi-Fi, I followed guidelines provided by my university and chose asynchronous online teaching. For me, the greatest challenge was how I would go about teaching online the many drama-based courses I have developed for my university. The impetus for the development of these courses had always been about encouraging student engagement. Kikuchi and Sakai (2009) indicate that prior to university, the focus on test-taking is a significant factor in demotivation towards pursuing English language education for many students. Drama approaches focus not only on communication and making learning purposeful, but also allow teachers to provide students with activities which involve both emotional and embodied engagement with the learning using the conventions of drama (Piazzoli, 2018). Yet such activities are designed to be face-to-face, interactive activities which allow students to benefit primarily from working in groups with other students, while at the same time providing them a context for using the L2 language. I was thus concerned most with how I would be able to translate this type of learning to an online, asynchronous classroom environment. In this article I will reflect on the process I went through in order to implement this kind of drama approach in an online-based oral interpretation course that I taught last semester and discuss what I learned, particularly in terms of the mental well-being of students in an online learning environment.

Feeling generally overwhelmed by the task of teaching asynchronously, I was incredibly nervous about creating an online asynchronous oral interpretation course. Oral Interpretation is essentially taking a text and performing the text in a way that conveys the essence of the message, with focus on the aesthetics and emotions (Gura & Powell, 2019). This can be done as an individual but generally it is done as a group, much like a choir, using voices and bodies to create powerful oral and physical imagery. I initially designed an online oral interpretation course for mostly first year students that followed a "safe" structure, giving assignments for students to complete individually. Each unit of learning began with a video lecture explaining an overview of the assignment, a brief explanation of the text, some key points to consider for preparation, which included some concrete examples, and a detailed step-by-step description of how to achieve the

goal of performing the assigned text. I also included a tutorial on how to use Flipgrid, (Microsoft Corporation, 2018) an online website and mobile phone application which allows to students to record and share videos. Students were then instructed to upload the videos of their performance onto Flipgrid for feedback, which I gave as a comment in Flipgrid in video format. After feedback was given to the students, they were instructed to rehearse and post a final presentation of the text for grading, again via Flipgrid. While interaction did take place in this activity, it was between myself and each individual student only. Overall, the students worked diligently and I saw improvement in their abilities to be expressive, in their pronunciation, and in their intonation. I was pleased to see students using their faces, their hands, and more importantly, conveying emotion in their performance. There were some benefits to using the medium of video as the students seemed more at ease being expressive and creative in taking risks. In the past, it was incredibly challenging to get students to become comfortable with using their facial expressions, raising their voices, and changing up the rhythm of their speech. I was surprised to see and hear genuine feeling and vulnerability, with students taking different pauses, different stresses of words, rather than copying my own example. Although, in one sense, this mode gave freedom for students to try new ways of expression, students could not experience the joy of working together with other students, nor could they attempt the essential challenge of learning to communicate emotion to an audience. It was all pretty dry and feedback came only from the teacher. It was unlike a normal oral interpretation class where we could exchange ideas and work together as a class, and receive both teacher and peer feedback.

Around the time we completed this first assignment, the department began to conduct surveys and first year student advisors attained feedback via one-on-one online meetings. Overall, students were satisfied with the content of the classes, but the primary complaints, particularly for asynchronous classes, were a lack of immediate feedback on assignments and an overall lack of community feeling in their learning, regardless of the form of the class, whether it was in real time or asynchronous. Many students who had just moved to our area were living alone for the first time, and were highly concerned with trying to make friends. The short, real-time chats in communication classes did not seem enough for them to spark friendships. Reflecting on my own experience in my courses like these, I decided to incorporate pair project work into the oral interpretation course. The assignment was to work together in pairs on a poem that had some

dialogue. The assignment required that the students discuss the piece and rehearse together, all made possible via the chat and video chat functions of Microsoft Teams. This was an incredibly unsuccessful endeavor, with students not responding to chat messages by their partners or missing rehearsal video chat appointments. Lack of proper participation would have been easier to monitor in a face-to-face class, but with the students using chat, I was unable to see if the students had been in communication. I only learned of the lack of participation just prior to the assignment's due date and could do little to intervene. This issue ended with me being a partner to multiple students, and as a result, I could not dedicate enough attention to other students who also needed guidance. We finally settled on working in small groups of 3 or 4 rather than in pairs.

Online social media platforms and teacher groups soon became full of teachers, myself included, who were lamenting the hardships and workload of online teaching. This brought again to the foreground in my mind the issue of student care. Online learning did have its benefits, as the online medium seemed to reduce stage fright and allow the students to be more expressive. However, interactions I had with students indicated to me that finding a time to meet up with all the group members, albeit online, was challenging for them, despite the suggestions I had made to use the allotted class period. The students seemed to enjoy the social aspect of group work. Yet I felt there was more I could do to use the medium of drama to help them process the difficulties of this pandemic. Thinking back to my own initial research in process drama, there were several books related to drama in education (DiE) and process drama that connected drama to therapy. Indeed, there is an area, as many may be familiar with, specifically called "drama therapy" (Landy & Montgomery, 2012). Looking at the journal articles, it was apparent that I was not knowledgeable enough to dip into this particular field in the limited time at hand. However, in other readings I came across an idea that I thought might allow students to process their emotions and reduce stress related to the current situation—the parody song. This would allow the students a chance to express their frustrations, concerns, and emotions in a healthy way through comedy, and hopefully aid in uplifting their spirits as opposed to pulling them down into negativity. Humor is a common weapon against hardship and I hoped the parody song activity would help improve the emotional health of my students.

I put forth the parody song idea to my students and immediately received positive responses. I assigned them into groups of three or four and challenged them, not only to create

parody lyrics, but to ultimately create a music video. After I showed them some example videos (The Holderness Family, 2020a, 2020b), the students seemed extremely eager to get to work. As the university provided Microsoft Teams as our online platform, different channels (online spaces) were created where they could contact each other via video chat or text, and also upload files to share with one another. We discussed different songs and ultimately chose "Shake it Off" (Swift, 2014) by Taylor Swift as it was an upbeat song with a fairly simple melody. The initial assignment was to have a meeting where they could exchange ideas about experiences they felt were funny, challenging or frustrating, made them sad, or were good learning or positive experiences that occurred as a result of the pandemic, such as social distancing, or taking online classes. After the meeting, students were tasked to summarize their ideas via a handout. These were shared between the groups and were the basis for the development of lyrics. We discussed aspects of song and poetry writing, including consideration of syllables and rhyming sounds, as opposed to similar spellings. After several rounds of editing and idea exchanges, the students had a set of lyrics. I created a series of tutorial videos beginning with pronunciation, speaking the lyrics in rhythm, and then finally singing the lyrics slowly. The students were also given a karaoke and non-karaoke version of the parody of Taylor Swift's song titled, "Wash Your Hands" to practice and record individually (see Figure 1). I asked the students to clap at a specific point prior to singing (four counts before the first word) which aided in compiling the singing via a simple music editing application, GarageBand. The app allows the user to import audio files and move, cut, modify volume, and add effects, such as creating ambience through reverb, as desired. I used the large spike in the app's visual window that the claps in the audio at the beginning created in order to align the audio files and then cut out extraneous sounds, such as the clap, and modified volume on each track to create a balance between student recordings. I then added the karaoke audio and a few effects to make the audio sound a little more natural, exported the file, and shared it via the Teams classroom.

Figure 1

Song lyrics for "Wash My Hands"

Wash Your Hands: Oral Interpretation Parody Song Project

What classes do I take? **Scared to make a mistake** **Coz my life just went on line, mmmm** **Coz my life just went on line, mmmm** **I have so much I could wear** **But I'm going no where** **So, it's PJs all the time mmm** **So, it's PJs all the time mmm** **But I'm a wiz at** **typing super-fast now** **Reports are getting easier** **more time to hang** **So, I think it's gonna be alright** **Coz people just keep cough, cough, coughing on me** **And the trains don't have enough space, space for me** **So, I'm just gonna chill, chill out at home** **And wash my hand wash my hands** **Coz my friends and I can chat, chat, chat online** **And there always twitter, tick tock, and the gram** **So, I'm just gonna chill, chill out at home** **And wash my hand wash my hands** **I can't hear my "teach"** **They are not within my reach** **Coz the 'net keeps breaking down, mmm** **Coz the 'net keeps breaking down, mmm** ***Combini* printers** **Are now my best friends** **Coz there's homework all the time, mmm** **Coz there's homework all the time, mmm**	**But I keep learning** **Through videos I star in** **Producing my own schooling** **Get family time** **So, I think it's gonna be alright** **Coz people just keep cough, cough, coughing on me** **And the trains don't have enough space, space for me** **So, I'm just gonna chill, chill out at home** **And wash my hand wash my hands** **Coz my friends and I can chat, chat, chat online** **And there always twitter, tick tock, and the "gram"** **So, I'm just gonna chill, chill out at home** **And wash my hand wash my hands** **wash my hand wash my hands** **wash my hand wash my hands** **wash my hand wash my hands** **wash my hand wash my hands**

The students, again in their teams, focused on the second phase of the project which was to create a music video. The challenge lay in trying to recreate scenes, such as being in a crowded train, which would require the students to be out in public places. Because we were in a state of emergency, students were told specifically to limit all their filming to within their residence. This

limitation actually sparked their imagination more than I anticipated and students, enlisting the help of family members and pets, were incredibly innovative. Some students used clips of their family members' legs cramped up and stepping on one another. Some used footage of themselves with their printer and a homemade Lawson sign above it. Some speeded up versions of themselves playing the piano, watching movies, and relaxing. What surprised me the most was that while I had offered to edit the clips to match the music, some students took the initiative and did all the editing themselves. Each group's music video was unique, with different interpretations of the lyrics, different expressions of the ideas in the lyrics. I could also see them taking steps to be brave and be expressive, to think outside of the box, and to debate with each other on the best way to portray the lyrics. Once all the videos were complete, they were shared with the whole class. Student activity on the channel (group discussion thread) increased significantly throughout the process of group work, and I was pleased to see the same enthusiasm continue in the interactions we had after we returned from group work and came back together as a class. Students excitedly gave feedback and they noticed good interpretations of the lyrics, in addition to good examples of editing made by other students. After giving feedback and having a discussion about the project, the students moved on to their final project, which was a short drama they created and recorded via Zoom in the same groups.

Prior to writing this teaching reflection, I conducted a short survey through the forms function on the Teams platform in order to assess overall student satisfaction of the course. The questions were kept general, not focusing on any particular activity, and I concentrated on asking students what aspects of the course they liked, which aspects they found challenging, and if there was anything they would change. Some did indicate that finding a common time to work on the group projects was difficult and at times frustrating. However, in general, the students indicated that the group work aspect was one of their favorite parts of the course. They indicated that having video lectures, as opposed to real time, had the benefit of allowing them to watch the lecture several times, which they said was helpful. When asked what they had enjoyed the most, many indicated that the parody song was their favorite activity. Some explained that their choice of the parody song project was due to the enjoyment of sharing details of their current life, while many said they liked the music aspect, and the creativity of making videos. Several students suggested increasing the number of group projects in the course.

While the students did not directly express to me or in the survey that the parody song project was particularly therapeutic, the popularity of the project could indicate that it had some cathartic benefit. Students were able to express their frustrations with learning to navigate the online platform of Microsoft Teams or issues with printing their assignments with humor. For me the most significant point of reflection in my teaching of this course was that particularly for first year students, teachers need to focus, not only on learning, but also on the emotional health of our students. Incorporating activities that seek to improve the emotional well-being of our students can provide opportunities for them to make real connections. I was so focused in the beginning on making sure proper "learning" was occurring, that I did not stop to truly think about how I could recreate a sense of connection and community in the classroom. I do not suggest that all teachers try using drama as therapy, nor do I think we need to become counselors for our students. However, I hope this reflection paper might encourage teachers to take a moment to think about how they can create a real sense of community in their online classes. As is the case with many teachers' classes, my courses will continue to be conducted online for the rest of the year. I do not have the answers yet on how to best achieve true personal connections in online courses, and I still am daunted by navigating the difficult waters of online teaching. However, I believe that this parody song project, at least in part, has helped me plot my course in the right direction.

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Description of a Theatre Review Writing Task in an Online University Classroom Setting

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Abstract

The Internet provides us with a plethora of material to read and view and is the tool that people use today to communicate and acquire information. YouTube is a globally-used platform for individuals and organizations to share audio and visual material. Due to the COVID-19 situation, many teachers in schools and universities have looked to this website to supplement their teaching as it provides a scope and depth of material that is easily and readily accessible to the public. Theatres having been forced to close because of the pandemic have used this platform to share their work, and many teachers, especially those teaching theatre or performance-related studies have accessed recordings of performances to use in the online classroom as it is, as far as I know, the only way to access the arts for free during the pandemic. As a teacher of English language with an interest in drama and theatre arts, I had been viewing many free performances as I hope to share and foster an appreciation of drama and theatre in my students. With that in mind, I attempted to design a theatre reviewing task for use in the EFL classroom. The report shows my findings and my reflections of the task, and reveals that viewing and writing about the theatre arts can have a positive influence on students.

After British prime minister Boris Johnson announced the "lockdown" in late March 2020, all theatres in Britain shut their doors to the public as most of the public were asked to "stay home". In response to this unprecedented situation, the National Theater of London announced that it would broadcast a selection of recorded productions under the banner of National Theater at Home. Initially six shows were announced – including *Jane Eyre*, *Treasure Island*, *Twelfth Night*, *Frankenstein,* and *Antony*

and Cleopatra, and premiering with Richard Bean's comedy *One Man, Two Guvnors* – and this gesture of goodwill was extended to a further ten performances, all of which were shown free of charge to the public on YouTube for a limited one week run (Lukowski, 2020). On its premiere, *One Man, Two Guvnors* was watched by 200,000 people – which was four times the number of people who saw the first National Theatre Live show of *Phedre* in 2009 – and approximately 2.5 million people watched the production during its limited run (Pollack-Pelzner, 2020). In addition to these popular broadcasts, the National Theatre Collection, a selection of 30 plays and an extensive range of theatre books, was made available (via Bloomsbury and Pro-Quest) to the global education sector. My university's library obtained access to this collection for a six-week free trial, so I decided rather fortuitously than by design to have a group of students watch and review one of the theatre productions.

Introduction

The use of drama can bring many psychological and communicative benefits to students in the English language classroom (Miccoli, 2003; Ranzoni, 2003; Sato, 2001; Shapiro & Leopold, 2012; Zyoud, 2010). But how might it benefit students in an online setting? As theatres have been closed and classrooms have gone online, perhaps the only viable option is sharing recordings of productions. Having watched most of the free productions which the National Theatre made available to the public via YouTube, and with some access to these productions through my university library, I thought it might be interesting to have students see one of them. The setting for this activity was my first-year Media Literacy class which had twenty Japanese university students with TOIEC scores ranging somewhere between 700 and 800. During the course students been introduced to literal or factual content in the form of articles, TED Talks, interviews, and debates, and since the class was taught asynchronously and there was no live platform for communication, all correspondence was carried out electronically. However, midway through the term as I was searching for an interesting project for my students and realizing that the 6-week limited trial of National Theatre Collection was soon to expire, I decided to have students watch and review a production. At that stage, I had no idea whether my students had ever seen a live piece of theatre, let alone written a review of a theatre production. Quite simply I went ahead with the plan and put my faith in the words of *Guardian* theatre reviewer Lyn Gardner, who in a 2012 *Guardian* article on the subject of how to write a theatre review had stated that "there are no rules" (Gardner, 2012). The production I chose for review was the National Theatre's *Frankenstein* which was praised in a *Telegraph* newspaper review as being 'well worth

seeing' (Spencer, 2011). The decisive factors were it was a modern adaptation of a classic story, it was, unlike many of the other shows in the collection, under two hours long, and it starred Benedict Cumberbatch, who I discovered most students knew after being made aware of their media consumption patterns (i.e., Netflix) through an activity we had done earlier in the term. The main purpose of the task was fostering a greater appreciation of arts and theatre craft in the students, and to examine whether students were able to review a piece of theatre. As my choice to do the activity was a last-minute decision, there was little time or room to guide students on how to respond to the task. One website I accessed before setting the task was a Wikihow blog entitled "How To Write A Play Review" (2020) which helpfully laid out 14 simple steps to writing a theatre review.

Table 1

"How to Write a Play Review" by Wikihow

Step	Instructions
1	Understand the purpose – give a subjective and informed response.
2	Look at structure – introduction, themes & plot, acting & direction, design elements, recommendation.
3	Read the examples – analyze other theatre reviews.
4	Read the play – get familiar with the subject matter.
5	Get a sense of the context – get an idea of the production style, the company and director.
6	Look at the program – read director's notes, production information, and cast biographies.
7	Take notes during the show – write down striking details for the review.
8	Write a rough draft immediately after watching – describe, analyze, judge.
9	Create a strong hook – something to engage readers at the start.
10	Answer 4W questions – who? what? where? when? in the first few lines.
11	Discuss the plot – summarize story, setting, characters.
12	Talk about the acting – react to relationship between the characters and believability of the actors.
13	Analyze the design – set, props, lighting, sound, costume, make-up.
14	React to the whole play – give overall judgement suggesting why audience should watch it or not.

The Task

I decided to have my students write a 300-word review and they had a two week period to watch the recording of the production and complete the review before submitting it electronically via the university learning management system. I also reduced the 14 steps

suggested in the blog to a more manageable size to fit the word count. The following table shows the areas the students were instructed to cover in their review.

Table 2

Instructed areas for students to consider when reviewing

Revised steps	Area to consider
1	Word Count
2	Cast and Crew
3	Plot and Themes
4	Acting
5	Costume and Makeup
6	Staging and Set
7	Sound and Lighting
8	State whether you liked it or would recommend it.

I chose these areas because I felt they were the typical elements addressed in theatre reviews. Word count was simply a way to measure how much students had written.

Observations

Word Count

Sixteen of the twenty students submitted a review of the production of *Frankenstein*. Three of them managed to write 300 words or more – 359 was the highest number of words, and 237 was the lowest. The average number of words was 277 which was within the 10% leeway applied to the task. However, half of the students wrote fewer than 270 words which might suggest they found it too challenging or not motivating.

Cast and Crew

The naming of those involved in the production produced some surprising results. Only five students mentioned the name of an actor in the production, and all five of them commented on the lead actor playing the creature (Benedict Cumberbatch). There was not one mention of the company that staged the production (Royal National Theatre) or the director (Danny Boyle), or any other actor or crew member involved. Seven students mentioned the title of play (*Frankenstein*). Most of the students referred to the doctor role as “Frankenstein” or “Dr.

Frankenstein" whereas three students did not even mention his name at all, which made me wonder what production they were indeed reviewing.

It was surprising that not all the students were able to distinguish between Dr. Frankenstein and the creature. Ten students correctly referred to the doctor role as Frankenstein. Among those, two students stated they had initially thought of Frankenstein as the creation. Three students did in fact mistakenly refer to Frankenstein as the creature, which is not an uncommon mistake (if you consider movie posters of *Frankenstein* with Boris Karloff's image on it). The omission and inaccuracy of basic details made some of the reviews confusing and difficult to read. The focus on Benedict Cumberbatch was not at all surprising since he is a famous actor and played the lead part in this production, but it was striking there was no interest at all in anyone else in the production.

Plot and Themes

In an interview at the time of the production with ArtsDesk about his adaptation of *Frankenstein*, playwright Nick Dear admitted "purloining" the story of Mary Shelley's novel to get the result he wanted (2011). Two significant differences between the Shelley novel and Dear's adaptation were that the story was told from the perspective of the creature rather than Dr. Frankenstein, and at the end of the production the creature's life is spared. One student expressed disappointment at this latter difference - "I want to [make] some changes in plot such as change of end". On the other hand, one student thought this ending was "thought-provoking", resembling the ending of the Ryunosuke Akutagawa's novel *Rashomon*, a story depicting two accounts of the same event which leaves readers wondering what actually happened. A common theme in both stories is self-interest because the main characters go on a trail of destruction to fulfill their needs. This fatalistic outlook was pointed out by one student who wrote "it is very dangerous to seek own ideal without others' advice or opinions because it is possible to cause disaster likes Frankenstein's experiment that created the monster in the story." In addition, six students noted the theme of revenge and other notable themes included "identity crisis", "rejection by society", "finding love", and the idea of nature versus nurture, which one student referred to as the "born good theory and born evil theory".

In the same interview playwright Dear had said he had hoped audiences would characterize the production "more by questing intelligence than by creepy thrills" (ArtsDesk, 2011), and like this, my students were showing thoughtful inquiry into the themes and plot. However, several students did acknowledge some of the squeamish elements – "zombie-like"

and "blood" – within the production, and some even seemed frightened or put off by it, which is not unsurprising considering the dark content. The major drawback was that many students did not elaborate their ideas far enough and some of them connected their ideas on plot with those on other elements of production, so the focus for the reader was not always clear.

Acting

Comments on acting were uniformly focused on the creature, the protagonist of the production. The creature was referred to, both correctly and incorrectly, in a few different ways – "the monster", "the creature", "Frankenstein" and, as one student called it, "golem". Several laudatory adjectives for example, "amazing", "wonderful", "impressive" and "unforgettable" were used to convey what they thought of Cumberbatch's acting, and some students commented on the atmosphere the actor created with adjectives like "strange", "surprising", "creepy", and "scary". Three students used simile to express physicality of the actor – "like a real zombie", "like a wild animal" and, in referring to the opening 'birth' scene, "like a newborn deer". One student gave a good description of the character's movement: "The actor looks like as if he stood up for the first time. He bended his joint unusually which helped him to look his as a non-human." Ultimately, the students were largely impressed ("I've never seen anything like this before") or overwhelmed ("I felt sort of power from them") by the Cumberbatch's performance.

By describing what they had seen and how it made them feel, students showed they understood, empathized with, and had approved of the acting. Of all the different production elements they had reviewed, comments on acting were the clearest and easiest to understand. They could state whether they liked something or not and they seemed more at ease expressing what they thought of the acting. As mentioned, students were able to use simile and metaphor to illustrate their points which helped me envisage what they had described. Fostering a greater appreciation of theatre was one of the aims so it was pleasing that students were impressed with the acting.

Sound and Lighting

Comments on lighting and sound were brief. Students could show how lighting was used to denote time of day – "sunshine and moonlight" – and could use simple adjectives to describe the effect the lighting established, for example, "if it was afternoon, the warm and bright light was used and if it was night, the dark and cold light was used". One student commented on the associative effects by stating – "When the creature moved, there was no sound and light

of only one color…(but)…When the people who live in the city moved, everyone sang the song with the music and light flashes." The most striking comment was by a student who attempted to describe what the lighting was representing – "At the beginning, the stage was darkish and illuminated by red lights so this setting could rouse feelings of nervousness". But there was an overall sense that students struggled to comment on lighting and sound. One student made the sweeping remark that the lighting was "powerful, shining and beautiful", and on sound, of which there was only only one comment, a student stated it was "classy" and "particularly drew my heart", which at the very least suggests it was effective and affective.

It seems from the responses that there was little keen interest in lighting elements. Perhaps it is because lighting, like sound is not a literal element but to a certain extent immaterial, and often supplementary to a scene in a production in how they endow and give atmosphere to the action. Changes in lighting can be very subtle, and changes in music can be fleeting, so it is not surprising students had little to say on these elements. Perhaps only skilled people in those areas are able to pick up on specifics.

Staging and Set

Observations on staging and set were also brief. Seven students commented on the size and shape of the staging — "circle" (which here means a revolving stage) — and one student observed that the "set spins and sinks". Two students remarked on the speed and smoothness of the scene changes and how this helped to show a passage in time and shift in location. A further two students pointed out some of the special effects on the stage such as the locomotive, the rain, and the use of fire.

Staging encompasses several aspects. Among these are the stage space which the actors and crew work in and the dramatic space which is the different locations shown in the production. A couple of students were able to comment on the stage space by referring to size and fluidity of changes, but no one addressed the dramatic space and the different locations within the story. Few students commented on elements of the set in relation to what was happening in the story. It is surprising that even though the production had an interesting staging and numerous innovative examples of scientific discovery in the machine age – including the impressive three thousand light bulbs which hung above the stage and the auditorium to portray the discovery of the age of electricity – students commented the least on this section.

Make up and Costumes

Students used adjectives such as "scary", "bloody", "terrible", and "horrible" to describe the bruised and scarred appearance of the creature. Similar drab expressions like "ragged" and "dirty" were used to describe costume design. Interestingly, one student made the observation that the creature acquired clothes as it grows in strength and knowledge, and another student thought the creature "looked like Adam" in the opening scene when it emerged from its incubator wearing a mere loin cloth. Two students stated that costume could be representative of "class", "profession" and "era", but their points were not supported with examples.

Although students gave brief comments about these production elements, what was apparent from the culmination of the results was there was a sense of what costume could contribute to a performance.

Is it Something the Students Liked or Would Recommend?

Considering that three students mentioned in their reviews that they had never seen live theatre before, it was encouraging to find out that most of the students had enjoyed watching the production of *Frankenstein*. Several students made positive comments such as "I am glad to see this video" and "This work is the most impressive work for me". Equally encouraging was the level of engagement students had while watching the production – "I could see this with interest until the end" and "At first, I cannot understand this video content and I thought this video is too scary for me to watch, [but]… I became to like this story". Most heartening of all were their remarks of appreciation ("Thank you for showing wonderful theater") and endorsement ("Everyone should see it"). Students showed they not only had a good time watching the production, but they had also learned a lesson from it, such as, "learn the importance of life and love", "forgive the fault of others and have a tolerant mind", and "love is the very important factor of all the living creatures". This suggests there was something valuable to be taken from this experience. Two students found relevance in the examples of science and technology in the story by stating "we already met the creature in the form of AI or robots" and "perhaps the same thing will happen in the process of making AI, clone, savior brothers... This play is lesson for us who live in 21st century".

It was good to know that students were able to make connections between the ideas in the stories and what is happening in the real world today. This suggests that stories written two hundred years ago can still have considerable importance today, and that my students could show a level of perception in finding relevance and worth in this theatrical and imaginative work of fiction. It was also good to know they enjoyed watching the recording

and learned something from it, which shows this was not only an entertaining and empowering experience but also an educational one.

Reflection

In hindsight, Gardner's assertion that "there are no rules" to writing a theatre review may not be a great deal of help when it comes to guiding students to writing a theatre review in the English language classroom. Making comments, giving brief descriptions, and offering the occasional example to illustrate a point are some of the things most of the students could do. But many of them seemed content on 'doing enough' and very were not very keen to elaborate on their ideas. For students to think more deeply and critically about the production and clearly articulate what they want to say, the task would require better planning and scaffolding, and greater motivation, and students would also need much more time to write the review. Some sort of rubric stating what is expected of the students would be useful and so would having a fuller understanding of the story, and greater knowledge of the elements and how to examine them in review. One book which would benefit this process is Pavis's *Analyzing Performance* (2004), particularly chapter 2 titled 'Tools of Analysis' as it contains a comprehensive questionnaire of elements to consider in review (see appendix). Based on my experience and findings, I would suggest the following activities to teachers who are thinking of having their students review a recorded (or live) theatre performance in class:

Table 3

Suggested examples for teachers of theatre review writing in the English Language classroom

No.	Suggestion
1.	Provide students with two or three examples of play reviews to show then what a review looks like and contains, preferably reviews of different productions of the same play to introduce plot and ideas within the story.
2.	Give students a brief synopsis with information about plot, setting, and character.
3.	Have students watch and analyze a scene or two from the production so they can learn how to identify and analyze the elements within it before attempting a review of the entire production
4.	Give students a rubric so they know exactly what is expected of them. This should cover the performance element for consideration, and suggested word counts for each performance element.
5.	Provide students with a note-taking sheet containing headings for the performance elements so they can jot down their thoughts while watching the production.
6.	Allow plenty of time for students to watch the production, write up their notes, and turn their notes into coherent thoughts. One suggestion is to use 3 ninety-minute lessons to do the following tasks: introduce the task, show review examples, analyze a scene, watch the whole production, discuss the elements (in groups, if taught synchronously, or via written correspondence, if taught asynchronously) and write up the review.

This research was very productive as it has enabled me to formulate a better way to construct this activity with Japanese learners of English. It is clear from the students' responses that they got great enjoyment out of watching the theatre production, so if the task is managed more effectively and there are clearer guidelines for students to carry it out, they can complete the written work with greater knowledge, care, and precision. I found students at this level able to reflect on the production they saw and articulate their thoughts in fairly focused and grammatically correct sentences with most of them able to meet the task requirements in terms of word count. For more in-depth and structured work, however, it might be better to try the steps I have suggested which give the students more time and space to reflect upon the performance and think about what they want to write. Additionally, for those interested, I would suggest the book *Performance Analysis* (Counsell & Wolf, 2001), which is a collection of texts on critical theory of performance.

Conclusion

A few weeks after the emergency declaration, Sonia Friedman (2010), theatre writer and critic of *The Telegraph*, said "theatre is incompatible with social distancing". Yet while theatres and schools have shut, teachers have had to search for alternative ways to bring examples of performance to their students into the online classroom. The sixteen productions presented by National Theatre of London on YouTube were a good example of what is available today online for free, and many other theatre companies have also made their work available to the public on the Internet. Viewing these theatre productions can bring benefits to people in many ways in good and bad times. The recordings of the sixteen productions were prefaced by the statement: "theatres around the world are closed and facing a devastating impact from coronavirus. Theatre and the arts are a positive force for our community in turbulent times" (National Theatre, 2020). Recorded productions of live theatre, as has been shown, can be a source of education, entertainment, and empowerment, but they can also be a source of comfort and solace in troubling times, particularly for students who are stuck at home all day behind their computer screens. Writing a review was a good way to challenge students to examine a work of theatre – a form which is often ignored in favor of cheap and populist forms of entertainment or considered too high brow. The act of critiquing a theatre production can help to enhance skills in comprehension, notation, reflection, analysis, description, and justification. It can also be a fun and emotionally rewarding experience to view a form of entertainment and a nice change from the seemingly more pedestrian and literal tasks which are often set as written assignments. Lastly, the showing of modern and digital material is satisfying for students and reminds them that they are learning ideas from the contemporary age.

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Appendix

Patrice Pavis – Theatre Analysis: Some Questions and a Questionnaire Retrieved from: https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridgecore/content/view/S0266464X00001573

Teacher-in-Role as a Tool for Scaffolding Role Plays in the English Classroom

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Abstract

While most drama-in-education activities include the students in the dramatic process, the teachers are often excluded. This exclusion creates a gulf between the fictional world inhabited by the students and the real world of the teacher, making it difficult for the teachers to scaffold and challenge the students without undermining the fictional world. One exception to this phenomenon is Teacher-in-Role. This article will analyze the process drama technique called Teacher-in-Role and discuss its functions, types, benefits, potential challenges, and solutions to avoid or manage these challenges. This article also includes examples of Teacher-in-Role to provide the readers with a better understanding of how this process drama technique can be used.

Drama-in-education activities such as roleplays, readers theatre, living newspapers, radio dramas, simulations, scenarios, skits, and process drama are often used in the field of language education, specifically English language education (Barbee, 2016; Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Rees, 2018; White, 2012). Pedagogically, these activities fall under the umbrella of performance assisted learning (Kluge, 2018). Almost all of these drama-in-education activities encourage students to create fictitious worlds and perform the activities in-role – not as their real selves but as imaginary characters. In contrast, teachers are often left out of the fictional world. Consequently, they stick out as reminders of reality. However, the fundamental law on which drama functions is the suspension of disbelief which means that the participants engaging with the drama willingly accept the fictional world as real. So, if something goes against this law

and obstructs the suspension of disbelief by reminding the participants of the reality, the drama might fail to achieve its purpose – artistic as well as pedagogical.

For this reason, teachers often struggle and hesitate with the need to interrupt role plays to scaffold the students. On the one hand, if the teacher destroys the fictional world through their interruption, the students might not be able to return to the role play with the same engagement and motivation as before. On the other hand, if they do not interrupt the role play by scaffolding, questioning, and guiding, the goals and objectives of the role play might not be met. Additionally, the students continue to look at the teacher as the central authority and power-figure in the classroom, which inhibits their desire to take initiative or ability to feel a sense of ownership of the learning process (Bowell, 2015; Freire, 1970). Teacher-in-Role (henceforth referred to as TiR) is a fitting solution to this problem as it transforms the teacher into a 'Teacher-Artist' (Taylor & Warner, 2006), enabling them to embed themselves in the role play and consequently interrupt the role play without 'popping the bubble' of the student-created fictional world. In this article, I will discuss what TiR means, how and why it is useful, how teachers can use TiR in their classes, what are the potential challenges teachers might face, and finally, this article will offer some tips and techniques for dealing with those challenges.

What is Teacher-in-Role?

TiR is a drama-in-education technique that falls under the umbrella of process drama. Process drama is an improvised form of theme-based educational drama that is episodic, created by the participants/students, does not require a pre-written script or an external audience, and uses a battery of drama techniques (Bowell & Heap, 2013; Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Piazzoli, 2018). As an external audience is absent, the parties involved in a process drama are the participants/students and the facilitator/teacher. In order to avoid confusion, this article will hereafter use the terms students and teachers instead of participants and facilitator. However, all aspects of TiR discussed in this article are equally applicable to non-classroom settings such as workshops where instead of students and teachers, the terms participants and facilitator would be more apt.

As TiR is one of the drama techniques that was developed as an integral part of process drama and is always used in process drama, it is considered a hallmark, core feature, or signature trait of process drama (Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Piazzoli, 2018; Rathore, 2017). In TiR, the teacher plays a role within the story of the classroom drama, thereby fully joining the drama (Winston, 2012). This role is shaped in relation to the roles played by the students, or it serves as a point of reference for the students to shape their own roles.

The formulation of TiR is attributed to Dorothy Heathcote, who is considered as one of the foremost proponents of drama-in-education in the last century. She is credited with laying the foundation of process drama, TiR, and the core concept of the *mantle of the expert* (Cowburn, 2013). However, it must be noted that the term process drama was popularized by Cecily O'Neill, who is also responsible for developing process drama as a structured pedagogy (Piazzoli, 2012). Heathcote's mantle of the expert is a technique that attributes expertise to the characters of a process drama. So, the students assume the roles of experts who have the specialist knowledge needed in the drama (Farmer, 2011; Winston, 2012). The use of the mantle of the expert boosts the students' confidence, engagement, and sense of ownership over the outcomes of the drama. When coupled with the mantle of the expert, TiR drastically alters the power dynamic in the classroom giving more decision-making power, control, and autonomy to the students.

Functions of TiR

The purpose of TiR is not to be a display of the teacher's acting talent. The "teacher's aim is not acting, nor entertaining, but engaging the participants" (Piazzoli, 2012, p. 33) so that they respond actively. In fact, if the teacher is too theatrical, it can be counterproductive as instead of encouraging student participation, it will make them a passive audience which is merely getting entertained and offers safe reactions such as giggles and applause or falling silent (Piazzoli, 2012; Prendiville, 2000).

To ensure engagement and active response, TiR has three key functions – "motivate action, inject dramatic tension, and provide exposition" (Brantley, 2012, p. 5). In terms of

motivating action, a teacher can enter a role to motivate physical action in the drama, to encourage plot development, and to invite reflective actions (Taylor & Warner, 2006).

The second function is to inject dramatic tension. Dramatic tension refers to a sense of "mental excitement" (Kao & O'Neill, 1998, p. 28) which leads to active participation and engagement by the students. O'Toole (2003) confesses that while dramatic tension is the driving force behind any drama and is easily identifiable, it is difficult to define because it refers to a set of emotional reactions experienced by participants of a drama both collectively and individually. O'Toole (2003) explains that dramatic tension originates in "the gap between the characters and the fulfilment of their purposes" (p. 27). So, dramatic tension lies in the constraints or challenges that prevent characters from fulfilling their purposes. In the case of TiR, the teacher can step in to create these constraints and consequently inject dramatic tension.

Furthermore, O'Toole (2003) categorizes dramatic tension into four categories. The first category is the tension of the task wherein tasks such as verbal negotiation, physical action, planning, or decision making consume time and engage the participants. The second category is the tension of relationship which refers to the relationship in the fictional world within characters that can be affected by involuntary factors such as conflict, dilemmas, and misunderstanding or voluntary factors such as intimacy between individual characters due to a shared moment, or ritual unity at a group level. Next are tensions of surprise, mystery, and secrecy caused by unexpected events, delayed expectations, a gap between expectation and reality, or withheld information leading to a gap in knowledge. Haseman and O'Toole (2017 as cited in Piazzoli, 2018) categorize the tension of mystery as separate from the tension of surprise. While the former deals with the unknown, the latter focusses on the unexpected. O'Toole's fourth and last category is metaxis which is defined as the tension of the real which is created as a result of the interaction between the fictional context of the drama and the real setting in which the participants exist. The TiR can create or accentuate any of these four categories of dramatic tension. The main effects of injecting dramatic tension are that it evokes the use of language, leads to higher intellectual and emotional engagement, and provides an impetus for action (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). TiR adds dramatic tension

by introducing plot twists or providing resistance and conflict by playing the 'devil's advocate' (McNaughton, 2004). Finally, when teachers are in-role, they can provide exposition or explanation through either volunteering information or in response to being questioned by the students (Brantley, 2012; Piazzoli, 2018).

Types of Roles

In TiR, the roles taken by a teacher are not permanent for the entire duration of the drama. The teacher can choose to enter into a different role in every episode of the process drama, depending on the required scaffolding – whether they need to motivate action, create dramatic tension, or offer an explanation. If the importance of the status of the role and the consequent power dynamics between roles is taken into consideration and power is used as the basis of categorizing the types of roles, TiR has three categories – higher status roles, equal status roles, and lower status roles (Bowell & Heap, 2017; Farmer, 2011).

Higher status roles have a positive power quotient. So, when the role which is taken on by the teacher has more power in the storyline, it is considered a higher status role. This position of power enables the TiR to manipulate the storyline actively. Additionally, a higher status role helps the teacher to fulfil most of the traditional class management functions that a teacher performs without endangering the suspension of disbelief and the integrity of the fictional world. So, teachers who are new to TiR might feel more comfortable if they begin by using higher status roles. Roles such as those of police officers, correctional officers (prison guards), emperors, field experts, bullies, gang lords, military captains, heads of a family, and immigration officers are all higher status roles.

A specific example of this can be Eucharia Donnery's immigration officer in her process drama titled *The Emigration Project* (Donnery, 2013), which had university students as participants. This drama was about the first ship of Japanese immigrants that lands in Brazil. In the second in-role episode of this drama, the students played the roles of the immigrants while the

teacher played the role of an immigration officer who interviewed the immigrants and scrutinized their documents.

Another example is my Castaway Family simulation roleplay. In this simulation, the students (first-year university students) were introduced to the Smiths – an eight-member family of Paleolithic humans from the tundra. The Smiths left their home for a warmer place, but their boat encountered a storm, and they were castaway on a tropical island. The students were informed that they all were members of the Island Management Committee and it was their task to decide and allot a suitable job for each member of the Smith family. The language learning goals were to use the vocabulary for names of occupations and to make sentences with positive and negative adjectives to describe those occupations. I used TiR to play the role of the chairperson of the Island Management Committee, thereby having the power to invite groups to present their suggestions, manage time, and call for a vote at the end to finalize which member should be given which job.

Equal status roles are those in which the teacher's role does not have an advantage or a disadvantage regarding their power dynamics with the roles of the students, thereby having a neutral power quotient. Equal status roles introduce a state of "colleagueness" (Heathcote as cited in Bowell, 2015, p. 49) which can lead to collaborative construction of the storyline and collaborative scaffolding for struggling students. Such roles include bystanders, fellow inmates, colleagues, co-passengers, and neighbours, to name a few. An example of an equal status role is that played by Dorothy Heathcote in her 2006 summer drama workshop for New York University. Landy and Montgomery (2012) recount that the students were put into roles as documentary filmmakers and Heathcote took on the role of their colleague and asked them to reflect on the impact of the office plans which they had created for their production company. Such roles have zero power over the other students' roles.

Fleming (1998) describes a process drama that was used for encouraging cultural awareness and analyzing attitudes towards other cultures with 12-14-year-olds in a school drama club. In a particular episode in the drama, the TiR was a foreign language traveler to England who has returned to his home country. The students took on the roles of his fellow compatriots and

questioned him about his experience in England. By choosing an equal status role, the TiR not only used the "colleagueness" to equalize the power dynamic but also to encourage the in-group feeling between the TiR and the students which led to an open display of and discussion on attitudes towards other cultures.

Lower status roles have a negative power quotient which means that the role played by the student has more power within the frame of the story as compared to the TiR. Such roles usually need help and depend on the students' roles for their expertise. They typically have the TiR pleading with or requesting from the students some form of assistance (McGeoch, 2012). Lower status roles are suitable for empowering the students in the process of story building while indirectly influencing the process. Brantley (2012) argues that vulnerable roles as TiR motivate students to make decisions. Roles that represent vulnerable groups such as children, victims, underlings, beggars, the homeless, people who have lost their way, or people experiencing a crisis are some examples of lower status roles. In Erika Piazzoli's process drama workshop titled *At the gypsy camp*, the experiential phase had the teacher play the role of Radi – a five-year-old gypsy child (Piazzoli, 2018). This role was of a child from a minority ethnic community which, when considered in relation to the larger societal structures, made Radi a lower status role which was non-threatening to the participants of Piazzoli's workshop. Another example, mentioned by Bowell and Heap (2013), is of higgledy-piggledy Sue, who had worn her clothes the wrong way and needed the students' help in learning how to wear her clothes properly. In this example, the expertise of knowing how to wear clothes and fasten buttons belonged to the students, and Sue was the person in a crisis.

I made use of a lower status role in a Hospitality English course that I had taught at a municipal centre for lifelong learning. The entire course was taught through a series of scripted roleplays focusing on various situations when an international tourist in Japan might need some help from the Japanese locals. While the students were presenting a rehearsed roleplay, I used TiR and entered the ongoing roleplay as an international tourist who was panicking due to an

earthquake. After a moment's pause, the students immediately understood that I was in-role and proceeded to use the phrases they had learned for emergencies to help me (the TiR) calm down.

Therefore, when using TiR, the teacher can choose either a higher status role, an equal status role, or a lower status role depending on the desired power dynamic. This power dynamic can help the teacher fulfil various functions such as scaffolding, questioning, guiding, class management, collaborating, disrupting, and facilitating.

Benefits of TiR

There is a whole range of benefits that TiR can offer to English language classrooms. These benefits include enabling teacher participation while maintaining the integrity of the dramatic medium, encouraging student participation, and bringing equality to student-teacher relationships. Linguistically, TiR enables the use of a broader range of sociolinguistic registers by both the teacher and the students. Finally, TiR helps the teacher by saving class time and offering opportunities to model behaviour and language for the students. These benefits are discussed in some detail below.

The first benefit of TiR is enabling teachers to enter the fictional world inhabited by the students. Drama activities in which only the students are in-role can make teachers feel hesitant to intervene because they are afraid of "popping the magic bubble" by forcing the students to return to student-teacher interaction. TiR enables teachers to fulfil the traditional roles of a teacher as the facilitator, primary interlocutor, and guide without risking disengaging the students from the drama process. In this sense, TiR transforms teachers into undercover agents (Prendiville, 2000) by enabling them to support and challenge the students without disrupting the fictional setting.

The next benefit is that TiR also encourages student participation as it invites, allures, and beguiles the students into the dramatic process and the fictional world. When students participate in actively shaping the fictional world, they feel a sense of ownership which increases their level of commitment and engagement (Bowell & Heap, 2013). The reason behind this is that believing in and feeling responsible for the fictional world makes the students invested in sustaining it through

their language and behaviour. Moreover, when they see their teacher as TiR, they see the teacher's commitment to their imaginary world (Aitken, 2007) which can reinforce their commitment to it.

Perhaps the most revolutionary or radical benefit of TiR is the democratization of student-teacher relationships. TiR reassigns and distributes power which generates equitable communication and leads to a "status change" (Piazzoli, 2012, p. 31). The primary reason behind this is that the students are interacting with a character instead of their real-life teacher. So, TiR creates a safe space where the students can "engage, question, and even debate with a teacher" (Brantley, 2012, p. 16). When teachers adopt characters with less inherent authority than what a teacher has in a classroom, this reassigns power which leads to greater empowerment of the students and consequently more initiative-taking by them (Brantley, 2012). Additionally, this reassigned power makes the students feel a greater sense of ownership of the learning process, which reduces learner anxiety (Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Piazzoli, 2011).

In language learning classrooms, the exposure that students receive with regard to social registers of the target language is limited. They are usually exposed to formal or semi-formal registers primarily due to the formal nature of the student-teacher relationship and the use of textbooks (written language is generally more formal than spoken language). However, due to the ability of the teacher to choose roles representing different power dynamics (higher status, equal status, and lower status roles), TiR enables the teachers to use various social registers and employ a broader range of question functions in comparison to when a teacher is out-of-role. Similarly, the students also get to use a more extensive variety of social registers and language functions (Palechorou & Winston, 2012). TiR also helps contextualize learning through in-role student-teacher dialogues.

Finally, in terms of class management, TiR helps in initiating drama economically as it saves time by establishing imaginary situations without spending much time on lengthy explanations (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). Firstly, despite extensive explanation by the teachers, the students might not understand the drama activity due to lack of vocabulary, lack of interest and attention, or an inability to translate the instructions given in the classroom setting to the fictional

world. Prendiville and Toye (2007) explain that the first thing that TiR does is catch the students' attention and make them listen to what the teacher (in this case, TiR) is saying. With regard to unfamiliar vocabulary and phrases, Ting (2013) explains that TiR helps students guess the meaning of words through the TiR's body language. Additionally, TiR also enables the teacher to model context-appropriate behaviour, language, and risk-taking for the students. Teachers can efficiently shape "the fictional circumstances of the drama from within the action as it is unfolding in immediate time" (Bowell & Heap, 2017, p.32) without having to stop the drama and return to the classroom setting repeatedly. In fact, TiR is considered "one of the most effective ways to begin a process drama" (Kao & O'Neill, 1998, p. 26).

Potential Challenges

While TiR has many benefits, I would also like to discuss the potential challenges of using TiR, as discussed by Aitken (2007). The first challenge is that TiR can lead to confusion if the students are unable to differentiate when the teacher is in-role and when they are out-of-role. Failing to make this distinction cannot only confuse the students about the expected response but also make them lose interest in the role play and come out of their roles.

Also, sometimes the teacher can feel trapped in the role and unable to use their usual teacher behaviour (Bowell & Heap, 2017). This can lead to feelings of panic or frustration and feeling intimidated with the idea of using roleplay in their class.

Additionally, sometimes the students can reject the dramatic process and the teacher's entering a role. This can happen in situations when the students have a pre-existing relationship as a group and are yet to build a relationship with the teacher. Therefore, their behaviour will be determined by the rules of their group and not by those of the teacher – especially when teachers go in-role and forfeit their institutionalized power as teacher. This rejection is called 'opting out' of the dramatic process (Aitken, 2007) and can happen to varying degrees. At a milder level, the students can opt-out by either disengaging, trying to fade into the background, or becoming passive and minimizing their participation. At a stronger level, they can stay in the drama but protest and

try to block the process by questioning the premise of the drama or protesting against any action proposed by the TiR.

Finally, with the absence of a teacher (as the teacher is in-role), the students can sometimes miss the point and forget about the learning objective of the activity. In some cases, students can fail to make the connection between what was studied as preparation and context-building before the process drama. So, the potential challenges in using TiR are confusion due to an inability to distinguish between TiR and teacher-out-of-role, lack of an exit or switch mechanism making the teachers feel trapped in their roles, opting out by the students, and losing sight of the learning objectives.

Avoiding Challenges

In order to avoid or minimize the potential challenges discussed in the previous section, three techniques and three phases should be used when engaging in TiR. The three techniques are signal, framing, and time out (Aitken, 2007; Bowell & Heap, 2017). A signal is a sign that informs the students that the teacher is entering the role. This signal can be verbal, whereby the teacher can say, "I am going into the role now". The signal can also be non-verbal such as the use of a prop. For example, the teacher can wear a hat to symbolize that they are in the role, and they can take off the hat whenever they are out of the role. The second technique, called framing, refers to a pre-process discussion in which the teacher lays out the expected behaviour of the students when the teacher is in-role and also establishes a process by which the students can cope with the teacher going in-role and the consequent absence of their "teacher". Framing also includes establishing some context about what is real and what is fiction. Apart from avoiding confusion and equipping the students with behaviour guidelines, framing also helps to establish a safe space within the fictional world. The last technique is the use of the term "time out". The teacher can use this term to step out of the role. This technique is useful in situations where the role does not permit scope for scaffolding. These techniques can help the teacher as well as the students navigate TiR with less stress and a clearer understanding of the switch between the teacher and the TiR.

Along with these three techniques, incorporating three phases into the TiR process can make the experience smoother and more effective. These three phases are pre-TiR, during TiR, and post-TiR (Piazzoli, 2018). In the pre-TiR phase, the teachers should communicate clearly with the students about the procedure of TiR. As TiR often leads to improvisation, the pre-TiR phase should be used to prepare the students for improvisation by providing them with essential vocabulary and language, register awareness, and explanation of the procedure. Finally, this phase can have a question and answer session or a brainstorming discussion among the students and the teacher to implement framing as well as coming up with mechanisms that either provide options to opt-out or suggestions to process and overcome the desire to opt-out when and if it arises.

The during-TiR phase requires the teacher to remember some vital behavioural instructions. Firstly, they should switch from their Teacher Talk to a context-specific register and style of delivery. Secondly, they must remember to create dramatic tension. Lastly, teachers should not repeatedly stop the flow of the drama to correct mistakes or provide vocabulary. Any scaffolding should happen from within the limitations of their role. An honest and useful example of how things can go wrong if the teacher does not refrain from Teacher Talk and does not alter their persona and behaviour when switching to TiR is given by Bowell (2015). She describes how failure to make these changes can not only confuse the students and have them respond according to the script of the traditional student-teacher relationship; it can also discourage student participation, dampen their motivation, and excessively slow down the speed of the activity.

Finally, the post-TiR phase focusses on a post-process discussion. The teacher and students should discuss the main things that emerged from the improvisation. Any new keywords or phrases can be discussed through group reconstruction. This phase is crucial as not having this discussion can lead to a sense of frustration among the students, particularly in situations with high dramatic tension when the students might not have been able to understand some important keywords or sentences pertaining to specific information (Piazzoli, 2018). So, a post-TiR discussion would ensure that the students have understood what happened in the drama and can keep up with the narrative. Piazzoli (2018) also suggests that, if required, teacher talk can be used

in this situation. Such a discussion can also support learners who might benefit from an explicit discussion of what information, vocabulary, and language were learned and what insights were gained through the drama activity or roleplay.

Conclusion

Teacher in role is often misunderstood as a technique that requires experience with acting or drama. Teachers often think that the focus is on artistry and that they need to be talented actors (Bowell & Heap, 2013; Bowell & Heap, 2017). However, not only is this assumption untrue, I firmly believe that TiR is quite close to the regular functions of a classroom teacher. Much like the regular teaching functions, TiR has the teachers model language, ask questions to their students, discuss the pros and cons of a situation, facilitate the story, and, in case of some simulations, chair and conduct meetings (Taylor & Warner, 2006). Therefore, TiR should be viewed as a useful tool to scaffold drama-in-education activities as "by taking a role, the teacher is in a position to support, challenge, and clarify the pupils' responses as the drama progresses" (Havell, 1987, p. 173 as cited in O'Neill, 1989, p.157).

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Conducting a Micro-Evaluation in an EFL Classroom for a Performance-Assisted Learning Activity

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Abstract

Performance–assisted learning (PAL) was introduced at the 2017 annual Japanese Association for Language Teaching (JALT) conference. It was revealed to be a "new concept in education" and that EFL university teachers were "extremely excited about its efficacy and power to motivate" (Head et al., 2018, p. 233). However, it was claimed that in many institutions, English department administrators did not share the same enthusiasm, seeing PAL activities as not academic enough. This study aims to gather a variety of qualitative data to validate the use of PAL. Over 5 weeks, a micro-evaluation involving a number of data sets was conducted on two university classes, containing 46 students in total, for a PAL activity (in this case, a four-page skit). The evaluations were individual student journals, peer-assessment, creative writing, teacher observation, and a video. The study describes the 5-week project procedure, and aims to provide more comprehensive evidence to support the use of PAL in the

EFL classroom. Findings indicate very positive student engagement in the project, and a need to give more explicit instruction to students for the creative writing task.

What is Performance-Assisted Learning (PAL)? PAL is an umbrella term that can be used for many different learning activities and is described as "using any kind of performance to assist in learning, consolidation, and assessment of content" (Kluge, 2018). Kluge also suggests that PAL "is the most efficient and authentic form for solidifying learning because it gives students opportunities to use real language in real settings". In a 2019 interview conducted by Kluge, Rod Ellis said that PAL tasks "make the expression of meaning, the conveyance of meaningful messages, primary". Such activities could be considered Task-Based Learning activities extended to include real settings. It can include and is not limited to activities such as skits, presentation, drama, music, debates, speeches, plays, oral interpretation, readers' theatre, etc.

Research into Using Drama and Performance in the EFL Classroom

Using performance in the EFL classroom encompasses a wide variety of language learning techniques. Examples of research in this field include learning ESL through literary texts (Collie & Slater, 1987), measuring speaking performance with a narrative task (Levelt, 1989), story telling by second language learners (Rintell, 1990), actor training to engage L2 learners (Butt, 1998), the educational potential of drama in ESL (Dodson, 2002), using narratives to show a variety of strategies in elaborating a story (Pavlenko, 2006), conversation analysis (Wong et al., 2010), the benefits of drama for second language learning (Davies, 1990; Boudreault, 2010; Stinson & Winston, 2011), the role of feedback in EFL classes (Klimova, 2015), engaging students in the L2 classroom using drama (Barbee, 2016), and the importance of teaching EFL through drama (Abraham, 2018).

In planning for the variety of empirical analyses gathered in this paper, a detailed framework for task evaluation was borrowed from Ellis (1997, p. 38). This involved choosing a task to evaluate, describing the task, and planning the evaluation.

Purpose of this Study

Despite all of this research discussed above, Hullah (2018) identified *Literaphobia,* "the reticence and nervousness of many teachers and students regarding 'literary' materials". One reason for this is the fact that when using drama, the teacher is challenged, having to play the role of "actor, director, playwright and teacher" (Donegan, 2020, p. 11).

In some Japanese educational institutions, teachers are given almost total autonomy to teach English as they see fit (Prichard & Moore, 2016, p. 75). In this situation, there is no specific need to justify the need to use PAL in the classroom. However, in other institutions, teachers need to convince those in charge of the value of using PAL. As this is 'a new concept in education', there is (i) little evaluative research (especially micro-evaluation) to provide such justification, and (ii) few detailed project guides for those EFL teachers thinking of using PAL in their classroom. This study aims to fill such gaps in the research.

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 46 undergraduate university students from two intact classes, in a small private university (Table 1).

Table 1

Participants' Details

Class	m	f	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
Speaking skills	9	16	17 (13f, 4m)	4 (m)	4 (3f, 1m)	
Public speaking skills	12	9		7 (2f, 5m)	11 (5f, 6m)	3 (2f, 1m)
Total (n=46)	**21**	**25**	**17**	**11**	**15**	**3**

The participants' levels of English were mixed, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Participants' English Ability

English level	Course name	
	Speaking skills	Public speaking skills
EIKEN 1	0	1
EIKEN pre-1	0	1
EIKEN 2	11	7
EIKEN pre-2	8	3
EIKEN 3	3	1
TOEIC (640)	1	0
No English test taken	2	8

Compulsory courses in universities are often split into groups according to placement test results. However, elective courses such as Speaking Skills and Public Speaking Skills where PAL activities usually take place often contain students with a very wide range in English ability. This fact should be considered when discussing the results of the analysis.

Data collection

Qualitative analysis was conducted on the following data:

1. Student journals
2. Peer-assessment
3. Creative writing
4. Teacher observations
5. Video recording

The intended outcomes are listed in the following hypotheses:

(i) Students will report positive reactions to this learning activity.

(ii) The teacher will be able to clearly observe students positive engagement with the activity.

(iii) Students will express a desire to undertake another PAL activity.

The 5-week PAL Activity Procedure

Over a period of five weeks, the skit, "An Unexpected Ending" (see Appendix A), was introduced, practiced, and performed in a class held once a week. Some of these processes used the full 90-minute class, whereas other weeks, time spent exclusively on the skit was shorter. Time spent for each week is given in the weekly reports below. In total, the project was undertaken over approximately five hours, excluding homework that was set twice. Approximately 40 minutes were spent explaining some cultural references in the script.

One student from the Public Speaking Skills group was asked to video record that group on three occasions for approximately 10-minutes each time. The student was given instructions to focus on groups and individuals during the practices and final performances. The classroom activity was not observed by external researchers.

Week 1

Participants were told about a four-page skit they would be asked to perform. They were then given a pre-test, and informed that the teacher predicted they would probably only know about 10-20% of the answers. They were reassured that this was for the teacher's private research and would not constitute part of their grade (20 minutes).

Each student was given a copy of the script and the class was split into groups of five or six. There are five speaking characters in the script plus one narrator. Character personalities were explained, and then groups undertook their first dry run read-through of the script with limited input from the teacher (20 minutes).

Homework to read over their scripts and to clarify the meaning of words they may be unsure of was assigned. They were also asked to start a journal explaining briefly how they felt about this PAL activity.

Week 2

Students were put into new groups and asked to take on a character role in the script different from the one they had in the previous week. As they read through the script, the teacher was much more involved in explaining pronunciation, exclamations, gestures emphasizing particular words, and explaining meaning and jokes. While all groups managed at least one complete run through of the script, some groups were able to read through the script twice (30 minutes).

Week 3

Five participants were chosen to act out the skit on stage. Props included a makeshift megaphone, a lunch bag, and pencils and paper under each student's chair.

As one group performed the drama on stage, the rest of the class followed the skit in their scripts and made notes as the teacher enthusiastically directed the action (30 minutes).

Week 4

Participants were asked to write a journal reflecting on their experience and feelings surrounding this skit activity thus far (10 minutes). They were then placed in new groups again and asked to perform the skits with gestures and props, emphasizing pronunciation, intonation, and engaging with the script to the best of their ability as had been demonstrated on stage the previous week (80 minutes). Once again, the teacher moved between groups and was very active in directing the group performances. For homework, students were told in their groups to choose characters and learn their lines for a final stage performance in week 5.

Week 5

Each group performed the skit on stage with props and sound effects. One student with a video camera filmed bits for later analysis. The audience of peers wrote comments about each group's staging of the skit. The class discussed particular things they thought were good, and which aspects needed improvement (90 minutes).

For homework each student was asked to write an original ending for the unfinished script, and to complete their journal with notes on their feelings about the learning activity now that it had ended.

Findings

Student journals

Students wrote a brief journal entry before, during, and after the 6-week task. In Table 5 below are a few examples of the enthusiastic responses. Each row, from left to right,

represents one student, providing a clear insight into how their feelings of confidence and enjoyment progressed.

Table 5

Generally Positive Responses from Student Journals

Student	Before	During	After
1	I feel shame in public. It is difficult for me to speak English.	I feel a little fun. If we practice the drama more, we can success it.	I was very nerves but I enjoyed drama. I want to study English more.
2	I was so anxiety.	I have anxietied yet, but I want to enjoy.	Some friends in my group helped me what made me relax. I enjoyed very much. I want to do this activity again.
3	I am so nervous!	I'm a little bit nervous but fun because I can talk with many students.	It was fun! I enjoyed it. My favourite part was after Mr. Karaoke read his poem, all students stood up and clapped their hands.
4	I can't read smoothly this text. So I thought that I will do my best to read smoothly it.	I gradually could read smoothly and understand this text. However, I can't pronounce each word clearly.	I could gain my confidence in my English than before. I thought I want to do a comedy drama again.
5	It is difficult for me to express their characters.	I was very nervous to play my role. Cause he don't have characteristic compared to others.	Before the class I can communicate in English well. However, I'm not good at to hear the English. So, I get depressed.

6	I was very interested in the skit which character we act, what the character's identity.	I feel little difficult for using own identity. I can enjoy acting.	This activity was very interesting. I will do it again. I want to act another character.
7	I think it looks difficult.	I think motion is difficult and I was a little nervous when I skit.	I think I couldn't speak too loudly. This is because I was nervous when I was it. But I enjoyed it.
8	I felt difficult that timing of sentence. I was so nervous. I have to need practice rizum and accent of sentence.	I tried to perform like to be character. I want to practice body language more in skit.	I enjoyed playing with member. Firstly, I was many mistakes but I tried to practice many times with members then it was a good experience.
9	I was just reading. I couldn't understand the story characters. I felt it's very difficult for me to act.	Fun.	I'll try to do other skits again. I understand to act as my decided character. It is easy for us to hear when we talk out clearly voice. Not only say words but to move in skit.
10	I thought difficult this activity.	We could the activity smoothly and quickly. However, I couldn't gesture.	I understand well that sentences. If I do the activity next, I have to make loud voice and use a lot of hand gesture.

Peer assessments

Students were asked to assess the final stage performances of their peers. Table 6 contains a selection of these insightful comments (the "*Teacher's voice"* refers to the character of the teacher in the script).

Table 6

Insightful Comments from Peer Assessments of the Final Stage Performances

Eye contact was good. Movement was very good and using music. Teacher's voice was big and clear. Pronunciation was great.
Everybody gesture is good! Everybody can be eye contact. Mr Karaoke's singing is nice.
Like the way they express their character. Her cowboy thigh slap is so good.
Eye contact is very good! Voice tone is nice. Pronunciation, accent and pose is good.
Each members practice very hard and move and eye contact is increase.
Good gesture. Everyone good pronunciation but not all gesture when they say "mmmmmm".
They could good pronunciation. It was easy to hear.
Twilight Zone music is very good! Nice!!
Mr Karoke is very good rhythm but it's a little quiet everyone.
Everyone reads scripts fluently without any trouble, though kinda lack the required emotion. I think they should've been more in-character.

Creative writing

Participants were asked to write an ending to the unfinished script for homework. Both groups contained students with varying English levels, so each person was asked to complete this task to the best of their ability, with no minimum or maximum word limit being set. Participants wrote an average of 34 words. However, this ranged from two students writing five words and two students writing one-page endings. Below are two examples of the students' writing:

Student A (24 words)

Teacher: Thank you Mr. Donut. Everyone could write nice poetly.
Today class is finished. See you next week!
All student: See you Mr. Sir, Tifficut, sir.

Student B (35 words)

Teacher:	OK, I want to hear more but the time is over. See you next week.
Mr. Chair:	Excuse me. When is the next class?
Teacher:	Next week.
Mr. Chair:	Next week. OK, thanks.
Teacher:	See you next week.
All students:	See you. Bye.

Student C (44 words)

Teacher:	It's time to finish this class. Please can you clean the whiteboard (points to Mr. Donut).
Mr. Donut:	Alright (stands up). I'll turn off the lights too.
All students:	Thank you, Mr. Sir Tifficut, Sir.
Mr. Ree :	What is the next class sir?
Mr. Karaoke:	English class.
Mr. Chair:	Go bananas! (Students are all happy).

Student D (95 words)

Teacher:	Oh my gosh, I almost forgot to see my mother in hospital, but bus has already gone…I can make it (cry).
All students:	Don't cry teacher! We can help you sir!
Teacher:	Thank you but how?
Mr. Ree:	It's me! I can move things everywhere with my mysterious power! So you wanna see your mom?
Teacher:	Yes, send me where she is!
Mr. Ree :	Alright! (Mysterious sounds come). (Teacher disappeared)
Other students:	Excellent! Wow! You made it! Where did you send her?
Mr. Ree :	I send her where her mother is.
Other students:	What… where?

Mr. Ree : Beyond the world… nether world!

(Twilight zone sound) for 30 second. END

Discussion

Qualitative analysis

Student journals

All students completed the journals and were found to be open to discussing their views on the activity. Participants' engagement in writing journals, peer assessment, and writing an original ending to the skit was overall very impressive and revealing, especially when considering the wide range in English ability of the participants:

(i) There was a common progression in the journals for nearly all the students from anxiety to enjoyment, ending with a boost in confidence.

(ii) Students clearly appreciated the fact that this task is achieved both individually and in a group. They talked about helping each other to achieve their final stage performance goal.

(iii) Reading the script every week helped students to understand the content and their roles within the task.

(iv) Participants expressed their understanding of the characters' individuality as written in the skit. Some said they found this helpful in escaping their own identity and talking with a different voice.

(v) Many students commented on their understanding of the importance of gestures.

(vi) A tiny percentage of students felt the task was too difficult but they all eventually concluded that the activity was enjoyable.

Peer assessment

Students made perceptive comments on their peer's performances focusing on aspects of communication such as eye contact, gesture, pronunciation, volume, and clarity of voice. This is an indication that they realize communication is multifaceted.

Creative writing

In both the student journals and peer-assessments all students made an effort to write, regardless of their grammar and spelling limitations. The creative writing task of composing an ending to the script was a particular challenge. Despite the average word count of 34 being quite small, the vast majority of participants made an effort to use dialogue, character, and action. Giving the students a minimum word count, or asking them to write a one-page ending, would have increased the average output but not necessarily the quality.

Overall, the creative writing activity showed an understanding of the text as students were able to pick up the story and follow it on to a satisfactory conclusion. Students also displayed engagement with the different character roles within the script. Most students gave voice to more than two characters in their endings. In addition, they included gesture notes in their writing which further demonstrates their acknowledgement of its importance in communication. In itself, this activity was a productive and valuable writing exercise allowing students to engage with characters and a living text. This task also revealed two students with a longstanding interest in drama, one of which gave me copies of their own scripts to use in class at a later date.

Teacher observations

It was the first time the teacher had used a five-week drama project and watching the students' reactions and enjoyment means that the activity will be incorporated into further classes. The

participants were fully engaged with the activity and attendance over the five weeks notably remained at 100%.

(i) Students soon became relaxed and familiar with the script. They fell into their roles quickly, using appropriate intonation and gestures.

(ii) In week 3, some students were seen to be directing other students having learnt specific intonation, timing, and gesture requirements from the previous week's direction.

(iii) Students fully engaged with and enjoyed the singing character, Mr. Karaoke, and picked up on the repeated phonemes joke coming from the teacher character.

(iv) There was a lot of laughing, enjoyment, and mutual applause.

(v) A number of the usually quiet students used their characters to speak with volume and confidence.

Video

As mentioned, the teacher plays a very important and active role throughout this task. Therefore, it is easy for them to miss exactly how the students are reacting and preforming, and what is needed by way of instruction. The video provides a clear record of students fully engaged in the activity, reading from their scripts, and using the correct gestures and intonation that were learnt in the process. In particular, the video showed students coaching each other and giving support within their groups. Editing of the video was left up to the student who took the film. While the quality was good, it would have been improved had some specific content of student rehearsals and final performances been included.

Conclusion

All three of the intended outcomes were achieved:

(i) Students reported positive reactions to this learning activity.

(ii) The teacher clearly observed students positive engagement with the drama.

(iii) Students did express a desire to undertake another PAL activity.

Using this particular PAL activity requires a lot of the teacher to facilitate the learning process. A thorough understanding of the nuances of the script, in particular the jokes, is essential to engage students and maximize their enjoyment of the process. This may be an obstacle for Japanese teachers not confident in their English ability. It is to be hoped that this article will inspire others to use skits in their EFL classrooms, and guide further studies into more evaluations of PAL.

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Appendix A

Skit Script

An Unexpected Ending

Classroom. Students quietly studying. Mr. Karaoke breaks his pencil.

Mr. Karaoke Can I borrow your pencil.

Mr. Donut Of course Mr. Karaoke. Here you are. You can keep it,…. I have 3 more.

Mr. Karaoke Thank you very much.

Mr. Ree Excuse me, does anyone know the capital of Colombia?

Mr. Donut The capital of Colombia is Bogota. B.O.G.O.T.A.

Mr. Ree Thank you very much.

Continue silently working. Big banging footsteps approach.

Mr. Donut Quick. The new teacher is coming.

Boys stand up, bang desks, and throw paper.

Teacher OK boys. Shush. Shh. Please be quiet! Please be quiet!

(megaphone) BOYS !!! (silence) Please be…. Quiet. Good. Thank you.

Mr. Chair Thank **you** sir.

Teacher Thank me?! Why.

Mr. Chair It was very noisy and now it is very quiet.

Teacher You're welcome, erm?

Mr. Karaoke His name is Mr. Chair

Mr. Chair Chair, sir. Marr Chair, sir (stands up).

Teacher First name…. Marr,… as in?

Mr. Ree As in Marr, sir.

Mr. Chair Mark… Anthony… Robert… Rocket… Red-robot… Rebecca… Relaxing Chair, sir.

Mr. Ree And he is Mr. Karaoke because every time he talks, he sings.

Mr. Karaoke I cannot help it.

Teacher OK. OK… please sit down on your chair over there, Mr. Chair. Thank you. OK, I am your new teacher, Mr. Tifficut.

All students Tifficut?

Teacher Yes, I know Tifficut is a little difficult….. So you can just call me…... sir. Is that OK?

All students OK. Mr. sir Tifficut sir.

Mr. Ree (Stands up) My name is Mr. Ree. But I don't know why?.... Are we going on a trip today, Mr. sir Tifficut?

Teacher I don't know. Please sit down.

Mr. Donut Yes we are sir, look….. we have all brought our packed lunches. What do you have, Mr. Karaoke?

Mr. Karaoke I have some nice cheese, I have some green peas, I have tea and kimchee, and I have custard.

Mr. Chair I have jam, ham, spam, lamb on a nan bread……. And custard. How about you, Mr. Ree?

Mr. Ree I have something very strange. Mmmmm. (Reaches in bag. Bicycle horn sound). I don't know what it is?

Mr. Donut I have a barnarnar, sultarnar, chard, lard, and a carton arv yargart…..

Teacher What is your name.

Mr. Donut Mr. Donut….. And custard.

Teacher Your name is Mr. Donut and custard!!?

All students No. Just Donut.

Teacher I see... The first lesson today is poetry. Please get out your poetry homework.

Mr. Chair Can I read first please, Mr. sir Tifficut, sir?

Teacher OK Chair, stand up there. Voice, nice and clee-air.

Mr. Chair Time…. By Marr Chair…. November 21st….. 2012…… quarter past nine…… in the morning.

Teacher OK, please begin.

Mr. Chair That's it, sir. I've finished.

Teacher OK. Very good. Does anyone else have a poem? (Mr. Karaoke puts his hand up). Mr. Karaoke.

Mr. Karaoke (Stands up. Tuning fork) Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to me, happy birthday to somebody else, that makes three happy.

(All quickly stand up and applaud, then sit down).

Teacher Wonderful, Mr. Karaoke.

Mr. Karaoke Thank you very much.

Teacher Mr. Ree, would you like to read your poem?

Mr. Ree I put it on your desk recently sir, but it has disappeared (Twilight Zone music).

Teacher Well, it's not here now…. That's very mysterious. It's a mystery, Mr. Ree.

(everybody rubs their chins: mmm)

Mr. Donut Can I read my poem, sir?

Teacher Please do, Mr. Donut.

Mr. Donut Donuts… by Mr. Donut…. Aged 12…. November 21st…. 2012….. 8:57AM….In the winter time…... about 10 degrees….

Teacher OK, OK. Please begin .

Mr. Donut Aherm….. Donuts are round, donuts are circles, donuts are brown, but never purple. Donuts are donuts, they ain't (cowboy thigh slap) nothing else, and if I were a donut, I'd eat me for my health.

The play is unfinished but has a time limit so must end here. Students decide ending.

In the Classroom

Speed Debate for Beginners

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Quick Guide

Keywords: Debate

Learner English level: Low-intermediate and above

Learner maturity: High school and above

Preparation time: None

Activity time: 45 - 60 minutes

Materials: Blackboard and chalk or whiteboard and markers.

Notes: For demonstration purposes the activity works best with a pair of teachers.

Debate is often considered one of the most challenging techniques to bring into an ESL classroom. The expectation of a good debater is someone with advanced language skills, a breadth of knowledge, and the ability to react and aggressively argue a point of view. While these qualities are certainly desirable and useful as one gains experience, they are not explicitly necessary, especially for students who are new to debate.

Like any challenge, there are certainly easy first steps that can be practiced to gain confidence and experience, and to build towards more complex and advanced language use later.

The goal of this speed debate exercise is to quickly develop the most basic debate skills using easy language.

All experienced ESL teachers are familiar with situations where students have English ability but are shy about expressing what they know. Perhaps they are second-guessing their responses or checking and double checking their answers in their heads before finally getting the confidence to try to respond. This method of answering can be safer but is not very efficient for learning and can slow the pace of a class with larger numbers of students. Additionally, slow and deliberate responses are not ideal for a debate setting.

I wanted to develop an activity in the framework of a competitive speed game to put students in a situation where they did not have time to second guess or rehearse their responses. I also wanted to make sure that in this debate activity they would not be punished for making mistakes.

It is important to start with the basics. For more advanced debate, one of the most important aspects of presenting an effective argument is to be objective, giving reasons to support a point of view that are not personal in nature. This speed debate activity is ignoring that aspect of debate for a couple of reasons. When starting out, the primary objective is a speedy response and students are naturally more able to express their own likes and opinions firsthand than they are able to speak about researched details or logical, universal truths. Objectivity is an aspect that should be tackled much later, once the students have become comfortable with the structure of a debate speech and the experience of constructing counter arguments. At this stage, largely personal or simple responses are perfectly acceptable.

The Activity

This is an overview of the steps to Speed Debate.

Round 1

1. Teachers explain and demonstrate.
2. Divide class into debate teams.
3. Student write one- or two-word reasons for their position on the topic decided upon.
4. Award a point to the faster team.

Round 2

5. Teachers explain and demonstrate.
6. Students put previous reasons into sentences.
7. Award a point for the faster team.

Round 3

8. Teachers explain and demonstrate.
9. Students put sentences into debate speech structure.
10. Award a point to the faster team.

Description

Round 1

The first step in Speed Debate is to demonstrate the activity. Modeling with just a minimal explanation is the most efficient and effective way to show the students how the activity is done.

Sample explanation:

> *"Now we will have a speed debate. The fastest side will win. English mistakes are okay. Easy answers are okay. One-word answers or two-word answers only, please. No sentences. The fastest side will win. Please watch."*

For demonstration in my own classes, I usually model using the topic of Disney vs. Ghibli. These are both animation studios that Japanese students are very familiar with and that have

distinct differences. Anything that can connect with one's own students is good for the demonstration.

The lead teacher is on one side of the board, and another teacher is on the other side. Ideally, one will have time to talk about this activity with the other teacher before class begins, but it isn't necessary. If the activity and its explanation are simple and clear enough for students, it should be clear enough for other teachers hearing about the activity for the first time. If there is not another teacher on hand, the activity can be demonstrated, albeit less effectively, by only showing one side.

Under each debate topic, the numbers 1-5 should be written on the board as well. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

Debate reasons table (blank)

Ghibli	Disney
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

The teacher begins modeling the activity by saying something like, *"I think Ghibli is better. The other teacher thinks Disney is better. Why? Are you ready? Go!"* Both teachers then quickly write one or two-word answers. For demonstration purposes it can be effective to purposely misspell a word on each side while playing. For example, see Figure 2.

Figure 2

Debate reasons table (one or two word answers)

Ghibli	Disney
1. colorful	1. songs
2. female characters	2. karacters
3. musik	3. Aladdin
4. Totoro	4. old stories
5. Japanese	5. cute

Whichever teacher finishes writing their list first makes a big show of it to make it clear that the quicker side is the winner of the activity. The class is shown that the winning side gets one point for finishing the first round. Check the answers and spelling after awarding the point. It is important to award the point first before reviewing and correcting to further enforce that speed is the only determining factor in deciding the winner of the activity. If possible, it is best to leave the teachers' answers up for demonstrating the objectives of the next round later.

Now it is the students' turn. Four or five reasons on each side is ideal. Four or five students line up on each side of the board. The teacher explains that student number one writes reason number one, student number two writes reason number two, and so on. If it is a small class of eight to ten students this works perfectly. If there are 20 students or less, the game can be played in a couple of rounds; the first half of the class plays the first round while the others watch, then the topic is changed and the remaining students do the next set. With a larger class of 40 students, one teacher could take half the class to the front of the room and the other teacher could run another speed debate at the board in the back of the class so there are more students active and engaged at all times. For an odd numbers of students, a teacher can jump in to even the teams out as well.

It is best to give the students very simple debate topics with lots of easy reasons, at least for the first time this activity is played. Some good examples are: summer vs. winter, Disneyland vs. Universal Studios Japan, Japanese food vs. Western food, etc. These topics are culturally specific and relevant to my own Japanese students, so it is good for other teachers to be mindful of bringing in topics that are within their students' own knowledge and personal experience.

The teacher can divide the class into sides based on their real opinions or just divide the group into two teams. It is fine if the teams are uneven, as long as the number of reasons each team writes is the same. Regardless of whether this activity is aimed at low-level ESL students or advanced speakers, it is best to start easy and simple, and work up to the more complex language or topics later. The students should be reminded that the objective is speed, not correct English, advanced vocabulary, or strong reasons.

The first round is played out and the quicker team is awarded with one point. Then it is time to go back and check for spelling. The reasons should be checked while being very lenient since the objective at this stage is speed rather than quality of content. If one of the reasons is really far off point, it should be corrected and changed so the reasons make sense for the next round.

Round 2

For the demonstration of round two, the teachers return to the board where they had written their original five reasons about Disney vs. Ghibli.

Sample Explanation

> *"Round two. Make sentences. The fastest side will win. Short, simple sentences are best. Mistakes are okay. The fastest side will win. Are you ready? Go!"*

Both teachers use their previously written reasons and put them into sentences (see Figure 3). As before, for demonstration purposes, it can be useful to purposely include a mistake or two.

Again, whichever teacher finishes their sentences first clearly celebrates to demonstrate they won with speed.

Figure 3

Debate reasons table (sentences)

Ghibli	Disney
1. colorful The movies are colorful.	1. songs There are fun songs.
2. female characters There are good female characters.	2. characters There are great characters.
3. music There is nice music.	3. Aladdin Aladdin is a good movie.
4. Totoro Totoro is a good movie.	4. old stories They use old stories.
5. Japanese They are Japanese.	5. cute The characters are cute.

As in round one, the point is awarded to the faster side first, *then* the sentences are checked for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Optional

If the teacher really wants to make a point of demonstrating that simple is best, at least for this activity, they could conspire with the other teacher ahead of time for one to write very simple sentences and the other to write lengthy ones. Then after points are awarded they can make the

following point: *"These sentences are better answers and have better English, but the short sentences won."*

Now it is the students' turn for round two. Using the same reasons they wrote for round one, they convert those one or two word answers into sentences. For an additional challenge, the student order could be changed so they have to write sentences for reasons that were supplied by different students.

Round two is played and the faster team is awarded a point. To keep things tidy and clear, this is a good time to erase the responses from round one while leaving the full sentences on the board.

Round 3

Now for the third and final round of speed debate. This can be a good opportunity to go over the words: introduction, reasons, and conclusion, particularly if these are new vocabulary to the students. It is also effective to have the students repeat the simple introduction and simple conclusion sentences so the students get the rhythm and pronunciation.

Sample instructions

> *"This is a debate. A debate speech must have an introduction, reasons, and a conclusion. Here is a simple debate introduction.*
> *I think A is better than B.*
> *Next, after the introduction, are the reasons in full sentences. Last, is the conclusion. Here is a simple debate conclusion:*
> *For these reasons, I think A is better than B."*

Having taught the simple introduction and conclusion, the teachers are ready to demonstrate the final round of the speed debate. The final round is simply plugging in the introduction, reading the five sentences created during round two, and then plugging in the

conclusion at the end (see Figure 4 for an example). The teachers take turns, each reading their full speed debate speech, while also timing their readings. Whoever reads the speech in a shorter amount of time is the winner.

Figure 4

Debate reasons table (speech version)

Ghibli I think Ghibli is better than Disney. 1. The movies are colorful. 2. There are good female characters. 3. There is nice music. 4. Totoro is a good movie. 5. They are Japanese. For these reasons, I think Ghibli is better than Disney.
Disney I think Disney is better than Ghibli. 1. There are fun songs. 2. There are great characters. 3. Aladdin is a good movie. 4. They use old stories. 5. The characters are cute. For these reasons, I think Disney is better than Ghibli.

Each team of students chooses one member to read their team's whole constructed speech. The chosen students from each team take turns presenting and the teacher times each side giving a point to the faster speaker. Depending on the remaining time in class, different students may attempt to read the same speech again, competing against a new opponent on the other team.

The activity can continue, changing the students' teams and the debate topics for the remaining time available in class. Once the students have played the game as teams a number of times and they are familiar with the debate format, it could be leveled up even further.

In my own experience, after completing a few speed debates of different topics I have had success with asking for two volunteers to make a new speed debate on any two sides of some simple debatable topic. For example, the two students could choose two movies or singers and debate which one is better. I timed that competition, awarding the speedier debater to be the winner.

I also like to take a moment at this point of the class to call attention to the fact that the students have developed a full debate speech with an introduction, reasons, and a conclusion with absolutely no preparation time, and that they have delivered that full speech very quickly.

Extension

This speed debate activity can be used multiple times across multiple classes. The first time the goal was speed. The next time the class meets, the speed debate activity could be re-used exactly the same but this time, spelling, grammar, and punctuation are important. Perhaps points are given for each mistake-free task as well as to the quicker team. The teacher could give bonus points if a team can find a mistake in their opponents' sentences and fix them.

The third session, the focus could be on effective or objective reasons rather than speed or lack of mistakes. Judgment for effective reasons could be given to the teachers or a student who is not in either group but is assigned to be the judge.

Conclusion

I believe this type of activity works well to break students out of the habit of sentence writing that favors slow and deliberate translation. With the activity's clear and easy framework, the students should be able to realize that they have more ability to respond quickly and have more natural responses in English.

I developed this activity for use at a high-level English Intensive Course high school and have used it there successfully several times. Students were not only able to complete the tasks of the activity effectively, but there was smiling, laughing, and excitement throughout the class.

I also had opportunities to try it at high schools with low-level students, and to my surprise they were just as successful as the more advanced school. To me this shows that the objectives of the activity effectively teach the foundational building blocks of a debate speech while also giving students the practice they need to produce language without overthinking and just reacting in a natural, communicative way.

Zach Strickland came to Japan 15 years ago and has taught all ages and education levels from infants to seniors. He was a member of the Pirates of the Dotombori bilingual, improv comedy group for 10 of those years and performed across Japan and Asia while also teaching performance workshops. He lives with his wife and daughters in Osaka.

Book Reviews

Starting Off with Role Play and Discussion

[Eric Bray. Nan'Un-Do, 2019. Pp.84. 2,000+tax ISBN: 9784523178781.]

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Around 2015, as the coordinator of a college English language program for English majors, I was looking for an oral communication book for second-year students. I was looking for something specific: the specialty of the department was an emphasis on performance in front of an audience, so a performance-based textbook that included language instruction with a lot of practice was best. I found the book! *Moving on with English: Discussion, Role Plays, Projects* (Nan'Un-Do) by Eric Bray (2007) fit all the desired criteria. The book worked well for a few years and students enjoyed creating, practicing, and performing role plays. Unfortunately, the college, which was a faculty within a university, was disbanded at the end of the 2017 academic year, so, of course, we had to stop using the book.

In 2020, in a chance discussion on Zoom with the author of the textbook, Eric Bray, I found that a second edition of the book, retitled, had been published in 2019: *Starting Off with Role Play and Discussion.* The following is a description and evaluation of the new textbook. Although I have not had a chance to use this particular textbook, I am basing this

review on my several years of using the first edition of the book and my professional views of good textbooks.

Description of the Book

The book is A4-size with a colorful cover. (See Figure 1.) Attached to the back of the last page is a CD of model conversations and useful phrases for each unit. The book is basically black and white with some blue sections and text and gray-scale photos and illustrations. There are 83 pages containing 14 units of discussion/role play, with the fifteenth unit as a review of the past 14 units. In addition, after every two units there are short review pages. Table 1 shows the arrangement.

Figure 1

Cover of Starting Off with Role Play and Discussion.

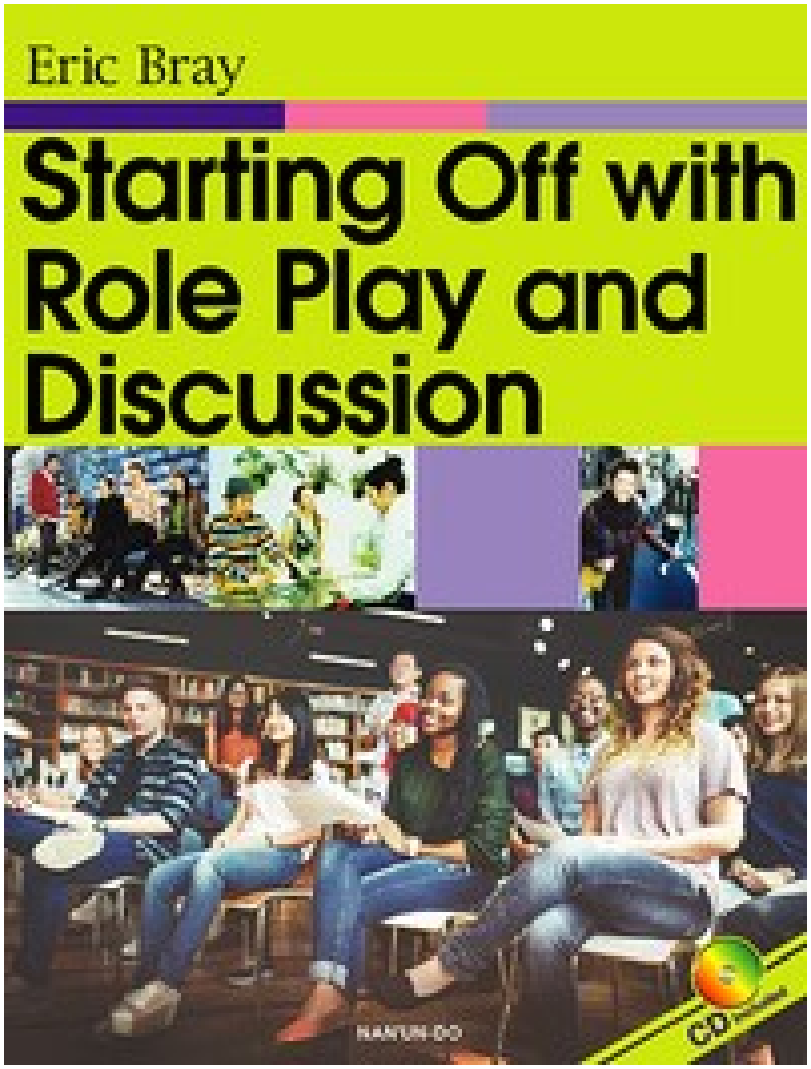

Table 1

Units and Reviews

Pages	Units
5 pages	Unit 1 – You and Your Classmates
4 pages	Unit 2 – You, Going Out to Eat
1 page	Units 1 & 2 Review and Reflection
4 pages	Unit 3 – You, Shopping
4 pages	Unit 4 – You, Out on the Town
1 page	Units 3 & 4 Review and Reflection
4 pages	Unit 5 – You, Planning a Trip
4 pages	Unit 6 – You, Hotel Guest
1 page	Units 5 & 6 Review and Reflection
5 pages	Unit 7 – You, World Traveler
5 pages	Unit 8 – You, Living with Others
1 page	Units 7 & 8 Review and Reflection
5 pages	Unit 9 – You, Job Hunting
6 pages	Unit 10 – You, Giving Good Advice
1 page	Units 9 & 10 Review and Reflection
5 pages	Unit 11 – You, Solving World Problems
5 pages	Unit 12 – You, Inventor for the Future
1 page	Units 11 & 12 Review and Reflection
4 pages	Unit 13 – You and Older People in Your Life
6 pages	Unit 14 – You, Making Your Own Role Play
1 page	Units 13 & 14 Review and Reflection
5 pages	Unit 15 – Review and Practice

As can be seen by the unit titles, the textbook is arranged in a situational syllabus manner which place the student into a variety of situations.

Formats

This textbook contains a variety of types of unit and so the following describes each type.

The Format of Unit 1

This unit is composed of some usual ice-breaking activities. It culminates in a guessing game and is not a typical unit. It could be easily replaced by the teacher's own favorite tried-and-true ice-breaking activities.

The Format of a Typical Unit: Units 2-10

A typical unit is 4-6 pages long and is made up of four activities, each activity containing one or two tasks, making this a task-based textbook. Here is a description of the activities and tasks for "Unit 2 – You, Going Out to Eat":

Activity I Discussion Preparation and Discussion

Activity 1 is a set of questions on the topic of the unit; in this case the questions are about the student's experiences of going out to eat. The task is for the student to first write an additional question, think about the questions, write answers to the questions, and finally discuss the questions with a partner or in small groups. The very first page of the textbook just before the table of contents is a page with 26 useful expressions for discussion arranged in categories: giving your opinion, agreeing, clarifying, disagreeing, and general comments.

Activity II Role Play Practice

This activity is practice for doing the role play. In this case, the first task is for students to look at a sample menu and a model conversation. In small groups, students are asked to practice the model conversation which is included on the CD. Afterwards, students modify the model conversation and the server is asked to write down the order on a sample blank order form.

Activity III Role Play Preparation

This activity requires the students to prepare their own original role play. In this case, the first task asks the students in groups to decide on the kind of restaurant they would like and decide on the name of the restaurant. In the second task, the students have to create a restaurant menu. When they finish with their menu, they have to practice being the server and customer, using the model conversation as a base.

Activity IV Role Play

In this activity students do the role play several times. The first task is to do the role play in your group, but with a twist that is quite interesting: the description of the customer includes seven different personality types and situations, with a space to add an extra one. Each customer chooses one personality type/situation and plays that part without telling anyone which they choose. The server also has seven personality types and situations with a space for an extra one and then chooses one without telling which one was chosen. After the role play, all members of the group guess which personality type and situation each actor portrayed. The second task is to perform the role play for another group, but only the student playing server, using his or her own group's restaurant name and menu, portrays the server for students from the other group. The unit works in that each activity prepares students for the next activity and the unit prepares students to create a successful role play.

The Format of a Review and Reflection Page

After each even-numbered unit is a page that serves as both a review of the last two units and as a reflection of what students have learned. In the Units 1 & 2 Review and Reflection, there are three questions/tasks that students must individually write the answers:

1. What useful new words, conversational expressions, or grammatical/usage patterns did you learn from the textbook, your teacher, or classmates?
2. Write sentences of your own using the new words, conversational expressions, or grammatical/usage patterns you wrote above.
3. What else did you learn in this class about language, culture, etc.?

The review and reflection section helps students review what they learned in the previous two units and reflect on what else they learned about language and culture, a very valuable and unique feature.

The Format of the Last Role Play Unit

In Unit 14, the last role play unit, the textbook asks students to create their own new role play on a new topic. Students in groups are asked to review all the role plays they have done so far and to come up with a new topic that they think would be useful to them in the future. They are then guided to come up with the following:

1. The situation
2. All the necessary materials
3. The useful language, and

4. The model conversation.

In groups they practice their role play. Then they perform their role play for another group. Students then evaluate the role plays using a format and rubric provided. This unit is a valuable innovation that can be added as a final stage in any role play project.

The Format of Unit 15 – Review and Practice

Unit 15 is a review and practice of all the previous units. The first task is a board game that can be played with a partner or another pair of students; that is, either in groups of two or four. The game board has squares that require the students to briefly discuss each of the 14 discussion topics and role plays they did. This is a very clever way of reviewing the contents of the book. The second task is to match terms in English with the definition in Japanese. Each of the four sets of 12 words or phrases come from three units, reviewing all the first 12 units. This goes against the spirit of the vocabulary component of each unit which allows students to create their individual vocabulary list. This activity would work better if it were incorporated into each unit or, better yet, deleted from the book. Alternatively, it could be added for each unit in a teachers guide.

Evaluation of Textbook

Looking at the textbook as a teacher considering using it for a course, it seems that it could be gone through quickly in a university oral communication course in one 15-week semester or gone through thoroughly with supplementation in one year. The whole book is good, with units 2-10 being extremely useful in real-life situations, but the units that caught my teacher eye were units 11-14 which seemed to be unique and that went beyond the utilitarian and entered the realm of creative and Big Idea units.

Below are the negative and positive points that could go into the decision of whether to use the book or not.

Points Which Could be Improved

I felt the following points could be improved.

1. Since most students no longer have access to a CD player, it would be a good idea to have easily downloadable sound files on the textbook's website.
2. The discussions are informal, and the textbook gives no guidance on the roles, role language, structure, and moves necessary for a good discussion. These items would have to be created by the teacher and distributed to students as supplemental materials.

3. The list of useful phrases for discussions is fine, but it would be better if students were required to use each phrase at least once and the phrases had boxes before or after them that could be checked each time the student used a phrase to encourage them to use the phrases repeatedly. Of course, this type of modified list could be used as a handout for students to hand in to the teacher.
4. At the end of all the roleplays in the textbook, on the last two pages of Unit 14, the textbook contains three ways to evaluate a role play and includes a seven-question self-evaluation form. It would be good if this information had been introduced earlier so that students would know how to act in a role play and what will be evaluated in their performance. These pages could have been placed as an appendix and then could have been referred to before and after each role play. Of course, the teacher could create such a rubric and self-evaluation form and have students complete it and hand it in after each performance.
5. Finally, as mentioned before, the last unit contains vocabulary for the whole book that is tested, but it is not clear where this vocabulary comes from and students may be surprised to be tested on these particular vocabulary items. Of course, the teacher can teach these items at the beginning of the unit and test them at the end of the unit.

Good Points

These are the elements that I really liked about the textbook.

1. The thing that most appealed to me was that the entire book was focused on preparing students to perform useful role plays.
2. The situations in the textbook are representative of a wide variety of common situations so the students will be motivated to explore these topics through discussion and role play.
3. The order of the four activities is logical and progresses from easy to difficult and simple to complex activities. The tasks break each activity into easily doable chunks.
4. The last question in each survey or personality/situation in a role play allows for input from the student and opportunities for the students to use their imagination.
5. The interesting structure of the role plays, with at least seven different personality/situations, allows for a wide variety of choices for the actors, ensuring that each role play will be distinctly different and makes it easier for the teacher and audience to sit through multiple performances of the same role play by different groups in the class.
6. The excellent one-page “Review and Reflection” pages help students to remember what

they did in the last few classes and reflect on what they have learned.

7. Giving the students a chance in Unit 14 to come up with an original role play situation allows them to exercise their creativity.
8. The review activity in Unit 15 that asks students to share their thoughts on the discussions and role plays of the whole book is better than a paper exam from a performance in education standpoint.
9. The review activity in Unit 15 that quizzes students on vocabulary items is a good characteristic of the textbook, especially if it includes the students' own vocabulary lists and is used before, during, and after each unit.
10. Finally, the publisher offers a teacher's manual which would give teachers not familiar with using role plays in their courses advice on how to do so. This manual would be much more valuable than is usually the case as this textbook requires the teacher to do activities that they may not be used to. (Unfortunately, I was not able to obtain a copy of the teacher's manual, so I cannot comment on its quality.)
11. Lack of full-color pages makes the book appear boring at first glance, but it does put the focus on the activities and role plays. A Japanese university language teacher once told me that colorful textbooks are interpreted as "children's books" by Japanese professors, so this judicious use of gray-scale photos and illustrations and blue sections and text make the book seem more serious than colorful textbooks. I count this as a positive characteristic.

Conclusion

Looking at the negative and positive points of *Starting Off with Role Play and Discussion*, and considering that each of the negative points could be offset by teacher-created materials, I have decided that I will definitely use it next year if face-to-face classes replace the present online ones.

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Announcements

2nd Performance in Education Research and Practice Online Conference ▪ Call for Papers and Student Showcase application deadline extended to January 24. See conference website: https://sites.google.com/view/sddpalresearchconference/home

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