Talk in Dramatic Interactions: An Examination of Three Discourse-Based Studies in Literacy Classes

Irfan Rifai [1][12], Firman Parlindungan [2][13], Rahmad Nuthihar [3][14]

Abstract

Process drama or educational drama, the use of dramatic approaches in literacy class, is not a classroom performance or a skit. It is not a classroom event where students memorize a script and perform a story for other students to watch. For Heathcote and Herbert (1985), Carroll (1986), O'Neill and Lambert (1982), Warner (2013) and Taylor (2006), or Edmiston (2013), it has become the tool to explore social issues, history, or science lessons that have "less emphasis on story and character development and more on problem-solving and living through a particular moment in time" (Wagner, 1999, p.5). Studies on classroom talks during dramatic interactions, unfortunately, are limited. After a systemic online search, three studies are selected for further analysis: Harden (2015), Epstein (2004), and Kao, et al. (2011). These three existing studies explore the discourses in educational drama settings from various contexts, participants, and texts. The three studies are examined for their positions in the extant literature, methodology, and contributions to the field. The examination reveals the predominant perspectives, methodologies, dramatic strategies, and issues frequently discussed within the field.

Keywords

Process drama, discourse analysis, talk in process drama, literacy

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Introduction

Heathcote emphasizes that the objective of integrating drama into the classroom is to bring out what students already know about the world and to make them see from other people's points of view when responding to an issue (as cited in Wagner, 1998). In a drama-based learning class, this is done by having everyone in the class pretend to be fictional characters who are set to solve a shared problem. In this class, the classroom becomes a temporary imaginary world where students collaborate to find solutions to the problem in a contextualized setting.

When students talk and think together to solve a problem, Bowell and Heap (2013) recognize that the teacher simultaneously thinks and acts as a playwright, a director, and an actor. As a playwright, the teacher thinks about helping students to craft the story. As a director, the teacher steers students to perform a dramatic structure; as an actor, the teacher performs as a fictional character trying to influence students' thinking from inside of the story world. As a teacher, he or she makes sure that all of the thinking happens simultaneously and that learning takes place. By taking multiple roles in a drama-based class, the teacher steps out of the traditional stance "to tell" and "to instruct" and takes different stances to set the class mood and to direct the dramatic learning events in the class (Johnson & O'Neill, 1984, p. 589).

A drama-based literacy class could become a forum for students and teachers to talk about texts in which language is the crucial means of sharing. Accompanying the talk in a drama-based literacy class is the juxtaposition of image, movement, and sound (Baldwin, 2004) that promotes students' meaning-making process. Moreover, unlike the regular classroom discussion about texts, the talks about texts in dramatic events offer productive discussion due to interactions and negotiations of meaning among members of the class before, during, and after the dramatic events.

Before the dramatic event takes place, the classroom talk that occurs is mostly about preparing students for dramatic events. It is the time when the teacher sets the structure and scenes before playing in roles with the students. During this talk situation, a teacher elicits creative responses from the group, challenges superficial responses, identifies and supports contributions that have the potential for learning, finds structures that expose students to the issues, and encourages the group to explore what they don't know rather than enact what they do know. The reflection phase of talks in a dramatic event takes place last and is as integral a part of learning in the process drama as it is in the learning in general. Through the back and forth and collaborative nature of meaning negotiation in the three situations/phases, teachers and students are involved in the talk that could change students' understanding and how they think about the problems (Edmiston, 2013).

Teacher's talk during educational drama or a process drama event plays a major role in enhancing students' learning and literacy development at school. Heathcote (1970) notes that drama naturally serves thinking, talking, and writing through role-playing and collaborative work. Similarly, Carroll (1980) believes that the act of role-taking in the classroom is central to the creation of discourses that represent student thinking. For Carroll (1988), drama is a creative force that demands a different sort of discourse from both teacher and students. In his study, he used socio-linguistic frameworks and Halliday's (1973) systemic linguistics to compare the talks that occurred in drama-based approach classes and the talks in non-drama-based classes. As a result, Carroll indicated that the roles that the teachers and students play in a process drama influenced the ways that they thought and talked about an issue. He also found that the

interactions between the teachers and students were open-ended due to the teacher's shifting position from telling to guiding and the reduced talking time.

Since the early work of Carroll, studies of talk in drama have received little attention until the emergence of the works of Kao (1998; 2011) and Freebody (2010; 2011; 2013). In 1998, Kao and O'Neill published a book about the integration of process drama in second language education that was primarily based on the study of university students' discourses during a 14-week drama-oriented English class. Through analysis of the participants' discourse, they discussed the nature of dialogue in drama, the continuum of drama approaches in second language learning, and the planning and evaluation of second language development in the drama-oriented classroom. This work was extensively quoted, especially within the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). Studies by Anderson and Loughlin (2014) and Anderson and Berry (2015) are two other works within the field that covered the academic language use and the on-task behaviors of ESL students during classroom drama sessions. In 2011, Kao and her colleagues published another discourse-based study to explore the questioning techniques used to promote second language oral proficiency. In this study, they investigated the functions of questioning in two groups of English as Foreign Language (EFL) university students in Taiwan. This study will be further explored in this paper.

Different from Kao's work, Freebody's works (2010; 2011; 2013) were mostly concerned with issues of social justice. For example, in her article published in 2010, she analyzed the discourses of two different groups of students from high and low social-economic statuses (SES) as they provided moral reasoning when interacting in roles. She found that students from various SES interacted differently when they were faced with ethical issues regarding future life, prospects, and pathways.

While considering Carroll's perspectives of the roles of talk in drama, our objective is to explore how current studies portray the roles of talk during dramatic activities in literacy classes. Our definition of talk is built upon the view that talk is a cognitive tool to help students organize thoughts, to reason, to plan, and to reflect on their actions and is also a sociocultural tool for thinking together (Wilkinson, Soter, & Murphy, 2010) as it is often revealed in dramatic classroom interaction. The focus of this paper is to review the studies of Harden (2015), Epstein (2005), and Kao et al. (2011), especially on their locations in the extant literature, methodology, and contributions to the field.

Method

In this paper, process drama is defined as a planned, unscripted drama that is developed episodically or in units of actions to create exchanges of thoughts and ideas among participants (Taylor & Warner, 2006). It is often used interchangeably with Drama in Education (DiE), educational drama, or classroom drama. With this definition, we searched and gathered only studies that explored drama-based learnings in literacy classes.

To gather empirical studies that examined the roles of talks or dialogues during a dramatic interaction in literacy classes, we searched through Google Scholar and our universities' online research databases such as Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson), Education Research Complete, ERIC, and PsycINFO. To gather relevant studies, we utilized the following terms in searching: process drama / drama / educational drama / drama in education; discourse / discourse analysis / talk; texts / literary texts; and literacy / reading/ writing.

The search resulted in nine studies that were published from 1988 to 2015. From the nine studies, I would focus on reviewing three discourse analysis studies because of their study contexts, methodology choices, data analysis methods, and literacy activities. Table 1 consists of the list of the articles gathered during the searching process.

Table 1. Discourse-Based Studies in Drama-Oriented Literacy Classes

Study	
1	Harden, A. (2015). The discourse of drama supporting literacy learning in an early years classroom. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, *38*(3), 141.
2	Kao, S. M., Carkin, G., & Hsu, L. F. (2011). Questioning techniques for promoting language learning with students of limited L2 oral proficiency in a drama-oriented language classroom. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, *16*(4), 489-515.
3	Epstein, S. D. (2004). Reimagining literacy practices: Creating living Midrash from ancient texts through tableau. *Journal of Jewish Education*, *70*(1-2), 60-73.
4	Anderson, A., & Loughlin, S. M. (2014). The influence of classroom drama on English learners' academic language use during English language arts lessons. *Bilingual Research Journal*, *37*(3), 263-286.
5	Carroll, J. (1988). Terra incognita: Mapping drama talk. *National Association for Drama in Education*, 12:2, 13–21.
6	Freebody, K. (2010). Exploring teacher-student interactions and moral reasoning practices in drama classrooms. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, *15*(2), 209-225.
7	Wohlwend, K. E. (2009). Damsels in discourse: Girls consuming and producing identity texts through Disney princess play. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *44*(1), 57-83.
8	Anderson, A., & Berry, K. (2015). The influence of classroom drama on teachers' language and students' on-task behavior. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, *59*(4), 197-206.
9	Dunn, J. (2008). Playing around with improvisation: An analysis of the text creation processes used within the preadolescent dramatic play. *Research in Drama Education*, *13*(1), 55-70.

Findings

After searching for discourse analysis studies that explored students' interactions during dramatic activities, we learned that such studies are limited. The three studies included in this section, Harden (2015), Epstein (2005), and Kao et al. (2011), were selected based on their choice of research methodologies and data analysis, contexts of the studies, locations in the extant literature, and contributions to the field. In this section, I will present the summaries of the three studies and the rationale behind their inclusions.

As part of her dissertation that applied qualitative multiple case study methodology, Harden (2015) used self-study methodology to explore her emergence as a drama and literacy teacher in the early year program. In this self-study, she analyzed her discourse with her students to provide insights on the use of drama as a pedagogy for written literacy. To complement the

study of the discourse, she examined the artifacts that her students produced during and after the drama events.

Harden used Halliday's functional linguistics approach to discourse analysis and replicated Christie's models of descriptors and categories (2005). Another theoretical framework that she adopted was the Kress socio-semiotic lens to examine children's emerging literacy. In addition to the theories mentioned above, she included Lindqvist's concept of 'play world' and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concepts to explain her pedagogical guided drama (Harden, 2015) approach. The guided drama concept she incorporated was Heathcote's mantle of the expert (Heathcote & Herbert, 1985) and a drama strategy called tableau. Mantle of the expert is a dramatic approach designed by Heathcote that positions children as experts in a group who are working together to solve some ethical dilemma. Tableau is a dramatic technique that requires students to transform their interpretations of an issue from a text or from elsewhere into a freeze-frame or still life form. In a tableau, the teacher takes a lower status role by asking questions.

The discourse analysis study was guided by the following questions: "Were the children engaged with my language as well as with my actions? Were cognition and memory supported by visual cues and action? How effectively was the scientific investigative process presented and understood?" (Harden, 2015, p. 144).

Like Christie, Harden categorized her verbal and non-verbal interactions with her students under several interpersonal modes of address. She tallied interrogation (questioning) frequency as well as declarative, imperative, affirmative, and contradictory statements and explanations. Within the textual function that she had defined, she looked for evidence of the inclusive "we" and "let's." She tracked the thematic progressions between teacher and students that Christie had related to power and status. Beyond Christie's model, she looked for dramatic features such as tension, pace, adoption of the mantle of experts, and identification with roles and the status assumed in roles.

Harden divided her analysis into two situational features: interpersonal features and textual features. In her description, the interpersonal metafunction represents the status and relationships between the teacher and the students. The textual metafunction deals with how themes are introduced and carried forward by participants, exercising their relative power and responsibility in the learning situation. The interpersonal feature represents the characteristics of the interactions that happened between Harden as the teacher and her students during the role-playing event.

From the discourse, she gathered twenty-seven declarative statements from students in comparison to her twenty-eight declarative statements. With this data, she claimed that her modeling talk was transferred to students' ways of responding to her and other students. She found no contradiction occurring—only affirmation from teacher and students. She revealed no explanatory teacher monologues as her talks were open-ended and mostly modeled, demonstrated, and imitated. As evidence, she emphasized that most students used words such as "let's," "just," and "look" as they talked, following her model.

In the analysis of the textual features, Harden tracked the productions of themes that emerged from the interactions between her and her students. The themes that emerged from the interactions were improvisation that came out seven times at the commencement of the action and twenty-seven times as a feature of the speculative discoveries. She also identified that the

children provided seventeen topical themes that were stimulated by leading questions or offered spontaneously. Their contributions to the interactions actively led and developed the improvisation.

The second study analyzed in this context is a study by Epstein (2004). Epstein (2004) suggested that Jewish educators revisit what have become the characteristics of Jewish study—critical questioning of narratives and reanimating them to push the texts to their boundaries, due to the lack of practices that explore the deeper meaning of the narrative from the Jewish Bible, according to Epstein, this will give students the opportunities to create their own "stories-beyond-the story" (Wolf et al.,1996, as cited in Epstein, 2004, p. 60) or *midrashim*. Furthermore, students might place themselves in *the grand conversation* of textual interpretation within such a context of learning.

This is a "practitioner research," insiders' research done by practitioners by using their own site as the focus of their study (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994, as cited in Epstein, 2004, p. 60), which was designed to explore how participatory drama enabled students to question the Bible actively and to deal with texts' complexities within one supplementary school classroom. The study was built upon Street's (1984, 1995) ideological model of literacy. In this model, Street defines literacy as a series of interactions of the interlocutors that goes beyond finding what is in people's heads and literacy skills. It also implies that to study a literacy event, one would need to consider the interactions and the resources involved in the ideological acts. Epstein constructed her study upon Gee's (1998) framework of discourse analysis to explore the social practices of collaborative dramatic explication as students worked "at the edge of text" (Wolf, Edmiston, & Enciso, 1996, p. 494). The study was guided by the following overarching question: "How and what do students negotiate as they build tableau based upon biblical texts?" (Epstein, 2004, p.60).

The discourse data were collected in River Heights Congregational School, a Reconstructionist congregational school located in the Metropolitan New York area, over the course of four months (February-May 2002). Twelve students within a mixed grade-five and grade-six classroom participated in facilitated drama-oriented text study for two hours on Tuesday and Thursday. Epstein videotaped the sessionKaos and analyzed how students utilized the varied resources of gesture, talk, and images to produce interpretations of the text. Epstein kept field notes of her observations and kept a journal, noting her reflections and impressions of the dramatic and literacy events. She also used the video record or pictures of the tableau as springboards for audiotaped group interviews following the sessions.

Epstein analyzed the language and gestures students used to engage in literacy events to understand the varied resources students brought to their interpretations. To help with the analysis, she incorporated Gee's (1988) building tasks and tools to analyze interactions. She reviewed the data by repetitively watching the videos, creating narrative descriptions of the literacy events, developing broad categories of social interactions, identifying the ordinary and disruptive social practices, and then selecting the discourse analysis events that represented the patterns and ruptures.

The six-building tasks offered by Gee (1998, in Epstein, 2004) highlighted various aspects of meaning-making built within a social context. The building tasks include questions under the semiotic building, world building, activity building, sociocultural situated identity and relationship building, political building, and connection building. Epstein used these six sets of questions and Gee's (1998) tools of inquiry—discourse, situated meanings, cultural models,

situated identities, social languages, and conversations—to analyze students' interpretations during two dramatic collaborative activities, tableau and hot seating.

The students in the study were hesitant to question the stories from the Bible but shifted in their perspectives as soon as they picked up the roles for a visual representation (tableau) of the stories of Sarah, Hagar, and Abel. When students were involved in hot seating, they voluntarily asked questions and, as a result, entered the actions and the thinking of the characters from the narrative. During these two drama-based literacy events, she found that the students were engaged in semiotic building, political building, and connection building as they negotiated whose ideas would be heard, accepted, and represented in their interpretation of why Sarah sent Ishmael away (Epstein, 2004). Epstein also found that the students made intertextual links to give ideas validity. Based on her analysis of students' interactions, she found that the intertextual links that students made were not limited to printed texts and images but extended to conversations that were made possible through dramatic techniques such as hot seating and tableau.

As the result of the analysis, Epstein suggested some pedagogical implications. First, she suggested that Discourse of the Bible was to be adopted as a living text. It means that the Discourse of the Bible could be questioned and reinterpreted. Second, she also suggested that Jewish educators find ways to integrate learning that encourages students to verbalize their intertextual links to other written texts or previous verbal conversations during biblical interpretation. Third, she advised students to be involved in the acts of translating meanings from one sign to another for deeper meaning-making. The use of tableau and hot seating encouraged her students to perform reflective thinking and discussion about the meaning of the verses. Finally, she strongly suggested that Jewish educators use drama to engage students in open-ended talk.

The last study analyzed was the study conducted by Kao et al. (2011). For Kao and her colleagues, questioning plays a key role in conducting classroom drama activities. As teachers ask questions in and out of roles during process drama, their questions are aimed to shape the drama, reveal the details, and sequence the scenes. This act of questioning, according to Kao et al. (2011), projects authentic linguistic contexts for the participants to communicate and negotiate. For this reason, Kao and her colleagues used discourse analysis to study the use of process drama and its strategies within two groups of Taiwanese college students who had limited oral proficiency. This study focused on the question formats and functions used by two teachers in organizing their talks in and out of the roles.

The study was built upon Grice's (1989) *maxim of quality* to identify display (DQ) and referential questions (RQ). A display question is a question to which the answer is already known by the initiator. A referential question, on the other hand, is a question aiming to elicit unknown information from the initiator. In addition to the two types of questions, they also referred to six of Tsui's (1992) question functions as a framework for analyzing the different types of responses prospected by the addressees and two other categories added by Weng (2009), making them all eight categories of the analytical framework. These categories are informed, confirm, agree, commit, repeat, clarify, pseudo, and understanding check.

The two teachers in the study incorporated different drama techniques, process drama and readers' theater, to help English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students develop the four skills of English. The participants were 30 university students of low to intermediate English proficiency who had little or no experience in the use of drama to learn English. The primary

objectives of this study were to find out how question functions were used by the teachers and the students in general and by the teachers when they were in-role and out-of-role. The study was divided into three week-long sessions. The first week was devoted to the use of applied dramatic techniques, the second week involved process drama, and the third week was dedicated to readers' theater. Teachers' and students' interactions from the two classes were collected in audio and video form. Selective drama activities were transcribed for the analysis of question functions.

The results of the discourse data analysis were presented in the quantitative description of question functions data and interpretive descriptions of the interactions. Table 2 describes the spread of the question functions between teachers and students. The teacher made use of all eight-question functions, while the students used only two of them, confirm (65%) and inform (35%). Kao and her colleagues suggested that it was an indication that eliciting new information from the students was a primary instructional goal in the classroom. In other words, the teachers designed the framework of drama activities, but the content was built from the contribution of the students and the teachers together.

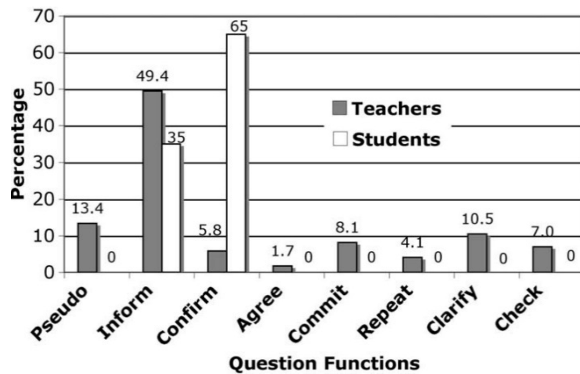

Figure 1. Question Functions Between Teachers and Students During Dramatic Interactions

In Figure 1, Kao et al. (2011) found that the teachers' question functions showed a different pattern. The teachers designated about half of their total questions to seek new information (inform, 49.4%). It was also found that the teachers applied the other seven functions more evenly than the students did, ranking them from high to low as pseudo (13.4%), clarify (10.5%), commit (8.1%), understanding check (7%), confirm (5.8%), repeat (4.1%), and agree (1.7%).

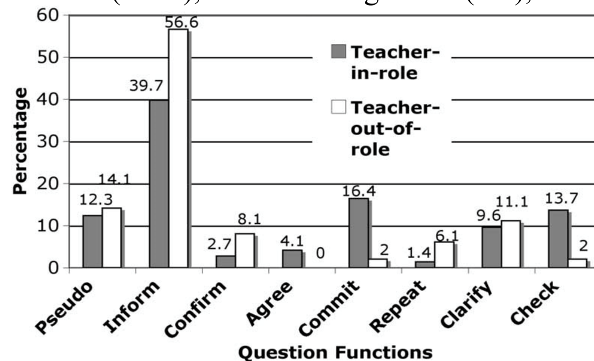

Figure 2. Question Functions of Teachers in and out of Roles

Figure 2 represents the result of comparison between question functions designated by the teachers in-role versus out-of-role. Kao et al. (2011) found that the teachers used pseudo

question functions quite often with this group of students, regardless of their roles in the activities.

The second part of the analysis was the interpretive analysis of the question functions. The researchers of the study presented their interpretation of pieces of interactions based on the eight categories. In the analysis of the *inform* function, the researchers found that the teachers in the study used this questioning technique to encourage the students to speak out and exchange their ideas. As for the students, inform questions were mostly used to seek information or explanation of new words that they did not know.

In the study, it was found that the teachers also used pseudo questions but extended their functions beyond evaluating the knowledge of the addressed students toward preparing students for the upcoming scene. It was also reported that the teacher in the role as the chief of police used an understanding check question to 'threaten' the police investigators, the students in the role, into performing their duty with the given authority of their chief. Further in the analysis, it was found that the teachers raised all the committed questions for the purpose of engaging the students with some action. According to Kao, et al. (2011), the analyses show that dramatic roles enabled the teachers to make use of a wider range of question functions with different social registers.

Besides the quantitative and descriptive analysis of the question in the interactions, the researchers also conducted pretests and posttests to measure four language skills. The quantitative element of the study was reported fully in another article (Hsu, Kao, & Carkin, 2009). Kao et al. (2011) found that the students had produced significantly more words and communication units and that the mean length of the communication unit was also significantly longer in the posttest for their oral competencies. The data from the written tests also showed some significant improvement in terms of the number of simple sentences' production and in the quality of their writing. In other words, Kao et al. (2011) claimed that the students had learned to express their ideas more efficiently and precisely.

The study's researchers concluded by offering some pedagogical implications and research suggestions. First, they suggested that the status of the teachers, in-role or out-of-role, could determine how they use and distribute the question functions in the activities. Second, when working with low-level language learners with little drama experience, teachers need to pay special attention to the pace and complexity of drama scenes and need to check their understanding of the roles and assigned tasks. Third, the make-believe moments in dramatic situations enable teachers to bring different social contexts, relationships and registers into an otherwise rather fixed classroom discourse setting.

Discussion

In this section, we review the three studies' location in the extant literature, their research methodology and analysis, and their contribution to the field. To locate the three studies in the extant literature, I am going to review first the development of the field of talk analysis in educational drama and put the selected studies in a timeline to recognize its succession. Then, in the methodology review, we examine the three studies based on their rigor and system of analysis, transparency in analysis, substantiation of claims with evidence, and representation of analysis and results. These four points of analysis are adopted from Greckhamer & Cilesiz

(2014). Lastly, we revisit the studies' objectives and examine their contribution to the field of talk study in dramatic interactions.

On the Location of the Studies in the Extant Literature

Although educational drama practitioners and researchers have long acknowledged the significance of talk and dialogue in process drama (Heathcote, 1970; Bolton,1979; O'Neill, 1989; O'Neill & Lambert, 1982), it was John Carroll who brought the discussion of talk on a more serious note. Before his dissertation work that compared between talks in drama-based classroom with talks in non-drama-based classrooms in 1986, Carroll had written two academic works addressing the distinction of talk in drama. These two previous studies (1978 and 1980) established his thinking and ideas on language functions and the roles of a teacher in dramatic events.

In 1994, under the supervision of Cecily O'Neill, a Taiwan-based Kao published her dissertation that studied the discourse of university students studying English through process drama. With some modification and addition, the dissertation was then published as a book in 1998. It has now become one of the most cited books about drama in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESOL) field. Kao continued to show interest in studying discourse in dramatic events. In 2011, she and her colleagues published an article that focused on questioning and its impacts on student and teacher language use. This work, reviewed in this paper, is followed by studies from Anderson and Berry (2014) and Anderson and Loughlin (2015) that focused on analyzing the language use and the task behavior of the students in EFL classes.

A Jewish educator, Epstein (2004), made an interesting study when she examined the discourse of her students who responded to the stories from the Bible through tableau and hot seating. She made some very valuable suggestions to fellow Jewish educators about the integration of drama and some of its elements in studying, questioning, and materializing the narratives from the Bible. Elsewhere in Australia, Freebody (2010, 2011, 2013) categorized three categories of talk in classroom dramatic events into pedagogical / logistic talk, sociocultural talk, and in role talks to examine issues of social justice in adolescent classrooms. Although her studies are very important in the field, I did not put any of her studies in this focused review due to the differences that we have in topics and contexts of studies.

Another study on the discourse of teachers and students in dramatic events emerged in 2015. Adopting self-study methodology, Harden (2015) analyzed her discourse as a teacher of a group of pre-kindergarten students. She modeled her ways of talking through a mantle of the expert and analyzed the development of the students' language use and writing through their work while writing in role.

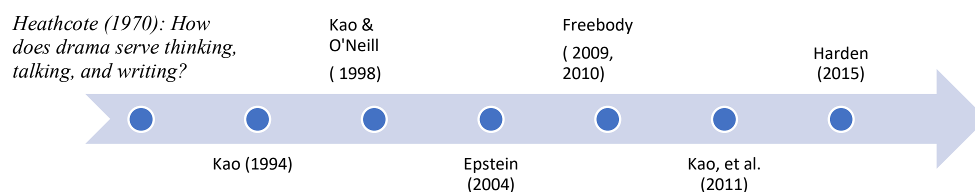

Figure 3. Timeline of Studies of Classroom Talks in Process Drama

Harden (2015), Epstein 2004), and Kao et al. (2011) seem to agree that drama opens space for learning, increases students' participation, and improves the quality of learning and meaning-making. According to Epstein (2004), participation in drama-related activities enables students to engage in open-ended talk that is often unavailable in regular classrooms. Her adoption of Street's ideological model of literacy framed the ways she defined and interpreted students' interactions when transforming stories from religious texts through tableau and hot seating. For example, she understood the context when students hesitated to question the stories from the Bible.

Similarly, Kao et al. (2011) pinpointed that the questioning nature in process drama interactions helps teachers establish the atmosphere, determine the direction, and challenge students' thinking. They found that students were not just the ones who would respond to the teacher's question. Instead, during the hot seating activity, students produced referential questions when they interviewed the characters in the stories.

In the context of Harden's (2015) study, the talk was modeled in an open-ended nature, guiding her pre-kindergarten students to produce similar ways of talking in thinking through a mantle of the expert. The various talk demonstrated and reported by Harden (2015) was of an instructional type that was exemplified, modeled, and done in open-ended nature. In response to her, the pre-kindergarten students in her study exhibited dialogue, action, confidence, and the modeled teacher behavior and talk.

The three studies also rely on dramatic strategies to create a condition in which students talk and think together. Epstein (2004) used tableau and hot seating to interpret and transform their understanding of religious texts. Kao et al. (2011) witnessed that the two teachers they worked with incorporated drama techniques like tableau, the teacher in role, hot seating, and mime for participants to ask questions. Through mantles of the expert and writing in role, Harden (2015) explored the world and the work of paleontologists to give meaning to the reading and writing activities. The three studies discussed in this paper could justify Baldwin's (2004) statement that the drama lesson is a forum for talk and a socially mediated activity within which language is a crucial means of sharing and shaping thinking.

On Methodology

We reviewed the three studies based on their systemic and rigorous analysis, transparency in analysis, substantiation of claims with evidence, and representation of analysis and results. These four points of analysis are adopted from Greckhamer & Cilesiz (2014).

Harden's (2015) article

Harden's objective was to describe the language used by the teacher during one drama event and the oral and literary responses of the children during and after the event. To help her achieve the objective, she framed the study with Halliday's (1973) functional linguistic theory and adopted Christie's discourse analysis methodology and analysis model. Thus, discourse analysis is an appropriate methodology for investigating the case.

Linking Halliday's theory with Christie's is reasonable as they both come from functional grammar perspectives. Harden also incorporated Kress's socio-semiotic theory to examine students' emerging literacy that involved a combination of images and words produced in the dramatic events. She analyzed transcripts of verbal interactions that took place during the mantle of the expert event and interpreted students' emerging writing by using Kress's theory and analysis. With the objective of defining and understanding the dynamic in drama and

dramatic play as pedagogies for written literacy, her analysis and data interpretations seemed coherent with her "epistemological and theoretical assumptions" (Greckhamer & Cilesiz, 2014, p. 13). Unfortunately, despite the coherence in theories and epistemology, Harden only shared a small percentage of data in this article. To understand the study and its scope better, I had to read her published thesis, Harden (2013), to learn more about her robust description and data analysis.

In terms of analysis transparency, we found the analysis procedures were described in a transparent manner because, as a reader, we could clearly visualize the process of the analysis that she reported. In the process, she described that she was using Christie's model to categorize the dialogue between her and her students under several interpersonal modes of address. In doing so, she tallied the frequency of student and teacher interrogation, declarative, imperative, affirmative, explanations, and contradictory statements.

The analysis of the discourse was reported in two interpersonal metafunction and textual metafunction categories. From here, she looked for textual evidence and thematic progressions. To warrant her claims, she identified, selected, and appropriated evidence of specific language usage (Duran, Eisenhart, Erickson, Grant, Green, Hedges, & Schneider, 2006), such as "we" and "let's" to find whether students used the language that she modeled during the interactions.

All in all, despite the small scale of the study and analysis, we believe Harden has demonstrated an appropriate representation of the analysis process and results that are accessible as well as interpretable by readers and are sufficiently efficient to comply with expectations of publication outlets (Greckhamer & Cilesiz, 2014).

Kao et al. (2010) article

In this article, Kao and her colleagues aimed to find out how question functions were used by the teachers and the students when they were in-role and out-of-role. Kao et al. (2011) incorporated Tsui (1992) and Wong's (2009) taxonomy of elicitation functions as their theoretical and analytical frames to analyze the questioning techniques performed by two drama-oriented teachers in two university-level classes that learned English as a second language.

Eight types of question functions were used to identify the functions of the questions students performed—inform, confirm, agree, commit, repeat, clarify, pseudo, and understanding check. The authors were able to identify and locate the functions of the questions used by the teachers in their interactions with the students by using Tsui's (1992) and Wong's (2009) taxonomy as a framework for analyzing teacher and student questions. Hence, the decision to use Tsui and Wong's framework was justified.

A discourse analyst needs to warrant knowledge claims by using two types of evidence: evidence of a systematic and rigorous analysis process and evidence of the substantive basis of results and knowledge claims (Greckhammer & Cilesiz, 2014). The authors of this article provide details about the data collection method and analytical procedures. This includes the background, details of participants, the contexts, descriptions of data collection procedures, and measurement of students' general proficiency progress.

Regarding the second type of evidence, Kao et al. (2011) warranted their claims by clearly identifying the background of the study and the problems they wished to address, transparently selecting participants and theoretical framework and analytical tools, and systematically presenting their data evidence. However, unlike Harden (2015), Kao et al. (2011) did not

include vast theoretical assumptions and tools to analyze the class' discourse. Instead, they merely focused on Tsui (1992) and Wong's (2009) taxonomy of elicitation functions as their theoretical and analytical frames and used pre-and post-course standardized proficiency tests to evaluate students' English with the interpretations of students and teachers' discourse, especially in using and producing questions in the targeted language. The triangulation of systemic data analysis adds rigor to the study; Harden (2015 Kao et al. (2011) have demonstrated an appropriate representation of the analysis process and results that are accessible, interpretable, and trustworthy (AERA, 2006).

Epstein's (2004) article

Borrowing Street's view of literacy as ideological practice, Epstein (2004) framed a discourse analysis study to explore the language used by a group of students when they worked together to construct a tableau and performed a hot seating activity as a response to a story from the Bible. Through Gee's (1988) lens of building tasks and tools of analysis, she identified students' individual and shared identity kits that students drew to understand the texts. It is also through Gee's (1988) perspectives that she saw the knowledge being created among students.

The choice of Street's view of ideological literacy suits the study and the analytical framework, considering the contexts and the religious texts being explored. In the tradition where texts and their narratives are non-questionable, dramatic strategies like tableau and hot seating provide an imaginary context for students to deal with reality (Heathcote, as cited in Wagner, 1998).

Despite only sharing a small amount of data, Epstein (2004) concluded that students engaged in semiotic building, political building, and connection building as intertwined activities as they negotiated whose ideas would be heard, accepted, and represented in their interpretation of why Sarah sent Ishmael (characters from the Bible story) away. One may wonder about the trustworthiness of the claims she made on this. In addition to the previous claim, Epstein (2004) reported that the students used intertextual links as they negotiated meanings. Her interpretation and claim for this were supported by the excerpts of students' interactions and references to theoretical frames.

By and large, Epstein's (2004) choice of theoretical frame and analysis suits the epistemological, the contexts, and the texts being explored. The study may lack robustness in its data description, but it presented a coherent procedure of data collection and analysis. As a reader, we found that the study was accessible and interpretable as we could relate it with our prior knowledge and the contexts of the study. We believe this was a significant contribution to the development of Jewish education, as well as enriching the research in literacy education.

On the Studies' Contributions to the Field

Both Heathcote and O'Neill were aware of the importance of dialogue in drama. For Heathcote, talk or dialogue in drama is the central tool to help students learn (as cited in Wagner, 1999). O'Neill even urges that "the exploration of the possibilities of story's meanings may be best accomplished through ongoing dialogue, movement, and play rather than through static interpretation" (Taylor & Warner, 2006, p. 92).

Carroll's study (1986) laid out an essential foundation for the study of discourse in drama-based literacy events. He signified the differences of talks in the drama-based classes with the talks in regular classes. Then, Kao (1998) expanded the notion of the importance of dialogue in process

drama and conducted a study of the language use of the students and teachers in the context of learning a second language that proved to be a hit in the field of second language learning.

One of Kao's most recent studies in 2011 explored the functions and effects of teacher and student questioning on students' language learning. The study discussed the functions of questioning for language teachers and how its efficient use in dramatic context would improve students' responses, engagement to the activities, and their second language competence. Despite not providing an analysis of students' responses during the talk, this study provides a good model of analysis for a discourse study that focused on the question. Kao et al. (2011) also provided some pedagogical implications for teachers when using questions in a second language class with students of limited spoken English proficiency (details in Summary section). Harden's (2015) study provided exemplary instructional discourse for teachers in using process drama strategy like the mantle of the expert to improve students' literacy and agency in making decisions. The study highlighted the importance of modeling an open-ended talk and scaffolding the writing activity at the pre-kindergarten level through dramatic approaches / strategies. Through her study, Harden (2015) has demonstrated that a teacher's task is to create learning situations for her students (Heathcote, 1970).

The last study reviewed in this paper (Epstein, 2004) is rare because of the context of the study and the sacred texts that her participants used to make meanings together. With the objective of improving the practices of teaching the Bible in Jewish education, she analyzed the discourse of her students, who collaborated with one another to create personal interpretations of stories they read from the Bible. By using dramatic strategies like tableau and hot seating, Epstein made her students inquire about the gaps of the narratives in sacred texts, and by using those drama techniques, she sheds light on the practices of reading and teaching religious texts.

Conclusion

Epstein (2004), Kao et al. (2011), and Harden's (2015) studies analyzed in this paper have left their marks in the extant literature and have contributed significantly to the area of discourse analysis study in drama-based literacy events. The three studies are predominantly occupied by perspectives of functional linguistics such as those of Halliday (1973), Gee (1988), Grice (1989), and Tsui (1992). Despite a small representation of data shared in some of the studies, their methodologies and data analysis are sound and relevant with the epistemological and theoretical frameworks. The studies were carried out with participants from the university level down to upper elementary and pre-kindergarten levels and with different contexts of literacy learning such as second language learning literacy, emergent literacy, and literacy in a faith-based school. They demonstrated that talks in dramatic interactions within literacy classes produce unique discourses marked by an open-mindedness of the interactions and the shifts of roles, potentially leading to the efficient discussion. These studies also demonstrated the roles of class objectives—dramatic techniques, texts, students' background knowledge, and sociocultural contexts—in influencing the meaning-making processes.

Studies on the teacher and student talks during drama interactions in literacy classes are insufficient. Considering the uniqueness of such interactions (Carroll, 1980), we believe studies that examine the language use of the parties involved in dramatic interactions that portray students' thinking and talking about and beyond texts should be undertaken. Talk in process drama, in this case, could be positioned as a cognitive tool to process knowledge, as a socio-cultural tool for sharing the knowledge, and as a pedagogical tool used to provide guidance

(Mercer, Wegerif, & Dawes, 1999; Rifai, 2019; Komala & Rifai, 2021) or as a task-based literacy instruction (Esfandiari, 2014).

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