



**Høgskulen  
på Vestlandet**

**Process drama as a dynamic method for  
a deeper understanding of Chinese  
culture**

**An exploration with students learning Chinese as a  
foreign language**

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## **Abstract**

As the international exchange and cooperation opportunities are increasing, it is important to promote cultural understanding and exchange between people from different cultural backgrounds. Especially, stimulating cross-cultural understanding and exchange into ordinary education could enrich students' horizon and insight for the world, and facilitate their knowledge about history and cultural diversity. Under this background, this thesis conducts a research about how process drama can contribute to a deeper understanding of Chinese culture for Chinese learners. Process drama is structured and developed in the same way that dramatic worlds occur in theater, and participants in the creation of these worlds can be intrinsically satisfying, educationally worthwhile, and dramatically significant (O'Neill, 1995, p. XX). In this research, the researcher has studied both theoretically and practically. The researcher focuses on finding the significant connections between process drama and intercultural understanding. A deep understanding requires the students to have the capacity to confront the complexities of a subject, solve real problems, and create further contemplation. This research presents that the application and the purpose of process drama could be according with stimulating a deep understanding of culture.

The finding of the research suggests that: The episodic form of process drama involves different drama strategies and conventions could provide multiple perspectives for the participants to view the subject comprehensively. Meanwhile, process drama also provides an opportunity for the participants to explore and contemplate the motivation of the behaviors that could benefit the intercultural awareness. Moreover, role-play as an indispensable part of process drama could also promote an internal emotional engagement that could assist a deeper understanding of Chinese culture.

## **Forewords**

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## 1.0 Introduction

What is drama? In a Chinese dictionary named Modern Mandarin Dictionary, it presents like this: Drama is an art form in which actors are playing roles and performing stories on the stage for a number of audiences, and it consists of literature, directing, performing, music, art, and other artistry elements (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences dictionary editorial office, 2016, p. 1407)<sup>1</sup>. If we want to classify drama, it can be classified into many kinds of categories. If we classify it with forms, there are tragedy, comedy, drama and so on. If we classify it with themes, there are the historical drama, modern drama and so on. In China, drama includes Chinese traditional opera, western modern drama, and classic opera. The traditional notion of drama was generated from Aristotle or even earlier, and it is also what I have learned and contemplated when I was working with it in China.

Since the middle of last century, in the wake of the progress of experimental drama, theater practitioners extended and profoundly challenged the notion of traditional theater. For instance, Augusto Boal has initiated a theater revolution that inspired from his theory such as the theater of the oppressed. It thoroughly changed the relationship between audience and performers in the conventional theater. Boal's theory presents drama and theater should break the restriction of theater stage and authoritarian limited professional techniques. Theater practitioners should reconsider the segmentation of audience and performers, and recall an original theater practice that has no limitation of theater stage and bring the unity of audience and performers.

*Comparing with the practice in the theater of the 1960s, dramatists seem to be omniscient, and they seem to like to teach audience everything. However, in our form of drama, we would like to ask the audience: "what do you think we should do?" And then we'll work together to conduct this process (Boal, 1996).*

In a wider notion of modern theatre, Boal argues that theatre practitioners should change the notion of director centered to the notion of people centered. Drama and theater should extend their responsibility and usage, and create a heuristic, dynamic

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<sup>1</sup> (中国社会科学院语言研究所词典编辑室, 2016, p. 1407)

and authentic form for enriching the notion of modern theater practice. The most obvious contribution in Boal's work is creating the notion of "spect-actor". He first applied this notion for describing the identity of the audience in forum theatre. When he worked in forum theatre, he proposed that let the audience appear in the scene to meet the actors. He opened a door to let the audience participate into the theatre event directly, and be a spectator and actor at the same time. The audience could change the dramatic action and the plot. As a director and playwright, Boal broke the limited identity of the audience, transformed the identity as spect-actor, and let the spect-actors be apart of the drama world sufficiently. The spect-actors are participating in composing the plot, constructing the sites, exploring the roles and reflecting on their own experiences. In the complex fictional world, they are finding, searching, solving, and contemplating for examining a change. The audience is no longer a witness who are just receiving detailed messages, but an independent lucid individual who can conduct a change. And also they have taken the responsibility of adapting stories, shaping roles, destructing the plot. This notion represents a new perspective of modern theater, and makes a wider usage of theatre for participants' change and liberation.

The concept of drama/theater-in-education in the earlier age has assimilated the theory of Boal in its development. By reconsidering the relationship between audience and performers, an interactive relationship has built, and participation becomes an important element in the field of drama/theater-in-education. Gradually, the educational function of drama and theater has supplemented the notion of modern theater/drama.

### **1.1 Intention**

When I start to discover the application and significance of applied drama in China, the notion of drama-in-education comes into my mind. I have been working as a playwright and producer in the traditional theater in Shanghai for some years, and

now I have got a chance to work with interactive drama and applied theater in Norway. I could say that I fell in love with it, and it really opened my eyes and brought a new sight for me to look at education and theater. During the study, I have got a huge interest in process drama, and I am enthusiastic about how we can use process drama in the ordinary learning. As a drama student from China, I am genuinely interested in Chinese culture propagation and culture exchange. As the international exchange and cooperation opportunities are increasing, it is important to promote cultural understanding and exchange between people from different cultural backgrounds and perspectives. Especially, stimulating cross-cultural understanding and exchange into ordinary education could enrich students' horizon and insight for the world, and facilitate their knowledge about history and cultural diversity. Nevertheless, how to teach culture or how to make student understanding distant and unfamiliar cultural values and norms is a big and tricky question. It is not only a question for language teachers in schools, but also for the teachers from a broader sense of education such as culture school or cultural subjects in the ordinary curriculum.

In my drama studying experience, I have observed and studied that drama could provide multiple ways of understanding and cognition. Drama offers a particular situation that invites cognitive, affective, and physical engagement (Bundy, Piazzoli, & Dunn, 2015, p. 4).

*Drama pioneer Dorothy Heathcote suggested that the main purpose of drama is to educate students 'to look beyond the surface action, to the personal and cultural values, to sustain them' (Heathcote & Bolton, 1998, p. 160). Therefore, the application of drama is valuable not only for the enhancement of language skills but also for helping ELLs to understand how culture(s) operate(s) (Ntelioglou, 2011, p. 183).*

Theater performances may for example bring a glance of another culture as when Chinese Peking Opera plays in European countries. Reading literacy or watching movie could also gain some cross-cultural understanding; and even chatting with people from another country could also somehow get a sight of another culture. Even



if audiences may obtain some knowledge about another culture, the question is still: How can we get a deeper understanding of an unfamiliar culture? This is an important question for cultural learning and understanding.

Therefore, in this thesis, I want to explore how process drama can contribute to a deep understanding of Chinese culture for the people who are interested in Chinese culture and who are learning Chinese. I choose to work with language learners because I realized that it is important for them to have an elaborative perception about the cultural background in which the language belongs to. Language is an important part of culture exchange, and cultural exchange will also contribute to language learning. People who are learning a foreign language have an interest in a different culture. Most of them have a great desire to go to China or want to get a closer look at Chinese culture. And in recent years, the teaching method has changed in the language-learning classroom. Gradually, teachers are not just focusing on the usage of the language itself, but also on teaching cultural backgrounds and perspectives in some interactive ways. The focus of teaching a second language in the classroom has transitioned from grammatical teaching to communicative teaching. Drama-oriented teaching can facilitate interpersonal interactions and communication (Wen, 2015). As I mentioned, it is crucial for Chinese learners to accept the cultural differences in order to assist them to learn the language, and by using drama, the students could view some aspect of culture instead of learning the language mechanically. So I have launched a thought that using drama for cultural awareness in order to assist the language learners to know the language better. From this point of departure, I am starting to consider how drama can help language learners or the people who are interested in Chinese culture to get a deep understanding of Chinese culture in order to avoid cultural shocks and misunderstanding that they might meet in the future. Therefore, I want to implement process drama as a unique theater form to provide language learners and the people who are interested in Chinese culture a possibility to discover a different culture within a meaningful context. Thus, I am going to

investigate if drama could contribute to a deeper understanding for students, and if process drama is an effective form to fit in this kind of learning and understanding.

## **1.2 Background**

In this paragraph, I will present some earlier research that is related to my research question and inspires me. In the context of the international exchange and cooperation, opportunities are increasing. The communicational voice between different cultures becomes more and more of concern. In my experience of the theoretically structured text reading, I have found that much research has been focusing on investigating how can drama elements or techniques can be used in a second language learning process. Shin-Mei Kao and Cecily O'Neill (1998), demonstrates learning a second language through process drama. Erika Piazzoli, an assistant professor in arts education, has done a lot of work using process drama for second language learning. According to Piazzoli (2016), process drama for second language learning (L2 process drama) is a relatively new field of inquiry, which has gained momentum in the last decades. By studying those researches at the beginning, I have realized that there is much research that discusses how drama can be used for culture understanding within this topic. Piazzoli argues that process drama can stimulate the intercultural awareness:

*The process drama... which aimed at investigating what happens when process drama strategies are used in the additional language classroom, at an advanced level of proficiency, to enhance intercultural awareness... ...The outcome of the research indicated that the approach increased the speakers' spontaneous communication and triggered opportunities for intercultural awareness (Piazzoli, 2010, p. 40).*

Another research is also interesting and relative to my research. It is from a Chinese teacher who is teaching English in the secondary school. The author has proposed his problem about teaching English in the Chinese cultural biased school. Xu Keqiang states:

*However, in practice, we realize, with years of English study, that students often have lots of disagreements, misunderstanding, and even culture shocks when they*

*communicate with the native speakers of English. Those breakdowns and misunderstandings are due to the lack of cultural knowledge of the country whose language is being learned. Students need to enhance their cross-cultural communicative competence (Xu, 2016, p. 162).*

This quotation exactly has shown why it is important for language learners to promote their understanding of cultural patterns and mindset. In this article, the author didn't mention any concept of drama or theater, but he has described that he was using some interactive teaching strategies. From my point of view, it seems to have drama elements and dramatic strategies.

The other research that inspires me is a Finnish researcher who is called Heini Salopelto, her paper is about "*Intercultural competence through drama*".

*The development of intercultural sensitivity in terms of transforming an individual's frame of reference from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative one was considered an important aspect of developing intercultural competence. Drawing from the theories of Meyer (1991), Hofstede (1991) and Bennett (1998), I was able to identify the basic components of intercultural communicative competence as: 1) the awareness of one's own cultural conditioning, 2) awareness of differences between cultures, and 3) skills that enable the speaker to overcome the problems that may be caused by the differences (Salopelto, 2008, p. 69).*

Salopelto's research shows what the intercultural competence could offer for an individual, and how teachers can use drama to achieve this competence.

These different types of research that are focused on how drama can be used in the second language-learning classroom, have inspired me. I have formulated my own research proposal which is concentrating on process drama and cross-cultural understanding. I am going to explore an interesting topic, i.e. how process drama can be employed for a deeper understanding of Chinese culture. As Salopelto has demonstrated above, I have also assumed that the participants firstly would get the knowledge of some culture signs and symbols. Secondly, they would learn the awareness of equality and eliminate prejudice. Thirdly, in the process, the participants could apply their competence of conceiving cultural patterns and confronting

articulated incidents. Meanwhile, it would also build up their opinions in a variety of situations within another cultural background, and give them a chance to contemplate their own cultural pattern and their own lives through meeting the differences and diversity.

### **1.3 Research questions**

My main research question is: how can process drama contribute to a deeper understanding of Chinese culture for people who are interested in Chinese culture and who are learning Chinese?

The main research question indicates my intentional research area is an interactive drama form-process drama, and the purposes of my research is to investigate whether process drama could devote to the cross-culture cognition and communication; In order to explore the main research question better, I have formulated some sub-questions.

#### **1. How could we devote to acquiring a deeper understanding?**

For answering this sub-question, I think the first assignment is to declare what does a deeper understanding mean for a student in the learning process. An understanding is a generalised meaning or insight. An insight is a basic sense of, or feeling for, relationships; it is a meaning or discernment (Y.K.IP, 2003). To understand is often regarded as a meaningful way of learning things or knowing concepts. But when it comes to my research question, I am wondering what does a deeper understanding mean, how can we stimulate a deeper understanding for students? There are many discussions about how to develop or obtain an understanding for a better learning by using drama. According to Gavin Bolton, creating an experiential feeling can develop a change in understanding is an important mission for drama in education. Change in understanding could directly initiate a better learning experience through drama experience (Bolton, 1979). Apparently, change in understanding is crucial for students

to gain new insights and to get a better learning experience. Therefore, in my study, I don't want to demonstrate how to get a simple understanding about a superficial phenomenon of culture, but an elaborative, careful, profound cognition. A superficial understanding usually makes thoughts of stereotype. Making stereotype often generates misunderstanding or disrespectful behavior even sometimes in some unintentional circumstances. To understand is 'to comprehend', and to comprehend is 'to take in' or embrace. Seeing solitary facts in relation to a general principle is the essence of understanding (Y.K.IP, 2003). Thus, I would encourage finding ways to explore a more complex and intensive awareness of a different culture.

## 2. How could we learn an unfamiliar culture by using drama?

Culture is considered very difficult to learn, because it relates to lots of aspects and reasons. It is a broad, sophisticated, and complex subject, and it formats by very subjective and various reasons. Therefore, in the experience of cultural learning, we couldn't learn it all at once. It is impossible to know everything about a culture in a short period. So I could assume that we could find a sally port to start with. We cannot see all the aspects of it, but we could start with a question or inquiry. From this inquiry, we could generate a situation in the background of another culture. In my opinions, learning culture likes completing a puzzle. You need to find all the pieces and put them together, and then you may have an overview of this culture. Meanwhile, learning culture means not only memorizing information, but also learning behaviors. Different culture presents different ways of living. Therefore, what can drama do for exchanging the different ways of behaving? How can we use drama for bringing intercultural communication? That are important questions that I have to investigate. Thus, we could explore if we can use process drama elements to make the cross-cultural exchange and intercultural learning meaningful.

In order to research those questions, I have studied theoretically and practically. Besides a hard work of theoretical investment, I also have practiced two process

drama workshops with my participants who are Chinese learners and interested in Chinese culture.

#### **1.4 The structure of this thesis**

This study is structured as the following sequence:

In the next chapter (2.0), it will demonstrate the theory basis for my research and the explanation about some central terms. The theory chapter will be organized in three parts. The first paragraph presents theory of process drama; it basically focuses on the definition of process drama and its features. The second paragraph presents some learning theory and discusses what a deeper understanding indicates in the process of learning. In the third paragraph of theory chapter, I discuss the theory of culture, how could we obtain the knowledge of an unfamiliar culture.

In the third chapter (3.0), I will illustrate the methodology of my research. My methodology consists of art-based research and some qualitative approaches. I will present my workshop design and reflect the process of the workshops for the further analyzing of my research question and my assumptions. Furthermore, I will display how I did collect my data, which are observation, qualitative interviews, and video recording.

In chapter 4.0, I will attempt to find answers for my research question and my assumption by analyzing the data, and also I will relate my practical findings to the theory. In this paragraph, I will concentrate on finding an accomplishment. First of all, I will present my analysis process of my data in order to get my findings. Then I am going to consider the challenges that I had in the process. At the end, I will sum up my findings and reflect on it.

In the conclusion, I will present the general sum-up of my paper, and some further possibilities for this research.

## 2.0 Theory

In this chapter, I am going to demonstrate some theoretical considerations to explore my research question. The first part presents the definition and historical background of process drama and its application for learning and teaching. The second part presents what does deep understanding mean in the process of drama. The third part presents learning theory from the Vygotskian perspective and I discuss how this learning theory can inform my research consideration. I will also show theory about the learning potential of role-playing. And finally, the last part presents some aspects of culture theory, where I take a closer look on intercultural studies and cultural communication.

### 2.1 What is process drama?

Drama has been used for many purposes in its history, such as: aesthetic, creativity, politics, culture dissemination, advertising, catharsis, therapy, performance, interpretation, social learning, and to the present-day supremacy, of “pure” entertainment. Drama for an educational purpose has been linked to the development of the western theatre (Berry, 2000, p. 31). When we think about what drama or theater can contribute to human life or society, the educational purpose would be one of the essential answers; even some of us might not have had a clear mind of the concepts of drama-in-education or theater-in-education. When modern theater started to grow in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one of the important functions of drama is instruction. Stig Eriksson once has presented in his article:

*Hong, a pioneer of modern Chinese theater, once said that:  
...the significance of modern drama lies in its creed. Modern plays are concerned with the knowledge and criticism of the world, philosophy of life and attack or approval of people's behavior. All good drama should be instructive (1929)  
(Eriksson, 2007, p. 372).*

In the field of drama and theater in education, many educational drama practitioners have argued that process drama belongs to the applied theatre genre (Bowell & Heap,

2005). Drama-in-education is a young and vigorous interdisciplinary subject in the field of both drama and education. It is an important branch of applied theater, and it is regarded as an interactive theater form which is employing dramaturgy and drama strategies in the educational field or people's social-cultural life. Before explaining what is drama-in-education, it is necessary to give a short introduction about what is applied theater.

*That is to say, they most often are played in spaces that are not usually defined as theater buildings, with participants who may or may not be skilled in theater arts and to audiences who have a vested interest in the issue taken up by the performance or are the member of the community addressed by the performance. Alternative theater practices, including those describe above, have historically been labeled with a number of diverse terms, such as grassroots theater, social theatre, political theatre, radical theater and many other variations, but over the course of the last decade. "Applied theater " is the term that has emerged as the umbrella under which all of these prior terms and practices are embraced (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009, p. 6).*

Basically, Applied theatre includes drama-in-education, theater-in-education, popular theater, theater of the oppressed, theater in health education, theater for development, prison theater, community-based theater, museum theater, reminiscence theater (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009). Applied theater derives from the trans-boundary of postmodern theater; its implication is using theater techniques and strategies in social cultural communication or other subjects. Its assignment is to climb over the restriction of the theater walls, and applying theatrical elements and means into for example communities, hospitals, schools, prisons and the other areas. Applied theater contributes to exploring human's psychological states, and it concerns people's development of consciousness and change. Therefore, in the field of applied theater, it also involves the knowledge of drama studies, psychology, pedagogy, sociology, anthropology, performance studies, ethology and other subjects.

Drama-in-education and theater-in-education are two important embranchments in the field of applied theater. Drama-in-education carries out in different levels of schools, and concerns about children and youth who are at different stages in their lives and



their personal development and aesthetic cultivation stands stages, from the earlier education for kindergarten children to the quality training of university students (Bowell and Heap, 2013, p. xi). In school and colleges today, drama-in-education is acknowledged as a way of giving students an experience of making and appreciating theater, as an approach to other subjects in the curriculum and as a source of personal growth (Taylor & Warner, 2006, p. 31).

In the early twentieth century, an American educationist and philosopher John Dewey proposed the concept “learning by doing” (Dewey, 1938) . This concept offered an educational support of the meaning of drama-in-education. The Russian educationist and psychologist Lev •Vygotsky provided the psychological foundation and support of the psychological differences of playing, dramatic activities, and drama events. The earlier drama-in-education pioneers such as Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton gradually and successfully introduced drama approaches into the curriculum in the British school education system. Later, drama has been practiced in the education system from Britain to New Zealand, from Canada to South Africa, from Finland to Hong Kong, from Jamaica to India, as a discrete subject in its own right or as a cross-curricular methodology (Bowell & Heap, 2001, preface).

In order to present the definition of drama-in-education, it is also necessary to put some words on the differences of drama-in-education and theater-in-education. Drama-in-education more often occurs in school classroom, and it attempts to focus on relating the curriculum with the instructional purpose for students. Whereas theatre-in-education gives an impression of being a theatre production. It has a distinct limit between actor-teacher and the audience, and the objective of each workshop or performance devotes to raising discussions and reflections. An important foundation of drama-in-education is that the teacher is working together with students to explore the problems or unfold the knowledge. There isn't an obvious separation between audience and performers or teacher and students. The teacher's position would be as participant, together with the students. Teacher and students are working,

exploring and collaborating together in an imaginary world. Therefore, the most obvious distinction of drama-in-education and the other interactive theater form is the clear existence of the audience.

*Process drama is a term used to describe the type of drama in which performance to an external audience is absent but presentation to the internal audience is essential. Whereas in some other ways of working, the meaning is made by the theatrical ensemble of actors, playwright, director and designers and communicated to a watching audience, in process drama the participants, together with the teacher, constitute the theatrical ensemble and engage in drama to make the meaning for themselves (Bowell and Heap, 2013, p. 6).*

For example: If teacher and students are learning the story "Little red riding hood", the leader (the teacher) may lead the students to explore the woods as if it were the little red's experience. Everyone could be the little red, even the teacher, and they could discuss or act if they are facing a big terrified wolf and thinking of how to deal with it. It is a group-work within an imaginary world, and everyone is inside this imaginary space and time. No one is watching from outside, and everyone is observing and interacting with each other inside the situation. O'Neill says:

*In the process drama the entire group will be engaged in the same enterprise, and the teacher or leader may function within the experience as a playwright and participants. The work is not undertaken for any outside audience, but the participants are an audience to their own acts (O'Neill, 1995, p. xvi).*

Theatre-in-education basically has existed with a clear distinction between audience and performers. The teachers firstly work as actor or actors, presenting a fashioned drama piece for the students. It has a complete progression of opening, developing, changing, and ending. Participation often involves at the break of each phrase that is dominated by the actors. Participation also concerns about some problems or knowledge which is brought by the dramatic situation. Students could be involved in different kinds of drama conventions or approaches, and they could also consider some other stories or reflections that may be relevant to the production or related to their own life experiences. Therefore, in concluding the difference between drama-in-education and theater-in-education, I will argue that the absent of an

audience, the incomplete storylines, and that everyone is involved together in an imaginary time and space, will be some important features of drama-in-education comparing with theater-in-education.

Meanwhile, there is another thing that needs to be informed here, especially for the mandarin speaking area. There is a big misunderstanding with drama-in-education(教育戏剧) and drama education(戏剧教育). It is easy to be confused when you read this two concepts in mandarin, because from the translation, it is the same words with different position, and also because there are not so many theater/drama practitioners in China that know what drama-in-education really is. So it is also important to show the differences between drama-in-education (教育戏剧) and drama education(戏剧教育). Drama education (戏剧教育) means teaching skills or capacities that are training for students who are studying drama and theater as their major, the constitution is for example sense of music, the capacity of drawing for designing stage, acting, writing skills, directing and so on. Nevertheless, drama-in-education is offering an opportunity for students to explore variety kinds of knowledge, for example, history, politic, mathematics, or aesthetic cultivation. Meanwhile, by experiencing drama, students could build up their abilities of language, culture understanding and expression, self-perception, learn to learn, interpersonal communication, cultural communication, and social communication (DICE Consortium & Cooper, 2010, p. 24). The international research project DICE (Drama improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education) shows that drama/theater could provide participants eight capacities and also provide “all this and more”. It indicates that is the universal competence of what it is to be human (DICE Consortium & Cooper, 2010, p. 24). To conclude, drama/theater-in-education could not only offer possibilities for the participants to learn those capacities, but the more important aspect is to make participants to excavate potential competence and find the best of themselves in drama and theater.

Stig Eriksson has introduced a reductionist overview about the background for

drama/theater-in-education for the 21st century. He summarized the development of drama and theater in four models: the transmission model, the development model, the dialogical model, and the critical model. The transmission model concerns about learning the acquired knowledge and skills for the school pupils. It requires that the teacher leads the students to meet and understand how the existing world is. The development model considers about the individual cognition and development. The teacher stands in the position as a leader of the group, and the notion of “learning by doing” (Dewey, 1938) is the important creed. The third model that is related to my research concern is the dialogical model. Process drama is representative theatre form from this model. It claims that the dialogical and interactive method is the basic method for exploring the unknown world or unknown knowledge. And the last model is the critical model in which theatre demonstrates to be a place for changing. The desertification and oppression in the human life should be changed and broken by attaching the importance to the voice of people through launching an opportunity for the audience to discover solutions for the problems (Eriksson, 2007). Eriksson (2007) addresses process drama as a dialogical model with the characteristics such as teacher as participant, existentialism and value centered, personal relevance.

When we are addressing the position of process drama, it should always begin to introduce the history of it. Bolton outlined the development of drama-in-education. Drama-in-education has generated from the 1920s, as “speech training”. Then the term of “mimes” became a newly approved label. And later Peter Slade and Brain Way informed “Creative drama”. Their drama was used as an alternative to drama education. In the 1960s, the notion of drama-in-education had become popular by the work from Newcastle and Durham universities, even though the term had appeared in 1921 (Bolton, 2000, p. 22). In the avant-garde theatre of the 1960s, the work of experimental practitioners and theorists emphasized notions of presence and immediacy, process and transformation, and these ideas filtered into the work of drama teachers in schools and collages (O’Neill, 1995, p. xvii). Brad Haseman and John O’Tool have referred the phrase of process drama in the recent years (Bolton,

2002, p22). Brad Haseman used first the term “process drama” in his published article (Haseman, 1991). O’Tool has applied the notion of “the process of drama” in his book (O’Tool, 1992). Along with the application of drama for an educational purpose, there have emerged many kinds of terms and names of this field.

*The subject is known variously as drama in education, educational drama, creative drama, development drama, informal drama, role drama or, more recently, process drama. This last term is a useful and increasingly popular one, and it distinguishes this approach from the practice of the more traditional and familiar creative dramatics (Taylor & Warner, 2006, p. 35-36).*

Process drama has quite a position in the drama field nowadays, and it represents a unique interactive theatre form in the theater history. Along with the development of drama-in-education, the term “process drama” has been used more and more. Cecily O’Neill suggests process drama is almost synonymous with the term drama-in-education. (O’Neill, 1995, p. xv).

Since the 1960s and early 1970, drama in schools has been regarded as an essential cognitive process. Process drama has quite a position in the drama field nowadays, and it represents a unique interactive dramatic activity compared with the other theater form. In the following paragraph, I will put forward a detailed illustration of the features of process drama which could assist to stimulate a deeper understanding.

## **2.2 Which aspects of process drama can promote a deep understanding in art-based explorations?**

Understanding is often regarded as a meaningful way of learning things or knowing concepts. Whereas, what is a deeper understanding comparing with surface understanding, and why it is so important for students in the learning process? A researcher Zirbel refers Grotzer (1999) in her article: “In the cognitive sciences the term “deep understanding” generally refers to how concepts are “represented” in the student’s mind, and most importantly, how these concepts are “connected” with each other (Zirbel, 2006, p. 3). ”

*Deep understanding then means that the concepts are well represented and well connected. As such, deep understanding of a subject involves the ability to recall many connected concepts at once, where every single concept has a deep meaning in itself (Zirbel, 2006, p. 3).*

Thus, from my understanding, deep understanding implies not just knowing the facts as the surface understanding works. Deep understanding requires the students to know the landscape of knowledge. It involves a recall of a network of the knowledge and the creation of new ideas. And it also includes knowing the connection and the complexity of the facts. A researcher from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University shows a chart about deep understanding<sup>2</sup>. It presents:

Surface	Deep	
Factual	Rational	Extended
Identify Recall Enumerate Describe List Combine Do algorithms	Compare Contrast Explain Analyze Interpret Relate Apply	Create Criticize Design Theorize Generalize Hypothesize Reflect
Quantitative	Qualitative	

This chart illustrates the differences between surface understanding and deep understanding. It shows that having a deep understanding indicates the learners are able to absorb and dispose the information that they get, and it could transform as new facts to deal with the real problems and analyze the abstractive messages.

A researcher from Ontario Ministry of education (Sherry, 2010) has concluded an interpretation of deep understanding. She presents:

- Deep understanding must involve a well-developed, rich base of knowledge that

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.polyu.edu.hk/obe/students/files/deep.pdf>

has relative complexity based upon development level.

- Deep understanding also involves understanding that is flexible and useful in solving real problems.
- Deep understanding is not often treated as an endpoint, but more often encourage continued growth and the desire to know more (Sherry, 2010).

Therefore, here I can conclude that when students have stimulated a deep understanding, it means they have the capacity to confront complexities of subjects, solve real problems, and create further consideration. From knowing the interpretation of deep understating, then I realize that perhaps process drama is an appropriate way to manage a deep understanding for students. The way and the purpose of doing process drama could stimulate a deep understanding. Therefore, the next paragraph will present some features of process drama that could assist create deep understanding.

### **2.2.1 Episodic structure and multiple perspectives**

Process drama involves various dramatic strategies and theatrical approaches, and it has an obvious feature, which is episodic (O'Neill, 1995, p. 48). The episodic structure could provide multiple ways of looking at the event so that students could understand the diversity and complexity of it. A process drama workshop consists of a series of sequence with different dramatic situations and techniques. Comparing with conventional theater form, process drama doesn't have a linear story or plot with a closed ending. But it must raise a discussable question. In a production of conventional theater, all the questions or suspense has been settled in its conclusion for the audience, as well as a teacher in the classroom has already prepared the teaching plan. The director or playwright is more like an omniscient that can decide everything to present to the audience. Performers should have a thoroughly grasp of the central theme of the story. However, this is different in process drama. The episodic structure of process drama allows the gradual articulation of a complex dramatic world and enables it to be extended and elaborated (O'Neill, 1995, p. xvi).

This complex dramatic world is beneficial for generating a deep understanding. Each episode of process drama has a relatively independent perspective of the center, it also includes many theater strategies, such as dramatic conventions, role play, writing literacy, narrating, composing stories and so on. Those drama strategies and conventions could bring diverse ways of exploring the focus of the theatre event.

The separation of different episodes also creates multiple perspectives. It creates different distances to the event. For example, John O'Tool and Brad Haseman (O'Tool & Haseman, 1988, p. 35-40) brings out that theater activities could involve three perspectives for framing the action: Focus on the main characters, Focus on the edge of it, and focus on the outside the event. So participants could learn the event in a comprehensive way. This framing would involve participants into the complexity of what happens, and get a deep reflection of it. The episodic manner collects diverse theatrical approaches for creating engagement for the students. It is structured so that participants take on multiple roles, not just one character throughout the drama experience. It is framed this way to allow participants to consider multiple perspectives (Landy & Montgomery, 2012, p. 19). Participants could learn more well-developed and richer knowledge from those multiple perspectives, and explore comprehensive perception, such as a deep understanding demands.

### **2.2.2 Participation and interaction**

Drama organizes and extracts the important moments from life, and put those extractives into the perspective of an individual, a society, history, culture, and values. Drama is always committing to unfold a simple situation or problem, which we can find the characteristics of our age, the challenges of our lives, and the choices that we have to deal with. That is what drama could bring to us. The audience or participants would generate their own thinking and involvement no matter watching a theatre production or having a drama experience to some extent. We cannot define that conventional theater has no chance for audience to be involved. They just have different degree of involvement. Whereas in some other theatrical genres the meaning



is made by the theatrical ensemble of actors, playwright, director, and designer and communicated to a watching audience; in the misunderstanding of process drama the participants, together with the teacher, constitute the theatrical ensemble and engage in drama to make the meaning for themselves (Bowell & Heap, 2001, p. 7). Comparing with the conventional theater, Drama-in-education has a greater degree of involvement. Participants are provided empowerment, options, and opportunities to reflect our own problems from our own age in a public space. Essential dramatic elements are managed by the leader and the participants in process drama so that it leads to both an authentic dramatic experience and a greater understanding of the nature of the event (O'Neill, 1995, p. xiv). In public fictional time and space, participants confront the real contradiction or complexity of our society or our family. Although we are discussing others stories, we are bringing ourselves in and negotiating for ourselves in those stories.

Interaction indicates that the students are not only receiving messages and facts, but also promote an environment where the students could be challenged to confront the real world. As a teacher, to create an opportunity which will enable them to interact with that world and to understand it more fully through their interaction so they may function more successfully in it (Bowell & Heap, 2001, p. 2). In the process of participation, participants are forced to create and solve something for making the action works. They are involved in a group-work; they are challenged by the tasks; they are taking the mission of a real problem from a real circumstance even though in a fictitious world. The involvement engages students deeply in the situation with their thoughts, values, and personalities.

*That is to say that participants in process drama will not normally be involved with learning and presenting lines from a pre-written dramatic text- a play- but will be 'writing' their own play as the narrative and tensions of their drama unfold in time and space and through action, reaction, and interaction (Bowell & Heap, 2001, p. 7).*

Therefore, for generating a deep understanding, participation and interaction would be

effective and crucial in a learning process.

### **2.2.3 Process and improvisation**

The term “process drama” indicates that it focuses on experiencing the process instead of planning a complete production. In process drama, the outcome of the journey is the journey itself. The experience is its own destination (O’Neill, 1995, p. 67). The form of process drama is a unique way of learning, and it comes with stories, role-play, dramatic tension, imagination and other artistic elements. Unlike the normal education of the curriculum, process drama doesn’t evaluate the outcome from examinations. It is more likely emphasizing on what the students have considered and reflected in the process. Students are learning, thinking and creating new ideas more or less in every episode. They could learn from communicating and negotiating with other participants, encountering and solving problems, and playing roles for immersing in other’s stories, “...the primary purpose of process drama is to establish an imagined world, a dramatic ‘elsewhere’ created by the participants as they discover, articulate, and sustain fictional roles and situations (O’Neill, 1995, p. xvi). It naturally promotes new cognitions and ideas. This variety of theatrical elements breaks sterile class atmosphere and support a chance for exploration. Process drama is not a procedure that students are asked to duplicate or memorize information. This procedure supports to produce superficial understanding. Process drama provides a space for improvisation and congress. As it unfolds, the process will contain powerful elements of composition and contemplation, but improvised encounters will remain at the heart of the event as the source of much of its dramatic power (O’Neill, 1995, p. xvi). Improvisation in process drama is intended to raise question and inquiry instead of to afford an answer or a conclusion. The aim of raising question and inquiry is for encouraging further reflection and contemplation. However, students might trigger different understanding of a single event in their drama experience through different activities. But this understanding is not superficial because process drama is not just for learning the structured facts. It operates through actions, feelings, empathy, and behaviors so that it could stimulate a desire for students to investigate those connected

facts after the class. And the combination of doing drama, learning facts and further exploration could promote a greater understanding of the knowledge.

### **2.3 Learning theory**

Practitioners have described the areas of learning in drama in a number of different ways but most agree that the learning falls into broad categories which include:

- Learning about the art form;
- Personal and social learning –including language, moral and spiritual development.
- Cross-curricular learning (Bowell and Heap, 2001, p. 8).

Learning in drama consists of two aspects: Learning the nature of drama and learning for other things and gaining competencies through drama (Bowell and Heap, 2001, p. 4). In my research, I conduct a proposal of learning cultural knowledge through the form of process drama.

According to the university level subject description of the Chinese language and cultural knowledge curriculum in Norway. It shows that the students should pass 5 levels to complete their capabilities of Chinese language and the awareness of Chinese culture. In their curriculum, the first semester is about cultural knowledge, and they have six subjects to learn: Chinese history, politics, geography, customs, religion, and minorities. The following next two and half years, it will be the language course. The evaluation system is based on essays and exams, and there is also a general exam for proofing the language capability at the end of the whole teaching plan.<sup>3</sup>

An introductive requirement for the Chinese language from a Norwegian high school shows three learning objectives:

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<sup>3</sup> The author got the information from interviewing an associate professor Zhao Shouhui who works at the Department of Foreign Languages in Bergen University.

- Firstly, learning Chinese would provide student ability to conduct cultural communication and exchange. This would decrease cultural misunderstanding and shocks.
- Secondly, Students should have the ability to deal with international events, and have the ability to truly understand Chinese culture.
- Thirdly, students should manage to apply Chinese in any circumstances and have certain knowledge about Chinese lifestyle, mindset, values, and etiquettes.<sup>4</sup>

This course description is based on the national subject curriculum in Norway for foreign language learning. The national subject curriculum is formulated by the “Utdanningsdirektoratet (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training)” in Norway. It requires three main subject areas for foreign languages learning:

- Language learning – which includes insight into one’s own language learning and language use.
- Communication – which focuses on imparting meaning through the foreign language.
- Language, culture, and society – which focus on cultural understanding in a broad sense.<sup>5</sup>

The course description and teaching plan of Chinese language learning at high school and university in the Norway suggests cultural knowledge is an important aspect in order to consummate student’s Chinese learning. However, how to teach cultural knowledge is a difficult question for teachers.

Basically, the forms of the classes are based on lecture and seminar. Lectures are for writing skills and grammatical knowledge, and seminars are for oral practices. A professor from the department of foreign language at Bergen University has once expressed that he has felt a great difference between the students from Nordic

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<sup>4</sup> The author has got this course description from a Chinese language teacher who works at a high school in Norway.

<sup>5</sup> The reference finds on this website: <https://www.udir.no/kl06/FSP1-01/Hele/Hovedomraader>

countries and Asia-pacific. He has experienced 6 years teaching in Singapore and 9 years in Australia. In the interview, he expressed that the student from Asia-Pacific is regarding the Chinese language as a survival skill for finding jobs and illuminating their resumes. They work very hard for the certification and application of the language. But the students in Nordic countries showed that they care more about the cultural knowledge of the language, and they are always seeking a deeper meaning of the story behind the language and the source of the cultural background. Therefore, the differences between the requirements of the students make him use different teaching methods. For Asia-pacific students who want to use this language as a survival skill, he would apply the traditional way of teaching, words, grammar, and an enough amount of reading. But for the Norwegian students, the focal point is emphasized on developing the knowledge of Chinese history and cultural awareness, and focus on subject knowledge and content study. He and his group are searching a different way of teaching to provide students a deep understanding of Chinese cultural Knowledge. He mentioned in the interview, he advocates the Vygotsky's teaching and learning theory.

### **2.3.1 Vygotskian learning theory**

Lev Vygotsky is an authoritative scholar of learning theory in the last century. He had inspired many researchers in the theoretical study of learning theory and children's cognitive development. In this paragraph, I adopt three researchers Penny Buddy, Erika Piazzoli, and Julie Dunn's perspective on some aspects of Vygotsky's learning theory, which could support my research.

Vygotsky provides a psychological theory for the learning process, and it explains the significance of playing in drama. His viewpoint suggests the individual development is affected by the social and cultural interactions. On one hand, Poehner suggests "according to Vygotsky, learning to use symbolic tools as mediating artifacts through engaging in activities with others gives rise to new forms of cognition through a process known as internalization or 'ingrowing' (Poehner, 2008, p. 28)". On the other

hand, the process of learning needs a systematic guide and crucial instruction from the teacher. A deep understanding is developed not just from a process that the teachers deliver the knowledge to the students. It should be a process that the teacher creates and experiences with students. Vygotsky's perspective demonstrates that the cognitive development of an individual is a mediating process. It implies that the interpersonal interaction converts the external experience and perceptions to internal cognition by using the assistance of the psychological tools. Vygotsky argued that all learning is mediated. The source of mediation can be a tool (e.g. a pen or a computer), a system of symbols (most notably, language) or another individual in social interaction (Bundy, Piazzoli & Dunn, 2015, p. 154). Learning in drama often requires interaction. As I have demonstrated in the last paragraph, interaction brings a bi-directional knowledge delivery. It would mediate participants' understanding by using the assistance from the other participants.

*Process drama as a pedagogy offers a particular way of mediating learning. Meaning is created through the participants' spontaneous collaboration, with learning further mediated through the elements of drama, including but not confined to role, tension, language, time, space, place, symbol and contrast (Bundy, Piazzoli & Dunn, 2015, p. 154).*

The significance for learning is about motivating and leading the student's potential ability in order to reach the further level. It is explained in Vygotsky's "the zone of the proximal development" theory (Hong, 2007).

The zone of proximal development is a psychological development distance. It is a distance between the individual's actual level of development and the potential level of development, which the individual gets the assistance and guidance from the teacher. The significance of the ZPD emphasizes on the collaborative application of the mediating tools, such as systematic guide and crucial instruction from the teacher or interaction with the other individuals. The teacher and the students or all the participants should work and experience together in the classroom. That is what process drama could provide. Vygotsky uses the term "Zone of Proximal

Development (ZPD)" to describe how collaboration with, or support from, a more capable peer can produce learning that an individual would not be able to achieve alone (Bundy, Piazzoli & Dunn, 2015, p. 155). And this explained the importance of interaction and collaboration.

### **2.3.2 Role-play as an effective way for learning**

As the communicative teaching approach has been increasingly used in different levels of schools, role-play is regarded as an effective way for learning. The "Utdanningsdirektoratet (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training)" officially lists that role-play has been planned into the teaching plan in the foreign language learning class.<sup>6</sup> Role-play originally comes from conventional theater, and it has been identified and developed by the development of theater. Role-play describes an individual with a specific identity and created behavior on stage. But the concept of "Role" has also been applied and generalized in the sociology and psychology. Nowadays, many theatre practitioners and educators are intended to use role-play in many occasions in order to practice communicative and dynamic method for teaching and communicating, Such as Augusto Boal creates "spect-actor" and Dorothy Heathcote uses "teacher-in-role".

In drama-in-education, role-play stands as a fundamental and crucial element for learning. Even though in theater event, role-play is also an indispensable component, but it is little different with role-play in process drama. In the conventional theater, actors should study and deliberate roles before constructing the production, and roles have more settled characteristics and been composed in order to conduct the story for the audience.

However,

*In process drama, the expressive means are usually limited, and the onlookers are also actors in the event, so it is primarily through their roles that participants create*

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/lareplanverket/veiledning-til-lp/fremmedsprak---veiledning-til-lareplanen/3-praktiske-eksempler/grunnskole/#niva-i-ii-rollespill-pa-restaurant>

*and maintain the dramatic world. During this extended experimental dramatic encounter, participants are likely to undertake multiple roles that require a simplicity of representation instead of complete identification and naturalistic portrayal (O'Neill, 1995, p. 69).*

In process drama, it is not necessary to present the role as a professional actor, it is regarded as a way of investigation and exploration. Particularly, when students play the roles, they often need to present identity or a type of behavior, which are extracted from the real life with no need of make-up and costumes.

Role-play could bring a cultural perspective. A role contains various perspectives of senses. When we develop a role, we would ask questions like this: who is he/she? Where is he/she from? What does he/she work for a living? Why does he/she choose to do this in this case? Those questions complete the role; meanwhile provide different contents of the character's identity and characteristics. The identity and characteristic are not necessarily to be fully detailed or manipulated, but it will be constructed as an individual who is unique because of representing a special symbol or situation. The roles maintain a sight of humanity, an understanding of culture, a social status, or a circumstance that is worth to be explored. As O'Neill (1995) argues:

*Definition of character in drama means a display of those personal traits and aspects of personal history that are relevant to the dramatist's purpose and the omission of all extraneous detail, ... dramatic characters are defined precisely by their context, it is inevitable that they will partake, to some degree, of the nature of the types and may even remain "stereotype figures and theatrical scarecrows," as Thomas Mann called them (O'Neill, 1995, p. 72).*

The role-play in process drama implies presenting universal men, and their personalities extracts from the real-life experience. In process drama with cross-cultural context, the role is a symbol for representing the universal circumstance and mindset from the different culture.

Role-play could also let participants put themselves in and stimulate empathy. Heathcote has proposed a metaphor for role-playing in drama, which is "taking on



others shoes” (Heathcote, 1985, p. 49). Participants take on roles, and they will be involved in the role’s situation, relationship, and affection. They are challenged to confront a situation and interpersonal relationship, and they have to think of the characters, act as the characters that may or may not conform to their real identity or experience.

In role-play, two terms should be concerned: Suspension of disbelief and Role identification. Probably, when they are involved in role-playing, there will be a conflict inside the participants’ mind. And when they have decided to believe the roles’ behaviors or options, there will be an appearance of suspension of disbelief. The British poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge from the early 19th century coins this term “Suspension of disbelief”. It indicates that the audience or readers could believe what they are seeing in a performance or what they are reading in a novel is a fictional reality. They could be empathized productively by the story or the performance if they suspend their doubt for the fictional world. In drama-in-education, the participants are committed to a world of “as if”, and this fictional space allow participants to explore human roles, situations and experiences (Davis, Clemson, Ferholt & Jansson, 2015, p. 6). When the participants believe the built fictional world and trust the roles, it is a good start for engagement. As Heathcote explains:

*I define educational drama as being anything which involves people in active role-taking situations in which attitudes, not characters, are the chief concern, lived at life-rate (that is discovery at this moment, not memory based) and obeying the natural laws of the medium. I regard these laws as being: a willing suspension of disbelief; agreement to presence, employing all past experiences available to the group at the present moment and any conjecture of imagination they are capable of, in an attempt to create a living, moving picture of life, which aims at surprise and discovery for the participants rather for any onlookers...I maintain that problem-solving is the basis of learning and maturation (Heathcote, 1985, p. 61f).*

Role identification is an important term for role-play. In an extensive meaning of applied psychology, a role refers to an independent individual with diverse possibilities for developing behaviors in a society. When participants are in role, it indicates that they have to be agreed with the behavior of this character. They are not

only digging into the character's mind, but the characters are also immersed into participant's mind. It is a bi-directional process. Gradually, participants may modify their opinion and behavior to fulfill the agreement and expectation for being the characters. The agreement and modification could arouse emotional resonance and empathy in order to conduct a greater degree of participation. This is important for deeply cultural understanding.

To conclude, From the Vygotsky's learning theory, we have known the importance of interaction and collaboration. Students could not achieve deep learning without the assistance of the teacher and the others. And it is critical to be involved in interaction and participation. Meanwhile, in terms of role-playing as an effective way for learning, it elaborates that the simplification of the roles in process drama might create universal symbols from another culture that represent typical cultural feature and mindset. And from the explanation of essential terms such as role identification and suspension of disbelief, it states process drama has the possibilities to invite participants to modify their ideas and behaviors for agreeing with the character in order to frame them into a greater engagement. In this moment, participants are engaged in the circumstance and prepare to explore the role without a doubt. When the engagement and modification are conducted, there could appear an emotional engagement with the role and situation. Bolton has argued the significance of feeling, which could work for a change in understanding. Only when the work is at an experiential feeling level can change in understanding take place (Bolton, 1979, p. 45). Here we can see that "change in understanding" takes place because of current empathy and engagement. It will develop a deep understanding of culture because participants are gradually immersed and deeply engaged into role-play.

#### **2.4 Culture theory**

Drama-in-education is a process of comprehensive learning, and learning culture also demands comprehensive knowledge and dynamic approaches. In my experiences,

Culture is considered as a very difficult knowledge to learn, and it relates to lots of aspects and foundations. It is a broad, sophisticated, and complex subject.

Generally, culture divides likely by nations, religions, or historical background. But within one nation or region, it can also be found a variation of culture, because culture is also influenced by gender, social class, or growing experience.

*Culture is shared symbols, signs, rituals, and behaviors, and assumes that meanings are socially produced. An individual may create the text but does so in a social and historical context. Culture, in critical theory and postmodern discourse, refers to any context in which meanings are generated, especially through symbolic representations. Culture can therefore refer to a set of meanings based on gender, race, color, creed, sexuality, political affiliations, and other possible constructions (Berry, 2000, p. 77).*

Culture is viewed as a complex system with three interrelated components: values, beliefs, and social norms. A value system is a set of explicit or implicit conceptions of desirable or preferable ends shared by a group of people. A belief system consists of explicit conceptions that have been viewed as a true representation of reality. The social norm is habit or behavior of individual or groups implicitly existing in their daily lives. This conceptualization of culture implies dynamic relationships among three major components to three knowledge facets in a holistic theory (Yang, Zheng & Li, 2003). Culture is formulated by the social environment in which contains many lives experiences, it is the production of the interaction between human and the society. Culture shows the way people live in life. For example, people have to eat, but western people eat with forks, and Chinese people eat with chopsticks. Even if it is a cultural perception difference, it starts with an action, or it costs an action.

*According to Vygotsky, human beings are cultivated into human society once they are born. When people grow up, passing through every stage of life, they keep interacting with human society. The elements in society, such as customs, religions, lifestyles, history, or laws, comprise the cultural world of human lives. The cultural world influences human behaviors and influences the growing children (Wen, 2015,p. 12) .*

Therefore, the author assumes one of the effective ways for understanding culture might be exploring the behaviors through dramatic interaction. For culture exchange and communication, we have to learn to function behaviors. People who come from different cultures have different ways of expressing affection and acquiring cognition. In a simple term, people develop common cultural senses through expressing, feeling, thinking, and acting in the real-life experience. In the author's opinion, cultural communication needs to share or even simulate the different ways of feeling, thinking, and acting for acculturation. Using drama to promote intercultural exchange maybe a feasible consideration. For example, in role-play, the participants could experience a different life experience so that they could investigate the motivation of their behaviors. Thus, the participants are confronting a special situation and a different way of behaving in order to learn the culture.

Learning culture also requires learning from the differences and the similarities. Students need to learn the nature of their heritage and figure out the origins of their own customs. For the students to develop cross-culture understanding through drama, I believe it is important that they are given chances to explore the nature of their own society, aspects of another culture and the similarities and/or differences between them (Jackson, 1996, p. 210). Students understand their own culture in order to hold a better and deep comparison with another culture.

*In inter-culture performance, narratives, codes and conventions easily read by those acculturated to them may be opaque to outsiders. Those attempting to work inter-culturally have evolved a number of production strategies for dealing with this reality. One strategy for the production of traditional Asian plays is to replicate as authentically as possible a play in a particular production style, keep its complex codes and educate an audience to those codes. Una Chaudhuri describes such reproductions as 'museum inter-culturalism'. She calls for ' a practical inter-culturalism' which does not 'simply reproduce already established (and hence already politically coded) images of cultural difference; instead it would produce the experience of difference' (Grady and Zarrilli, 1996, p. 196) .*

Learning culture also includes a risk that is just copying and presenting the cultural facts and symbols. That is why it is important to assert the significance of experiencing the differences and exploring the complexity in a collaborative process.

### **3.0 Methodology**

In this chapter, I am going to present the methodology of my research. Firstly, I will introduce applied researching methods, qualitative approaches and art-based research, which I have used to develop my research process. And in the second part I present the design of two workshops in which I did the practical investigation for my research question. And in the third part, I will present how I collect my data, and present the methods I have applied for my data collection. Eventually, in the last part, I will introduce my analyzing methods that I have utilized for the following analysis.

#### **3.1 Art based research and qualitative research**

Research in the field of art often refers to practical fieldwork. There is in fact very little research in drama that is not tied to a particular practical context. For the vast majority of us, our professional educational context provides us with the Research Question, the research site, and the target community (O'Toole, 2006, p. 21). Many drama and theater practitioners are investigating their research question in the practical work and exploring it within their professional experience with participants or "research objects". As I have introduced, my research investigates the application of process drama for intercultural communication. I have implemented numbers of approaches in order to explore this research request. I have chosen multiple methodologies which could assist researchers who are examining in a practical work. Those are art-based research and some qualitative approaches.

##### **3.1.1 Art-based research**

John O'Toole (O'Toole, 2006) has identified three most frequently used research paradigms in art and drama education and applied theater. These are descriptive and interpretive methodologies, interventionist methodologies, and third space

methodologies. The appearance of the third space methodologies is based on the radical demands of the creative arts and arts educational researchers. It regards as a new paradigm of research. This new paradigm refines its protocols and procedures, free from the constraining assumptions and principles that define the methods and dynamic of qualitative research. Even though it is not commit to an elaborate research, but it is an instrumental approach for the beginners (Haseman, 2015, p. 338). John O'Toole concludes that the third space methodologies are applied for description, interpretation and ongoing change (O'Toole, 2006, p. 56). I have identified that my research is in this genre, and I have located that art-based research is a suitable method for my research. My research does not concern so much about specific statistic results or measuring, it does concern about understanding and experience from the participants through the artwork. Art-based research is an appropriate methodology.

*As a methodology, in its simplest form arts-based inquiry creating a piece of artwork and using that process to examine a Research Question perhaps about the structure or processes of dramatic art. The outcome normally consists of a piece of dramatic art, accompanied by a commentary or exegesis (O'Toole, 2006, p. 58).*

My practical work principally is concentrating on building process drama workshops, which is a fundamental investigating process for my research question. The process drama workshop as a unique theatre form regards as an artwork. I will examine my research assumption in the process, and research the art piece in practice.

### **3.1.2 Qualitative research and methods**

In my investigation, I have applied several qualitative approaches. Since I am focusing on utilizing process drama workshop as an important part of my investigation, I need several methods which can direct and function with discovering and analyzing phenomenon and empirical data. Qualitative research methods are assisting my researching progression successfully, especially because it requires reflecting on practical artwork and research with a certain number of participants. Unlike quantitative research paradigm which focuses on measuring and calculating

objective statistic data, qualitative researchers try to extract meaning from their data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 4). Qualitative research approach focuses on finding “what and why”, it contributes to discovering the understanding of reasons, insights, and motivations. It acquires discernment through answering questions for identifying problem, understanding the phenomenon of the objective incident, analyzing human behaviors and cognitions. It is qualitative when they need to collect, interpret, and make judgments about data that cannot measured-such as what people say and do, and why (O’Toole, 2006, p. 31). Researchers are using qualitative research for locating the inquiry and dealing with experienced based data. The concrete purpose is to make a deep inquiry about the characteristics of the research object and the cause of the phenomenon. Qualitative research is an intellectual, creative, and rigorous craft that the practitioner not only learns but also develops through practice (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 4). The main methodology “art-based-research” that I have chosen is one of the specific methodologies in qualitative research.

My research project involves multiple qualitative methods. For my data collection, I am applying qualitative interview, observation, and video recording as my concrete approaches. For my data analysis, I am coding and extracting the meaning of the materials, and video analysis for my visual data, and the method “systematic text condensation” (Malterud, 2012) is applied for analyzing my interview materials and observation logs.

### **3.2 Description of Workshops**

For investigating my research question, I have formulated two process drama pieces in January and February 2017. They are structured with different contents and showed different aspects of Chinese culture. Each workshop has been practiced with two groups of participants, a group of local high school students and a group of mixed nationalities adults.

The first workshop is “A woman from Tang Dynasty”. This process drama adapted a story about a Chinese female poet and writer from Tang dynasty. Her name is 鱼玄机 (“Yu” as her name in the following context). She has a great reputation for writing, but she has a tragic life story. Her story is a representation of female’s situation in the Tang Dynasty, and it gives participants a closer look at Tang culture. The purpose of this workshop is experiencing the different cultural atmosphere, while discussing woman situation in the past and nowadays society.

The second workshop centers on an important policy in China: The Chinese One-Child Policy. In this workshop, participants have explored the One-Child Policy, the regulation, the political purposes, and especially the influence of family. The workshop is located in an ordinary Chinese family with three generations, and consider the family relationship and the growth of a single child.

Each workshop processed for two hours without a break. After each workshop, I have made interviews with the participants about their reflections, experiences, and feelings.

### **3.2.1 The participants**

One group of participants is high school students from one of the Nordic countries. They are from different grades, one class has 12 students from the first grade, and the other class has 7 students from the second grade. The first-grade class has participated the "鱼玄机<sup>7</sup>" workshop, and the second-grade class has worked in the "the one and only" workshop. They are learning Chinese as a third language, besides their mother tone and English. They are about 15 to 17 years old. In their Chinese language learning class, the curriculum also involves a course about the Chinese culture and society.

The other group of participants is adults who have great interest in Chinese culture or

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<sup>7</sup> 鱼玄机 is the name of the Chinese female writer. Her name is pronounced Yu Xuan Ji.



my focus point. They come from different age groups and have different backgrounds. They are drama practitioners, students in university, researchers from science field, Chinese teachers, and cinema worker. They also have different nationalities, and some of them are Chinese. But they all share a great interest in learning Chinese culture.

Both two groups of participants have both participated in two workshops, so I have made four workshops. Most of the participants didn't have experience about interactive theatre form or even haven't heard about process drama. Some of them like to go to theatre and enjoy a theatre production, but they do not regularly participate in this unique theatre form. Some of them have told me that they are confused but excited in the beginning because they don't know where they are heading.

In the adults' group of participants, there are several Chinese participants in the workshop. Their identity brings a special interaction with the other non-Chinese participants, and it works differently than the workshop with the high school students. The high school students are getting new information from each other, the leader (me), or the context. But in the adults' group, the interaction shows an interesting communication and exchange of different cultural elements and mindsets on site.

Before I conduct my practical work with my participants, I have registered my project at NSD<sup>8</sup> (Norwegian Centre for Research Data). NSD is the Data Protection Official for Research for all the Norwegian universities, university colleges and several hospitals and research institutes. It requires a restriction for researchers ethically, which could protect the personal data of individuals who are involved in the researching process. If the research involves personal data, sensitive personal data, audio/video/pictures recording through interviews, observation, or video collection, the researcher must register at NSD for a notification<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Norsk senter for forskningsdata

<sup>9</sup> The information could find on this website: <http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/pvo.html>

In my research, I have made a contract with my participants from the requirement of NSD. All personal data will be treated confidentially. In this project, only the researcher and the supervisor of the researcher has access to the personal data and the recording of the workshops. The personal data and the recording of the workshops will be locked in the researcher's private computer with a password. Participants' personal information will not be recognizable in the publication, and the video recording will not be shown to the public. The personal data will be made anonymous.

The personal data and the video recording will be deleted when the project is finished.

### **3.2.2 The intention of adopting these two contents**

In order to investigate the assumption that I have proposed in the introduction chapter, I have chosen one story and one policy as my pre-text. Pre-text is the source of the inspiration of the focus in process drama. It carries out the dramatic world and dramatic tension. It could be a painting, a text, a myth or a piece of music. Pre-text operates as an essential preliminary frame. Even though the material is barely recognizable in the workshop, but it is the origin of the core of the workshop (O'Neill, 1995, p. 33-36). Finding a suitable pre-text is an essential work as a starting point for process drama.

*When we select pre-texts that resonate with our dramatic and cultural heritage, not with a view to accumulating facts or repeating understandings but with a sense of recognition, of interrogation, we are discovering occasions for understanding, integration, interpretation and inquiry. Appropriate pre-texts will allow us to encounter and transform the materials of other cultures without necessarily appropriating them. When we create significant dramatic contexts we are building the kind of dramatic curriculum that invites creation, participation, and appreciation (O'Neill, 1995, p. 43).*

Therefore, I have selected a story about "Yu" a woman from Tang Dynasty and the Chinese One-Child Policy as my pre-text. I didn't select the whole life story about "Yu", I just chose some parts about female issue and status that contributes to a further exploration of culture differences. Besides that, the "one-child" policy is not a

part of art. But it can be used for arousing a consideration about a single child in a family and their youth under this special circumstance.

#### The first process drama work: A woman from Tang Dynasty

Yu was an extremely brilliant female writer in the Chinese literary history, and her poems have a rich taste of Tang culture. But she had a very bad reputation. She was brave to seek the freedom, and fight for the rights to be a woman who is not underrated by men. At the end, the local government executed her, because of killing her maid. The official historical recording said she killed her maid because the maid doesn't want to serve this kind of woman. Tang Dynasty is the first and only dynasty that had a Queen in the history. Even though in the most open, influential and prosperous period in Chinese history, there is still no position for a single woman like her. Chinese society requires harmonious. A harmonious implies the collective standards are more important than individual's right. But the Western culture seeks fully developed human potential with an active, individualistic approach (Yang, Zheng, Li, 2006, P1215). In Yu's story, we can also find the conflict between the individual and a harmonious society. The Harmonization from the ancient Chinese society causes her tragedy.

I chose to introduce Tang Dynasty because it is influential for both eastern and western world in that period. Tang dynasty (c.618-907) is an impressive period in Chinese history, it regards as a great period in Chinese civilization, and a golden age of cosmopolitan culture (Benn, 2004). Until now in the North America, Chinese are still called Tang people, and the main area where many Chinese are living is still called "Tang People Street" in many foreign countries. Tang Dynasty could be a representation of many Chinese empires back in the history.

#### The second process drama work: Be the one and only

I named this process drama piece “Be the one and only”, it presents the situation of a signal child. Many people in the west have heard about this policy. The Chinese One-Child policy is a part of the family planning policy in China. It was introduced in 1979 and began to be formally phased out in 2015. This plan was prepared to reduce China's population for the balance of the population and the economic development. However, as a single child in an ordinary Chinese family, it is also generating many questions. Aloneness, excessive fondness, unbalanced family communication, over-controlling and the like would all be the major problems to cause a contradiction for the family relationship. In this workshop, we stand on the viewpoint of a family's development and happiness. The participants would experience several aspects of Chinese culture, the mindset of Chinese parents and youths, the communication pattern of family members, the importance of the university entrance examination, the experience and growing pains of a single child. In the workshop, I focus on the relationship between a family with three generations and a single youth. “Be the one and only” is the title of this process drama, it will arouse a thought about being the one and only in a family. But why couldn't we pursue the one and only dream which is decided by ourselves? While the western culture is characterized by individualism, Chinese traditional culture is typified as collectivism. In the collectivistic culture such as the Chinese, an individual is less valued than a perceived collective interest (Yang, Zheng & Li, 2006, P. 1215), even if he or she is the only child in the family.

In addition, as a part of the investigation process for my research question, these two contents could bring a closer look at some aspect of Chinese culture. On one hand, these two contexts have rich taste of Chinese culture, such as Tang Dynasty, status and regulations in the ancient Chinese empire, the circumstance of a signal child. On the other hand, these are also connecting to the issues in the modern society, women situation, family relationship, human liberation, and the growth pain of a youth.

### 3.2.3 Research through workshops

#### **The first workshop: A woman from Tang Dynasty**

Through this workshop, the students investigate particular aspects of woman situation and social status in ancient China, meet a female writer who lived in Tang dynasty (c.618-907). The focused question in the workshop is what does the status mean for a human? How are woman treated and regarded in that age?

#### Episode 1: A poem made of Yu

Music<sup>10</sup> is playing before the participants come in.

The teacher(me) shows the participants the following poem and give them some seconds to read the poem.

《忆子安》

枫叶千枝复万枝

江淹桥映暮帆迟

忆君心似西江水

日夜东流无歇时

《To my husband》<sup>11</sup>

Maple leaves have covered thousands of branches

The river submerges the reflection of the bridges

The boat hasn't come yet, the sunset reflects on the sail.

My yearning to you is like the water of this river.

It flows eastward days and nights without a break.

After the participants have finished reading, the teacher stops the music. Everyone sits

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-afNj5-swE&t=520s>

<sup>11</sup> English translation by author.

in a circle and the teacher asks the following questions :

- What scenario does the poem describe from your point of view?
- Who has written this poem?
- What is the identity of this writer, gender? profession? age?
- What is his or her status in the society?
- Why did he or she write this poem?

After discussing the poem, the teacher invites the participants to see a video<sup>12</sup> about the territory of Tang dynasty in the world's historical evolvement.

The purpose of using music and Chinese poem, as a starting point, is to give the participants a direct involvement of this cultural atmosphere and attract them to focus on the event. The video gives the participants an impression on the period of Tang dynasty in the world history and its territory development. In this way, it would help them know some of the background, situate the Tang dynasty in the long and distant ancient Chinese history. It is easy to get confused if they don't have an overlook about the position of Tang dynasty in history, and it is better to compare with the Norwegian history by using the video of the world history.

### Episode 2: A market in Chang'an<sup>13</sup>

The teacher shows a painting on the big screen, while music<sup>14</sup> and a soundtrack of noise from the street<sup>15</sup> plays at the same time.

Task 1: Participants go into groups with pairs, and discuss what they see in the painting. It could include the smell, sound on the street, music, language, objects, or people in this painting.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewd4l2rD2\\_U&t=165s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewd4l2rD2_U&t=165s). It shows from 1minute and 59seconds.

<sup>13</sup> Chang'an is the capital city in Tang Dynasty.

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuNiVPg\\_q2I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuNiVPg_q2I)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZxPqa2J5Ro&t=70s>

《West market in Chang An》<sup>16</sup>



After their discussion, the participants stay in pairs and they are given a task to try to rebuild the painting in the classroom. Each group chooses a pair of characters in the painting, and makes a still-image of a moment they have discovered in the painting. In this section, everyone acts at the same time for trying to rebuild the old city market.

When the still-images are posed, the teacher asks them to look around. The teacher asks them about the relationship between these two characters and about their status in this society. After a short discussion, the teacher will ask the participants to do the action again but exaggeratedly, and they may over-do this action for expressing the difference of status in this society. Through this task, the participants maybe get a clear notion of the meaning of status in a society.

When they are imitating the action exaggeratedly, the teacher goes around and touches on students' shoulder. When the student feels the touch, they may express what the character is thinking at this moment.

**Task 2:** The participants are sitting in an open area, and the picture is in the

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<sup>16</sup> This painting describes an ordinary day in a famous market which is called West market in a city called Chang An. Chang An was the capital of Tang, and it is located in the middle area of China

background of this section. The teacher informs the participants that they are going to meet a girl who just passes by the market.

The teacher is in role as the girl. The girl comes with a simple Tang custom and starts with a short Tang dance. The girl sits quietly on her knees on the floor and begins to talk with the participants while doing a tea making convention. Participants start to interview her. She tells:

My name is Yu, and I am 24 years old. I love to write poem and walk around in the garden in the house. I was taught to read by my father, and I like to read books. I love my husband, but he has many wives. I don't know what my husband's job is, but I am waiting for him at my room every day. Sometimes, he comes to me, but normally he comes to the other wives. Whatever, I am going to leave this family, because my husband wants a divorce.

In this section, the discussion of the painting gives the participants a chance to explore an unknown or unfamiliar culture by imitating the characters' postures in the painting. In addition, when they are discussing the painting, they are exchanging their interpretations with each other. In task 1, the participants could raise a curiosity and anticipation about the character, and they would carry this expectation to “meeting the character”. Task 2 is presenting the character and framing the participants by using the “teacher-in-role” convention. When the participants are interviewing the character, they are attracted by the character and concentrate on her story. They raise curiosity and anticipation. This anticipation would frame the participants to explore more about the character. While the improvised conversation would make an authentic communication with the character, the participants maybe gradually accept the fictional world in this way.

### Episode 3: A divorce letter

In this episode, the teacher and the participants investigate an important moment in her life: the moment when Yu gets divorced. In Tang period, the divorce letter is only given from the husband to the wives, and the first wife who is born to a high-status



family could also divorce the concubines. The teacher informs that the first wife censures Yu because she doesn't follow the seven rules which women should follow in that time. The teacher tells the seven rules:

The seven rules (三从四德)

Obey your father, obey your husband, and obey your son  
Mind your words, mind your appearance, mind your servant,  
and mind your morality.

However, is this the true reason?

Task 3: The participants are going to confront with a situation when Yu is divorced and kicked out of this family. The participants have known that the first wife said Yu doesn't follow the seven rules. But what is the true reason? The participants are separated into groups of three persons. The teacher gives them a divorce letter written on a Chinese style paper with calligraphy.

休书

凡为夫妻之因，前世三生结缘，始配今生之夫妇。若姻缘不和，比是冤家，故来相对，即以二心不同，难归一意，个还本道。

男方 李亿

女方 鱼氏

A divorce letter

The reason why we became husband and wife is because the fate generated by the past three lifetimes. If the marriage is not harmony, we became enemy, thus we are confronting the problem. We have different heart and separate mind. It is difficult to be united again; therefore, we would give each other a chance to a return of the road we came from.

Husband Liyi

Wife Yu

The three participants in each group take the roles as the husband, the first wife, and Yu. Each group composes a short scene to explore why Yu is kicked out of this family.

They may rehearse in group first and show the scene group by group. The teacher requires of the participants to be aware of the different status in this family. At the end, no matter how the argument goes, Yu will accept the divorce letter.

After showing the scene, the teacher leads a short discussion about each group's work and their thought about the situation.

#### Episode 4: Jing Zhao Yin's office<sup>17</sup>

The participants gather together, and they are informed to be in the Jing Zhao Yin's office. The Jing Zhao Yin just has received a new case today, and this case is huge. It is about a famous woman, Yu, who has killed her maid three years later after she was kicked out by her husband.

Task 4: The teacher is in role as Jing Zhao Yin, and the participants are in role as his colleagues. In this scene, they are talking about this case right now. They may have different attitudes. The teacher proposes those facts:

- The body was found in the front yard of Yu's house.
- A passenger passed by and smelled the weird smell.
- Yu is caught right now. All the evidence shows that she has killed the maid.
- What do you think about this case?
- What is the motivation of her?
- Did you hear some rumors on the street?
- Somebody hears that Yu was proud of her foot, it is small and beautiful, but the maid has an even smaller one, and accidentally showed the feet to a man that visits Yu.
- Somebody also hears that maid doesn't want to be her maid because she is a woman who is kicked out of a family.

Discuss and performing begins when the teacher claps hands.

In this episode, the leader asks the participants to discuss in role why she has killed her maid. This meeting will bring the participants into a new development of this

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<sup>17</sup> Jing Zhao Yin office (京兆尹府) is the police office at Tang dynasty, the title of the head leader is named Jing Zhao Yin (京兆尹).

story, and it brings an outside perspective of this incident and Yu's characteristic.

#### Episode 5: The prison's wall has ears

Task 5: The Participants have to decide a volunteer to be Yu, the rest of the participants are the walls of the prison room. The volunteer sits in the middle, and the rest sit in a square. When the teacher claps, the rest "walls" start to talk at a lower volume to a higher volume. The participants, as the walls, may witness many things. They can talk about what is in Yu's mind. They can witness if someone has visited her, what does he or she say? This section stops when the teacher claps hands.

The purpose of this task is to dig deeper into the character's mind by using a poetic convention. The participants put everything that they know together, and reflect on it by expressing the emotional thinking of the character.

#### Episode 6: Writing in role

Task 6: The participants divide into two groups, and they are going to write in role. One group writes a confession document as Yu, and the other group will write a working journal as Jing Zhao Yin (the police officer). Everyone finds a place to write. After writing, they may choose a partner from the other group, and read what they have written to each other.

Writing document is an important activity for participants. They could get a peaceful space to contemplate the situation and their character. Comparing with acting in role, writing in role concerns more about the deep or hidden thoughts instead of actions. It helps participants to explore the role's motivation of actions, and it is also an effective task to engage them.

#### Episode 7: Funeral

The participants are facing a chair as Yu's grave with a Tang custom on it. We are going to make a memento for Yu. All the participants are standing in front of the chair,

and music<sup>18</sup> plays. Everyone comes forward one by one and gives her a word as a gift, a single word that represents her life.

In the last episode, the teacher uses a ritual convention to conclude the story. This is a memorial ceremony for Yu, and it is also a poetic way for sum up the whole workshop. At the end, every moment may travel again from beginning to the end in the participants' mind.

### **The second workshop: Be the one and only**

The pre-text of this workshop is Chinese one-child policy. From 1979 to 2015, One-child policy was put into practice for 36 years, and it has been a big matter of concern both domestic and international. As a single child in a family in China, I have truly experienced many aspects of this policy. Thus, using this policy as a pre-text for bringing an insight of Chinese family relationship and society is a meaningful and conceivable topic for the participants. This topic is down to the earth. The participants are also teenagers, and this may easily relate to their own experience.

#### Warming-up

Activity: The teacher gives each participant a single chopstick, and everybody is standing in a circle with a short distance between each other. They hold the chopstick with one figure with each other and try to avoid dropping it. Then the teacher and the participants begin to move. The movement stops when one of the chopsticks is dropped. Afterward, the teacher leads a discussion about what do they reflect on this action.

#### Episode 1: A name

The teacher and the participants sit in a circle. The teacher proposes a question: What is your name and what is the meaning of your name? The participants sit in pairs and

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSL3IoBl6ik>

talk with their partners about their names.

**Task 1:** The teacher gives each pair a paper, and there are some Chinese names on it. The teacher asks the participants to take roles as a young couple who just know that they are having a baby on the way. Therefore, they are going to pick a Chinese name for him or her. This name represents their love and expectation for the child.

nánhái  
男孩 (Boys)

nǚhái  
女孩 (Girls)

zhāoyáng  
朝阳: The sun, the rising sun

chánjuān  
婵娟: The moon, beautiful woman

jùnjíe  
俊杰: A person has an outstanding talent

wǎnyì  
婉仪: Gentle behavior with a soft heart

hàorón  
浩然: The spacious sea

zhuóyán  
卓妍: A outstanding goodliness

wēi  
伟: A hero, a leader

jìng  
静: Peaceful

xīn  
鑫: Much more gold for the family

miǎo  
淼: The child lacks water in her fate

zhì míng  
志明: Clear and attainable ambition

chūnjiāo  
春娇: Be borne in spring and sweet

This task proposes a discussion about names. A name carries the expectation and love from their parents. It gives the participants an occasion to think as if they are a young couple what they want for their child, it might relate to understand their own parents. This section is also helping them try to play a role, but in a safer space.

### Episode 2: A family

The participants are standing in front of an open space. There are several chairs and desks in the room. The teacher asks the participants to think what a Chinese family apartment with three-generation looks like? How many rooms do they think there will be in this apartment? Where are those rooms? Where are the living room and kitchen? The participants may use the chairs and desks in the classroom to decorate it.

Task 2: When the participants have arranged the appearance of the apartment, music<sup>19</sup> is played. The teacher asks the participants to imagine an ordinary evening in a Chinese family's apartment. A family consists of three generations. The family members are a teenager, the father and mother, and the grandparents. Where are they? What are they doing at this time? The participants propose the suggestions, and the teacher let them take on roles as family members and position themselves as the role in the sited apartment.

Task 3: The positioned participants get a paper to draw an object, which is the most important object for these roles. These objects can be a symbol for representing their jobs, their personalities, or their stories. The rest of the participants would draw an object in the room, and place it in the room. In addition, the teacher reminds the participants that they should draw the objects, which are possible to appear in a Chinese family apartment. After this section, there is an arranged Chinese family apartment in the room.

This section is supposed to let the participants investigate each role in a Chinese family by drawing an important object. The participant may deeply consider their identity and their characteristic. Putting the object in the arranged apartment is to frame them in the imaginary world for further exploration. Arranging the room into a Chinese family apartment give participants an opportunity to organize a drama stage, they also experience the nature of setting.

#### Episode 4: A family photo book

The teacher asks the participants to stand in front the set-up apartment, and imagine three photos on the shelf near the sofa.

#### Task 4:

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqyf8oSMSXI>

Part 1: The participants are divided into three groups with three persons. They are going to rebuild the three special photos. These photos are presenting three lovely moments of this family. When they finish composing, they may show to the others.

Part 2: When everyone has checked every still-image, the teacher asks them to make another three images about another three moments from this family memory. Then the teacher gives the three moments:

1. When the mother has another baby, but they have to choose to do an abortion or pay a huge amount of money for keeping the baby.
2. When they have a certification, which presents this family has promised to keep only child in the family.
3. A lonely child at home.

When the three moments are presented, the teacher goes around and touches the participants on the shoulder, and they may say what they are thinking at this moment as their roles.

Part 3: Based on the three still-images, the participants are going to try out three scenes, which are related to the three situations in an external perspective. For example, the teacher suggests:

1. When the government officer formulates the policy, how do they formulate the conditions such as the abortion or the payment?
2. Some neighbors see and discuss a lonely child at home.

In this episode, the teacher demonstrates the influences of One-child policy for an ordinary Chinese family. In task 1, the teacher uses still-images to explore more about this family and their relationship. In task 2, the teacher proposes three moments for still-image to let the participants understand more about the circumstance of the influences of a family, and the “thinking trace” drama convention conducts for letting

them stand in character's perspective to think. In task 3, it is time for the participants building a scene on their corporation. Those scenes explore the external perspectives of this situation. It refers to different consideration of this policy, such as political, social, and individual.

#### Episode 5: Overhear a conversation

Task 5: In this section, the teacher suggests that the participants try out a situation when the youth overhears a conversation between his/her parents. The participants go into groups with three persons, A and B are the parents, and C is the single child. Before trying out the scene, the teacher gives the A's and B's a sentence as a starting point from a conversation between a father and a mother. The teacher will ask the A's and B's to complete a conversation that the child may overhear. The C's are going to take the role of the child in this family. While A's and B's are working together to discuss the conversation, the Cs are waiting beside.

The sentence is “ Father says: Please, can't you just stop crying? ”

When they have done their preparation, they may present in the staged apartment from the first episode.

Task 6: The participants are standing in the circle with the same roles as A, B, C. They will write in role as their character. The document will start with “I love my parents, because... even though...” or “I love my child, because... even though...”. The teacher will collect it after they have written.

This section discusses the relationship between the parents and the child. Overhearing is a dramatic situation that may extract a dramatic tension. Overhearing something may refer to some thoughts that may never tell in public. In this section, it is important to interview the C's' feeling after he/she plays the role as the only child, and it is also important to tell the C's to leave their feeling on the stage instead of bringing it to affect their real feelings. This is a needed protection for participates. In



process drama, it is also important to arrange a “distancing”. Distancing is verbalized to a small extent as an estrangement topos. Here, the distancing functions primarily as protection for the participants against becoming inhibited by an embedment in reality (Eriksson, 2011, p. 5).

#### Episode 6: A teenager

Teacher-in-role acts as a teenager and he is asking for help from his friends. The participants are his classmates in school. The teacher comes with a hat on. The participants are sitting in front him and try to understand why he is so upset.

Context: the teenager is Ming. He is a single child in the family. He is anxious about how to fill the application of university entrance examination. This application decides which university he will apply for. He wants to go to an art academy, but his parents don't agree with him. They don't think studying art is a brilliant plan for the future. Should he follow his parents' will or his own?

In this episode, the participants are meeting this character and his dilemma. The participants play as his classmates so that they explore in an outside perspective. Even though the participants are not playing this role, they have a different perspective on the situation. When they are giving advice to the teenager, they are also confronting with different opinions from the other participants.

#### Episode 7: A decision

The participants are divided into two groups. Each group has the role of a youth, a father, a mother, and the grandparent.

Task 7: In this episode, the participants are going to exploring a situation. The scene arranges as the following:

Time: This is the evening before handing in the important application of the university entrance examination.

Event: The school has delivered an application for every student, and this application is for choosing their dream university and their dream major before the exam.

Scene: This evening, on the dinner table, everyone in the family is discussing which university the youth should apply for, and which major should be his or her study? It is an important decision for his/her future.

Limitation: The family members have different attitudes about this application.

1. The youth wants to be an actor, like a superstar. Therefore, the child wants to go to an art school.
2. The father wants the youth to study the major himself has studied.
3. The mother wants the youth to go to a university just 20 minutes' walk from home.
4. The grandparents are mediators.

The two divided groups will direct a short drama from this given situation. They have 15 minutes to prepare the stage and compose the performance. They may practice few options. Eventually they will perform it in the arranged apartment. The result comes naturally by the participants' negotiation.

Task 8: At this moment, the participants will recall the documents they have written in the previous section. The participants read it out loud as themselves.

In the last episode, the participants play with attitudes. Different attitudes could provide different ideas of the decision. The participants play different roles with different attitudes would help them to understand the complexity of this circumstance. In addition, the participants work together to conduct their own piece of drama and experience nature of directing, composing, and performing.

To sum up, in this paragraph, I present the design of my practical workshops, and I will demonstrate the evaluation of the workshops in the discussion chapter. From the

beginning of devising the workshops until analyzing the process, I have acquired many useful ideas and reflections. In the next paragraph, I am going to explain my data collection and the analyzing methods.

### **3.3 Data collection**

Data collection procedure is an important process of my research and further analysis. Considering about theoretical data gathering and analysis, literature reviewing and close reading is a necessary segment. The purpose is reviewing and exploring the knowledge of process drama and theoretical basis. This part is based on previous research works and process drama studies, which covers the concept of process drama and its implementation in the drama field. Besides that, I am trying to study the related materials such as journals, articles and conference papers that can help me to extract and answer my research question. In my practical data collection, I have selected qualitative interview, observation, drama conventions as research method, and video recording as the main methods for the data collection.

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative Interview**

In my project, I have interviewed the participants after each workshop. Interview is the commonest method of data collection in qualitative research (O'Toole, 2006, p. 111). Interview in qualitative research has many forms, solo interview, focus groups interview, structured interview, and unstructured interview (O'Toole, 2006, p. 111-115). Because of the objective limited condition of time and their request, I have produced the group interview with the adults' group of participants and the individual interview with the high school students. I also choose to do the unstructured interviews because I want to give my participants space to discuss what they are interested in and concerned about. The unstructured interviews wouldn't constrain their thinking or expression by imposing external framework (O'Toole, 2006, p. 115). Instead, the fully structured interviews are most useful where statistical information is needed, with large numbers of interviewees, who are all asked exactly the same question, in identical or similar contexts (O'Toole, 2006, p. 115). Therefore, the

unstructured interview is more useful for my research. Before I go to interview, I have formulated two interview directions that are connected with my research question. The concrete questions like this:

- Culture perspective
  - What are the cultural differences that you have experienced in the workshop?
  - What do you think about the cultural differences and commonalities in the old society and our modern society?
  - What do you know about Chinese culture before you attend the workshop?
  - What do you know more about Chinese culture after you attend the workshop?
- Process drama as a new way of learning
  - What do you think about the experience in process drama?
  - Have you learnt something new in the workshop?
  - Have you been challenged in the process?
  - When you were in a role, what were you thinking?
  - What is the difference between you are in the role and you are not in the role?
  - What do you feel when I am in a role?
  - Which parts or scenes have intrigued or touched you in the workshop, and why?

### **3.3.2 Observation**

Observation is a powerful data collection method which is used in various qualitative studies (Kawulich, 2005). In my workshop, I am a participant and also an observer in the process. I am observing from an internal angle instead of an external observation. Observation is concerned about capturing the research objects' behavior and vocabulary through the eye and sentience of the researcher or other equipment. Even though the external observation has a more comprehensive view of the site, the

internal observation has more effective and closer connection to the participants. In the workshop, I am in the same position with the participants and confronting the same emotional wave. Therefore, when I observe them, I will get a deeper understanding of their perception in the same perspective. In the observing process, I have recorded logs.

### **3.3.3 Drama convention as research method**

Process drama and the devising and rehearsal processes involved in playmaking provide a particularly fertile field for more subtle and indirect forms of data collection (O'Toole, 2006, p. 110). In process drama, many drama conventions could be used as a superior route for qualitative data collection. When we worked in different episodes, the participants had several occasions to create meaningful and useful information on different levels. This information could reflect the distinct phases and circumstances of process drama work. For example, conventions such as writing-in-role, drawing a picture, composing a moment and so on are the typical ways for researching the ongoing concern of the participants. These conventions are also a method for researching a direct and current perception of the participants. According to O'Toole:

*In-role writing is a technique used by process drama teachers and theatre directors and actors in rehearsal. Not only is it an excellent way for an actor to get to understand and develop his or her character, it can be used to analyse many other factors, especially in process drama work- the level of engagement, comprehension of the whole dramatic context or particular elements, understanding of the theme or the dilemma, imaginativeness in response to a challenge (O'Toole, 2006, p. 110).*

I have collected the participants' written documents and their creation of drawings as my collected data. In addition, I recorded the workshop for checking their reaction and manifestation.

### **3.3.4 Video recording**

In my workshop, I need a full-scale data collection. Video recording involves the live and fleeting moments and behaviors, such as the behavior of the participants, their

reactions in the scene, and discussions in the group. Usually, video taken for research purposes is single-camera, often fixed in space and focal length. Nevertheless, because of the very limitation, video can provide very valuable data for analysis, particularly for an event that you were part of (O'Toole, 2006, p. 147). Video records have particular qualities and features that mean it differs significantly from other kinds of data such as audio recordings or field notes. And it has three main features: 1) its character as a real-time sequential record; 2) a fine-grained multimodal record; and 3) its durability, malleable, and share-ability (Jewitt, 2012, p. 4). Therefore, video recording is not only helping me to collect the dynamic materials, but it also could help me to look the process again and again, and I can check the details when it is paused.

Meanwhile, in process drama, the teacher is also a participant in the workshop. I have to experience and participate with the other participants. I couldn't observe in an external perspective, and I also couldn't concern about every angle in the site. Therefore, I have decided to use video recording to help me to collect the dynamic data. The video from each workshop is 2 hours, i.e. of the same length as the workshop.

### **3.4 Analysis method**

Data analyzing is an important procedure in the research process.

*This is the activity of making sense of, interpreting, and theorizing data. It is both art and science, and it is undertaken by means of a variety of procedures that facilitate working back and forth between data and ideas. Analysis begins with the processes of organizing, reducing, and describing the data and continues through the activity of drawing conclusions or interpretation from the data, and warranting those interpretations (Schwandt, 2007, p. 6).*

In my research, data has been collected in different ways. Generally, it is classified as the written data and the dynamic data. The written data I get from the interviews, observation logs, and the produced materials during the workshop by the participants. The dynamic data is collected from video recording and my observation as a

participant.

### **3.4.1 Video analysis**

From the video recording, I could get a detailed and repeated review of the workshop. After the workshops, I have watched carefully and transcribed some important moments from the video. Video can reveal new and negative data, those relevant things that you were not looking for (O'Toole, 2006, p. 147). Therefore, when I review the video recording, I focus on the expected movements and actions. But I also concern about the unexpected moments. When I reveal the video, I pause the moments that are important and interesting for investigating how process drama can connect to deep understanding of Chinese culture. In the reviewing process, I am concentrating on three concerns. First, I concern especially about the participants' immediate actions and their improvisations. Second, I focus on their small group discussions or rehearsal. When I was working in the workshop, I didn't have time to observe every group's work. Therefore, I can review those moments by checking the video. Third, I concentrate on the changes in their attitudes and behaviors from beginning to the end. Video gives me a coherent and macroscopically perspective to look at the whole process. That is something I cannot receive when I am in the process. After I review the whole video, I have got many notes from it. Then I organize the logs with different categories and codes. At the end, I have made a synthesis of the logs.

### **3.4.2 Written data analysis - Systematic text condensation**

From the interviews and the observation logs, I have got much material to organize. Firstly, I transcript the interviews from radio to texts, and tidy the texts in order to orientate my research analysis, arrange the observation logs into a neat order.

In order to sort out and analyze my data, I used a qualitative strategy called Systematic Text Condensation (STC). It was introduced by Kirsti Malterud, a professor from University of Bergen.

According to Malterud,

*Systematic text condensation is a descriptive and explorative method for thematic cross-case analysis of different types of qualitative data, such as interview studies, observational studies, and analysis of written texts. The method represents a pragmatic approach, although inspired by phenomenological ideas, and various theoretical frameworks can be applied (Malterud, 2012, p. 1).*

I chose to apply this method of analysis because it is a strongly practical and explicit method to utilize. The “Systematic text condensation” has basically four procedures:

- 1) Total impression – from chaos to themes;
- 2) Identifying and sorting meaning units – from themes to codes;
- 3) Condensation – from code to meaning;
- 4) Synthesizing – from condensation to descriptions and concepts (Malterud, 2012).

Firstly, the researcher goes over the whole text and gets a comprehensive impression of the messy materials. In this step, the researcher would find a basic overlook about how to sort the materials according to the research question and the sub-questions. Next, the researcher is going to address the meaning units in the text sentence by sentence. The meaning unit indicates the meaningful contexts, which are related to the research question and the sub-questions. When all the meaning units have been located, the researcher may compile them into codes. It implies that the entire meaningful contexts are sorted into different labels. The next step is extracting the codes into meanings. The extracted meanings should be closed to the result. The last step is arranging the disconnected meanings into a description or concept. The description should reflect on the validity and the wholeness of the original text (Malterud, 2012).

Therefore, based on the guide of the Systematic Text Condensation strategy, I have organized my materials as four labels:



- Culture difference and commonalities
- Process drama as a way of learning
- Change in understanding
- Role-play

Those codes are formulated from the applying of STC, and they are connected with my research question. Based on the interview preparation, I have found more focused and detailed opinions from the participants through the process of analyzing. Many participants give words on Role-play and their change in understanding, and those thoughts are very precious information for my research.

According to the STC method, the next step is condensation. In order to condensate those code groups, I have to analysis and understand all the meaning units in each code group, and make it simple but concentrated. I sort out the central focus of each meaning units to actual meanings in every code groups. In this way, I have got the integration of the meanings from the interviews:

- |   |
|---|
| <p>1. Culture perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural encounter           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The development of women's social status has similar circumstances even in different cultural contexts.</li> <li>- Jealousy exists no matter what cultural context, which age of period, it is a common perception for the human.</li> <li>- There are many reasons that create the cultural differences: Geographical, historical, social, and political. It infiltrates in small aspects of cultural expression, for example family relationship or women situation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Past &amp; Now           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social classe changed, and the policy changed, it is a better phenomenon.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <p>2. Process drama as a new way of learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is interesting.</li> </ul>  |

- Empathy/ Emotional Resonance/ Put oneself in/ Feeling
  - Immersive feeling
  - Walking in someone's shoes, think as another person
  - We are challenged with what the parents and children in China have to challenge with.
  - Designed situation stimulates emotional substitutions or transpositional consideration, for example: rebuild the picture and writing in role.
  - Relate to my own experience.
  - Empathy is important.
  - I am comparing with myself when I was choosing education, and how different it was.
  
- Creative
  - Thinking and playing creatively
  
- Thinking
  - It is different from reading. Even I experienced in a fake way. It makes me remember better and think more.
  - We get to think how do they feel.
  - It was challenging, we get a lot of things to think.
  
- Learning
  - Learned a lot from it.
  - It is a new way of learning
  - Because we can interact with each other.
  - A different way, it makes things easier to remember and feel how things really are in those situations.
  
- Episodic/ Variation
  - We had many tasks, not only one drama.
  - It is a combination of all the different types of things, like looking at the picture and discussing it, and playing it out and writing. All those things make us have different impressions.
  
- Participation/ Interaction
  - Liked the working on the floor in groups
  - Participation is different from observation. We need not only to receive the information, but also need to output your ideology.

### 3. Understanding:

- Expected
  - Get a better understanding of the differences between China and Norway.
  - It would be a good way to learn the important things like the things you

really need to remember.

- It is higher benefit if you understand this part of the culture. You could get it closer to this type of method.
- For this purpose to understand a culture better, I think it is a better form.
- I got a better understanding of this situation, and what the family might be feeling.

- Unexpected:

- The first excise, which is with the chopsticks is impressive.
- When we quickly walk in the room.

- Before:

- Have no idea about Tang dynasty
- I read an article about one child policy
- My Chinese teacher told me about something, but I couldn't remember.

- After:

Positive:

- About the social classes, many ethnic groups, 700 years after Christ, golden age, women's rights and rules, structure in a rich family.
- The feeling of the families, the government part, expensive to have more than one child.
- How the culture worked.

Negative:

- I didn't learn so much.
- I didn't have so much.

#### 4. Role play

- Teacher in role:

- You (the teacher) play the female writer that brings strong involvement.
- You put on a hat or take on a cloth, and you are a different person.
- You are in the role and interact with us, our feeling changes.
- We concentrate on your movements and expect what you will do.
- It touches me when you played the boy.

- Student in role:

- In character's perspective:  
Get into their mind  
What is logical for them?  
Think about their life.

- Role and themselves:

Empathy: Put yourself in

I have to take the responsibility to find a solution.

How would you feel in such situation.

Role identification:

I am against abortion myself, but I did an abortion in the scene.

I am writing as police officer, I thought what he would think,  
but it is me who is writing

- Other: It is interesting to watch the others.  
I didn't feel so much in role-play.

The last step is going to look at the reorganized data again comprehensively. In this step, I have written a general description of my own understanding and reflection about the formative result:

### Synthesizing

From a cultural perspective, students perceive cultural knowledge by understanding the commons between their culture and the Chinese culture. Some aspects of culture are the common sense in human context. Since the development of culture is based on the development of human, some culture expression is generated from the essence of mankind. Such as jalousie happens no matter what age or what area in the world. Understanding the commons in culture could provide a mutual communication and a resonance in awareness. An effective way to understand a different culture is relating to their own culture. At the same time, learning cultural knowledge also demands to view the differences. There are many reasons to cause the cultural differences, geographical, historical, social, and political. It infiltrates in small aspects of cultural expressions, such as a behavior or an attitude. Learning the culture demands to learn the behaviors and attitudes. In drama, it provides a space for students to imitate and contemplate real diverse behaviors.

From the perspective of learning through process drama, it offers four aspects of assistance for understanding culture. Firstly, it is a collective and participatory group work. The interaction with the others provides a dynamic form of learning. Even though it just gives a fictional situation, but the participants are solving real problems for completing the scenes. In the group work, the participants understand the conflict and dilemma in the drama world, and they also understand and learn from each other. Especially, there are two groups of adults' participants with mixed nationality. There are several Chinese participants in the group; this gives the other participants a viewpoint from Chinese people on Chinese culture. Secondly, empathy has been mentioned many times in the interviews. When the participants are composing a situation, an attitude, or a role, they put themselves in. They are thinking, "if I am this person in this circumstance what should I do?" As Dorothy Heathcote says, "walking in someone's 'shoes'". Gradually, they have been immersed in the situation and arouse empathy. This empathy or emotional resonance creates the emotional substitutions and transpositional consideration. At this moment, the participants are convinced and engaged by the situation, which includes a strong cultural ambiance and feature. Thirdly, process drama supplies episodic investigating section for the participant to be able to change perspectives. It gives participants the possibilities to explore the culture from different angles. This helps the participants recognize the complexity of Chinese culture. Fourthly, process drama challenges the participants to think and create. In the process, participants are challenged to be creative in order to conduct the interaction and participation.

From the perspective of change in understanding, the survey shows that everyone has their own way to understand things. Because of their different experience and background, students have different ways of understanding. Some students are learning through role-play, some of them are learning through imitation, and some of them are learning through discussion. For example, a student expresses that

when she is playing the role as a concubine, she has to kneel down. When she kneels down, she sees the world in a low position. She just sees others' legs and feels oppressed. It totally changes her mind when she acts this behavior. It shows that change of action assists changes of understanding. Furthermore, empathy and emotional involvement also assist to a change in understanding. When the participants are emotionally involved, they would abandon what they are used to or believed in, and accept a new understanding.

From the perspective of role-play, it should be seen in two aspects, teacher-in-role and student-in-role. When the teacher plays a specific role and communicates with participants, the participants feel a great involvement. The teacher doesn't use complex customs or props. Sometimes it is just a hat or a coat, but the participants would produce anticipation. Most of them are fully concentrated because of the curiosity and expectation for the role. Teacher-in-role offers an opportunity for the participants to connect with the character, even though the teacher performs the character. One student said: "I am immediately touched when I saw the little boy that you (the teacher) played, I want to help him". This involvement is where the deep understanding starts. Moreover, when the students play roles, they need to think of the roles' attitudes and perspective. At the beginning, they are imitating the actions of the characters that they have seen in the pictures or in their memory. Gradually, they are convinced by the fictional world and start to be engaged in the circumstances. Afterwards, they start to conduct empathy for the characters. They may modify their action for presenting the characters better, even though in some case the cultural consciousness is different with their own.

However, some students have expressed that they didn't feel empathy or it is hard to understand in this way. Because they are so nervous about acting, or some are confused about what they are going to do. From the evaluation, I reflect that it is hard for the teacher to make sure every participant is engaged in the fictional

world. To get a qualified engagement is a crucial mission for drama teachers, and it is worth to explore in the future.

This synthesizing has presented my understanding and analysis of the material. In my data analysis process, I found this method quite instrumental and feasible. I have followed the procedures to sort out my data and put my own understanding in interpreting the meaning of the data. Therefore, by the guiding of this “Systematic text condensation” approach, I have conducted my results. I will demonstrate the results in the next chapter.

## **4.0 Discuss**

In chapter 2.0 and chapter 3.0, I have conducted a demonstration of the theoretical reviewing and the explicit methodology. In this chapter, I am going to submit a discussion about the result and my challenges of the research. In the first part of this chapter, I am going to emphatically land on analyzing and discussing the result. I will integrate the theoretical study and the reflection of the practical work in order to comb my analysis. In the second part I will discuss the challenge that I have considered in my research process. It is crucial to share the challenge in the thesis in order to reflect on my research process.

### **4.1 The results and discussion of this study**

Through the theoretical studies, reviewing and examining practical work, I have discovered some interesting and instrumental findings. These findings devote to a better understanding of process drama and intercultural learning.

Therefore, I draw my conclusion in two aspects. On one hand, the features of process drama could provide a dynamic and comprehensive form for a deep understanding of some aspects of Chinese culture. On the other hand, role-play as an indispensable part of process drama could promote an internal emotional engagement which could assist

a deep understanding.

#### **4.1.1 A dynamic and comprehensive form for deeper understanding**

In the theory chapter, I have explained a definition and implementation of deep understanding. To generate a deep understanding indicates that confronting the complexity of a subject or a concept, using the understanding to deal with real problem successfully, and creating new idea and further consideration (Sherry, 2010).

Since the analysis of my practical data and the theoretical instruction refers to Cecily O'Neill, John O'Toole, Pamela Bowell, Brian S Heap, and other academics, I have discovered many features of process drama which could contribute to a deep understanding. The uniqueness of process drama will promote a deep understanding instead of memorizing orientated surface understanding. Therefore, I infer that two aspects of process drama could help a deep understanding of Chinese culture.

1) The episodic structure provides multiple perspectives

The feature “episodic (O'Neill, 1995, p. 48) ” identifies that it is not a whole and complete drama piece, but it is structured as a sequence with different drama strategies and conventions. The different drama strategies and conventions lead participants to discover diverse aspects of the event or situation. Drama conventions are certain dramatic techniques that employed to conduct a desired exploration. Conventions are often used in exploratory and rehearsed stages of dramatic inquiry and performance (Neelands & Goode, 2015, p. 2).

*Conventions are indicators of the way in which time, space and presence can interact and be imaginatively shaped to create different kinds of meanings in theatre. Particular conventions will, therefore, emphasise different qualities in the theatrical possibilities of time, space and human presence (Neelands & Goode, 2015, p. 3)*

For example, Kari Mjaaland Heggstad conducts a process drama workshop named “The Human Hand”. The pre-text is a famous painting by Rembrandt. The painting is



called Dr. Nicolaes Tulp's anatomy lecture (DICE Consortium & Cooper, 2010, p. 61). By studying this process drama piece, I have explored the application of several strategies and drama conventions. In this work, Kari Heggstad manifests a special meeting about a surgeon in Amsterdam in 1632. She plays a role (teacher-in-role) as an assistant of Dr. Tulp, and leads participants in role as the members of the Amsterdam Guild of Surgeons to select a corpse for a dissection from a group of men with different social status. In this episode, the participants stand on the viewpoint of a dominant perspective to understand the event or the dissection. They must decide the men's destination. The participants experience the roles with higher status and their power for decision. However, in the following section, the participants have built a tableau about a painting that expresses a group of Dr. Tulp's students is observing an academic dissection. The participants stand on the perspective as his students in order to investigate an objective observation of a dissection and explore the importance of science and unknown world at that age. In a later section, the participants work as a group on composing a day of a man's life, and the man is the chosen corpse when he was alive. In this episode, the participants explore the feeling of a man in a lower status and discuss how human are treated in that society (DICE Consortium & Cooper, 2010, p.61-68). This example demonstrates that different strategies manifest the different aspects of a dissection. This dissection involves the discussions about the power of the dominant status, the desire of science, and the oppression of low-class man in a society in Amsterdam in 1632. It reveals that different strategies and conventions lead participants to explore the event comprehensively and full-scale instead of leading by one character and one perspective. In order to give the participants a more comprehensive exploration of the One Child policy, my workshop also comprises about many episodes. The participants have the chance to play the roles as the family members, and it brings an understanding from the viewpoint of a family and the influence of a family under this policy. The participants also get to play the government officer or neighbors. This involves viewpoints from the political and social perspectives. Therefore, in different episodes in process drama, the participants experience individual, political and social

perspective about this policy. In addition, the conventions such as changing roles, still-image about family photos or writing-in-role provides possibilities for the participants to explore different perspectives. As I explained above, in Kari's work, she offers an opportunity for the participants to take on different roles in order to investigate different perspectives of the dissection. Changing between roles would help the participants to explore different aspects of the situation and acquire a full-scale exploration. Transformation of the persona gives us a new perspective on an event: We learn more about it and this changes our knowledge about it (Courtney, 1991, p. 14). As To-Helge argues in his article, changing roles and perspectives may work different for students, but also that it can contribute to promote a greater activity and deep learning for students (Allern & Drageset, 2017)<sup>20</sup>.

A participant expresses in the interview about the experience in process drama:

*I think it is a combination of all the different type of things. Like when we looked the picture and discusses it, or when we try to play it out and write. I think it is all those things that make us have different impressions.*

In process drama, it involves multiple ways of expressing, acting, directing, writing, negotiating, playing with attitudes, and so on. These different drama techniques offer various possibilities for understanding in different levels. According to O'Neill's comment about the workshop "Frank Miller",

*The episodic and extended nature of this experience allows the participants to explore notions of belonging, of family and community relationships, of caring, of revenge, of absence and banishment, all from within the process. Each episode involves a different perspective on the event, permits an increasing level of personal and public engagement with the issues that emerge, and is based on an encounter of some kind (O'Neill, 1995, p. 3).*

In addition, within an episode, playing with different attitudes also will devote to a comprehensive understanding of the situation. Different attitudes represent different

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<sup>20</sup> Rolleskift og perspektivbytte kan virke forskjellig på elevene, men også at det kan bidra til å fremme større elevaktivitet og dybdeløring (Allern & Drageset, 2017).

consideration of one problem within the situation. An attitude is an extraction from a role, a simplification of a viewpoint, and it represents an aspect of a fact, positive, negative, or mediation.

Dramatic worlds are never simple and static, but are a complex sequence of circumstances (O'Neill, 1995, p. 104). The complex sequence of circumstances provides a comprehensive and diverse understanding. This is an opportunity for cultural awareness because students need to be able to understand cultural phenomenon comprehensively in order to avoid prejudice and misunderstanding. Understanding the complexity and diversity contributes to increase students' horizon and enlighten tolerance.

## 2) The contemplation of the motivation of the behaviors

Culture reminds as a wide and sophisticated knowledge. The discrepancy of culture relates to many reasons and sources. Understanding culture doesn't happen in one click, it could happen through different ways for long time. In my opinion, one of the important and effective ways of understanding culture is exploring through action and behaviors. In the first workshop about a Chinese female writer, one episode requires participants to explore and perform a moment in which Yu is divorced from her husband. A girl plays Yu in the scene, and she tells me that she has to kneel on the floor. She has never experienced this action by a social purpose, but in this situation, she has to do this action. She expresses that:

*I was kneeling on the floor, and I cannot look up to the husband and the first wife. The world looks so different when you are in that position. Normally, when you stand up, you look at the other person's face, but I only see legs in this position. And it is an uncomfortable position and it makes you feel smaller in mind.*

Her experience shows that changing of behaviors could give the participants a new sight to see the familiar space. And based on this behavior, we should track down the source of the action. Understanding culture is not just imitating the behaviors, but also

investigating the motivation of the behaviors. Culture is the outcome of the interaction between human and society. Human's behaviors are influenced by many reasons, such as geographical, social, racial and so on. Chronically, those behaviors form as customs, and the customs turn into an ideology. Further, this ideology effect on social activities again. In this case, the cultural differences are regarded as different way of living and behaving, and there is different ideology behind it. For example, the difference in catering culture is because of the different ways of cooking. And the cooking custom is affected by other objective reason such as geographical. Therefore, understanding culture is not simply about what we are doing, but the most important part is to investigate why we are doing it. The motivation of behavior provides the reason why we have this kind of custom. The potential of process drama is the possibility for the participants to explore the motivation and the source of actions.

In process drama, the dramatic world usually generates from a pre-text to a situation. The teacher structures the situation in advance, and this situation includes a discussion with a strong cultural characteristic. This situation is fictional, but it tightly connects with real life experience. Essential dramatic elements are managed by the leader and the participants in process drama so that it leads to both an authentic dramatic experience and a greater understanding of the nature of the event (O'Neill, 1995, p. xiv). This authentic dramatic world is a fundamental space for the participant to be challenged through action. A participant expresses:

*When we did the drama (this workshop), when we put ourselves in role, we had to challenge with what the parents and children in China have to challenge with. It isn't real but we have tasted it.*

Under this safe space, there are many aspects that the participants could explore about role's motivation. Developing a role in process drama is not as detailed as conventional theatre. But there are three basic aspects of role needs to be considered, purpose, status, and attitudes. Purpose, status, and attitudes all form part of the character's motivation (O'Tool & Haseman, 1988, p. 7-13) . The status of the role

explains who the role is, the purpose explains why the role is in this situation, and the attitude explains how the role deals with the situation. For example, in the first workshop, Yu as a woman from Tang Dynasty, carries a different cultural background. Her behaviors and choices are not committing with the participants, so the participants should step into her position to view the world. In the workshop, I lead the participants to think why she does this or why she chooses this way. I let the participants to discover the status of Yu in the ancient Chinese society, and I let the participants play with different attitudes from different characters, such as: Yu's husband or the police officer. There are many strategies in process drama could deeply explore the motivation of the role's behavior. For example, writing-in-role is an instrumental way of digging into role's mind, and this convention will especially help exploring the thoughts from the bottom of the role's heart. Moreover, the process of exploring is also important. For example, in the first workshop, the husband and the first wife divorced Yu. The participant has proposed many reasons: she doesn't have children; she shows herself in public, which she is not supposed to do; the first wife is jealous of her. These three circumstances are certainly different from what the participants are committed. And one participant has proposed another suggestion: why cannot Yu flight for herself, why must she accept the divorce? That is a necessary question. We immediately discuss it, and I propose a few questions: Why shouldn't she accept the divorce? What is the consequence if she doesn't accept this? Is she going to have freedom or misery in the future? The whole group joins in this discussion. In this case, this participant raises this question because the situation is not familiar with her old understanding. Thus, I give her and the other participants a space to discuss this question. The discussion is exploring the motivation of Yu's choice. It is very important for the participants. In addition, this example also shows that process drama offers a space for participant to contemplate. The significance of this space is to raise a question instead of delivering facts. It is not necessary to get an answer with yes or no, but it provides a process for deep thinking, comparison, analyzing, and understanding. In process drama, contemplating of the arising question is extendable. It doesn't imply the teacher gives a fact, and this is what it is. Drama

arises a question to let the participants compare and contemplate. Even the workshop ends, but the contemplation doesn't stop. This contemplation could be a start for deep understanding. A participant expresses:

*You (I) think more because we were forced to try to find arguments for why your child should take your own education. And then you try to hear your child's reason not to do it. I am kind of comparing it to myself when I was choosing education. How different it was.*

This "finding arguments" implies that the participants are challenged to find the motivation. Another participant presents:

*You have to like getting into their mind, and think about all the things they did. Why it is logical for them to do it. Or you have to think about the life that the role has had, or does live.*

In the process of finding motivation, it is important that the participants get their chance to contemplate. And they are trying to persuade themselves to commit, adapt, and understand this mindset.

#### **4.1.2 Role-play as an effective and instrumental way**

Role-play is important and useful to conduct an investigation of another culture.

*Through improvisation, fictional worlds are created and maintained where participants explore the deep personal connection to themes and issues. The improvisations provide the impetus of questions as participants take on fictional roles answering who, what, when, where and why that fictional character exists in the fictional worlds (Weltsek-Medina, 2008).*

Through theoretical data studying and practical data analyzing, I realize that role-play could dedicate a deep understanding in participants' mind. Role-play (student-in-role) could devote to framing students in the situation and discovering others' mindset or even their own potential consciousness. In the analysis process, I am concentrating on how participants could be engaged by role-play. In this paragraph, I will demonstrate some consideration of the relationship between the participants and the roles.

Role-play in process drama regards as a crucial process for investigating and exploring the given circumstance instead of presenting the character fully accurate. In process drama, elements of character will not be invented necessarily in advance but will consist of behaviors possibilities discovered in response to circumstances (O'Neill, 1995, p. 91). The roles represent attitudes or different types of ideas. They are extracted and abstracted from real life experiences, and it could represent a viewpoint or a perspective of culture. As I have demonstrated in the last paragraph, it is important for participants to explore the motivation of behaviors, and this exploration advances through role-play.

When a role comes to us, first of all, we would ask many questions, such as: who is he/she? How old is he/she? Where is he/she from? What does he/she do for a living? Is he/she satisfied with his/her life? Those questions would locate a situation that brought by the role. Every role in process drama participates in a situation, and this situation carries a focus that needs to be discovered by the participants. In my practical work, the roles are regarded as cultural symbols, a female writer from ancient age and the only child. And they both have a common label that is Chinese. Those roles represent different aspects and viewpoints of Chinese culture. From my data analysis, the outcome demonstrates that there are four steps for participants to be engaged in a deep understanding of the roles.

Firstly, when participants start to play roles, they would imitate the action and poster of the roles from their known knowledge or the given information. For example, in a workshop presented by John O'Toole<sup>21</sup>, he asks participants to play refugees. As one of the participants, I was imitating a refugee that I saw in a movie, even though I haven't known one in the real life. And also, in my workshop, the participants are playing the Chinese characters by the assistance of their past experience, or they are imitating the gestures from the painting presented on the screen. At this stage, it

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<sup>21</sup> This workshop was presented in September 2016 in Bergen, Norway.

doesn't implicate any deep understanding or emotional connection. It is a process of copying the behaviors. They are neither being nor representing the roles. They are just asked to do it. But at this stage, it builds a curiosity and anticipation for the participants to dig the characters.

In the next stage, the participants come to visit a fictional situation which maintains a perspective of culture. A key feature of drama implicates a notion of suspension of disbelief (Davis, Clemson, Ferholt & Jansson, 2015, p. 6). The participants are putting aside their doubts and objective judgments, and come into believing the "as if" world. In terms of suspension of disbelief, it is important for participants to be involved willingly and voluntarily. And it is an essential foundation for emotional engagement. At this stage, the participants are convinced to put their mind in the situation. For example, when the teacher plays teacher-in-role, the participants put aside the disbelief and start to interview the appeared role. They believe this situation is real to some degree, and they are willing to be involved in this event. The notion of suspension of disbelief is crucial for role-play in educational drama, because in this case, they may deeply concentrate on playing and exploring the roles instead of playing themselves. Another example should be shown here, a participant who is playing the role of Yu in the workshop. When she was trying to play the role, firstly, she walked with very big steps. Then she realized it is not appropriate to walk in big steps because she had seen me in role with very small steps. Therefore, she starts to walk with small steps when she was playing Yu in the scene. This detail shows that this participant had imitated my movement when I played as Yu. However, she was not simply copying the action, and she is imitating the action with a purpose. This purpose implies she has believed in this situation and started to create a living and vivid role. She was able to play the role because she had a concept of the intention of the role in the situation.

In the further stage, when the participants believed in the fictional world and readily start to explore the role, there might appear a discussion about the relationship



between the participants and the roles. As a participant said about role-play: “I think it is interesting that like we are walking in someone's shoes, like when you need to think as another person”. At this stage, the participants start to explore the roles deeply, but there might be a conflict in the participant’s mind. When they are playing the roles, the attitude of the role may not agree with the opinion of the participant, especially in an intercultural context. There will be a struggle in the participant's mind. Here is an example, in the workshop about the one child policy, there is a scene about the parents and if they should decide to do an abortion. The participants are asked to play the roles of the parents in this scene. In the interview, a girl had expressed:

*In one exercise, we had an abortion, I think I was the mother, and she was the father. And I think we have the abortion, I don't think we should have taken the abortion because I am kind of against the abortion. But I feel like it is a Chinese thing to do.*

The response of this girl shows that she has a conflict with the role. She is herself against abortion. Nevertheless, when she plays the role, she has to modify herself to agree with the role, because she thinks it is logical to do under a Chinese cultural context. For another example, there is another girl who plays an officer of the Chinese government. She acted in a scene where officers are negotiating the standards and disciplines for this policy. She expressed in the interview:

*I was kind of mean, I feel like the government shouldn't really decide how many children you could have. It should more be a guideline, not a rule. I was really mean, it feels like in a movie or something.*

In this case, she also didn't agree with the role, but she chose to modify her own opinion to agree with the role. There is a notion as role identification that explains this. The participant plays a role, and the fact of the role will affect on the participant. The participant is willing to modify his/her action to according with the role. The participants accept the role's idea and immerse into the role's mind. In some degree, they start to stand on the role's perspective to view the world. This modification is a significant step for engagement and deep understanding.

In the final stage, the participants have been through imitating the roles' behaviors and postures, the suspension of disbelief, the role identification. Afterwards, they may generate empathy for the role. As O'Neill presents:

*There may be a gradual increase of involvement for the audience from projection through identification to empathy. I believe that these phases of commitment also may be applicable to the different levels of participation in process drama (O'Neill, 1995, p. 77).*

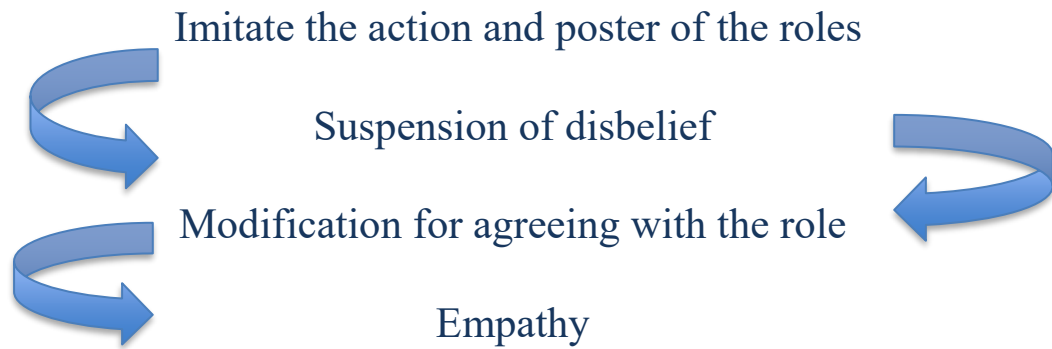
Empathy is very important for participant to relate the role's circumstance and feeling to themselves. It creates an emotional connection between the participant and the role.

*Broadly speaking, there are two states or strands to empathy: the cognitive and the affective. There are various opinions about what makes up each strand, but there is considerable agreement that empathy is a process, which contains emotional contagion, identification, generalization, projection, sympathy, and role taking qualities (Fairlamb, 2001, p. 7).*

Role-play provides an effective way for the participants to generate empathy, and in this way, the participants share the same feeling with the role, confronting the same struggle as the role, and communicate with the role across ages or cultural background. Role-play emphasizes on feeling as the role instead of reading about the role. In process drama, the participants experience to be the role, and they share the idea with the role affectively and physically. Bolton expresses that the learning does not have to be painful, although it sometimes is and in any case, it has to be felt for it to be effective (Bolton, 1979, p. 31). At this stage, role-play stimulates emotional resonance or transpositional consideration, the participants understand the role and also some aspects of its cultural background.

To conclude, I have made a chart to present that there are four steps for participants to be engaged in a deep understanding of the roles.

As the following chart:



#### 4.2 The challenge in the research project

In my project, I have noticed a challenge of culture learning in process drama. It is challenging to keep the balance between structure and spontaneity. Process drama consists of various forms of improvisation and artistic creation. It is defined as an ongoing dramatic event that regards the meaningful experience as its outcome (O'Neill, 1995). And in the process, it requires that students create their own piece of work for their benefits with improvisation (Bowell & Heap, 2001). Process drama requires leaving an open space for the students to explore by themselves, and they may have different opinions on the same event. However, it is quite difficult for culture learning. Basically, some aspects of Culture consist of a stabilized ideology. If there is too much space, it might lead participants to another direction, which is not relevant to Chinese culture. Therefore, I found that is challenging to keep the balance between control and spontaneity. However, O'Neill has a suggestion to this problem:

*To be spontaneous does not imply behavior that is merely impulsive and unthinking. Spontaneity demands much more than this. It implies a quality of mind, the ability to think afresh, to balance impulse and restraint, and to integrate imagination, reason, and intuition (O'Neill, 1995, p. 62).*

It is important for teachers to be structured and spontaneous at the same time. In addition, it needs a long way of training and practicing for the teachers who work in process drama.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

Drama activity mostly produces a change in how we understand the deep rather than the surface level of meaning (Courtney, 1991, p. 26). Drama-in-education concerns about providing multiple deep learning possibilities for the participants. The amazing part of Drama-in-education is that it could promote the development of the potential competencies of the participants, such as: language, culture understanding and expression, self-perception, learn to learn, interpersonal communication, cultural communication, and social communication (DICE Consortium & Cooper, 2010, p. 24). It also could refresh their understanding of those things that they have misunderstood and neglected. A Chinese proverb expresses: the frog that looks up from the well believes that it sees the whole sky. The horizon of us might just provide a narrow view of the world, but we could experience how other people may experience a situation from their perspective in process drama. Especially for learning a different culture, Drama-in-education helps to modify and enrich the original knowledge.

Overall the research project, I have found something meaningful and interesting in the process. I have studied my research question; how can process drama contribute to a deep (er) understanding of Chinese culture, both theoretically and practically.

Looking back this thesis in chapter 2.0, on theoretical learning, I have studied the implication of process drama and the meaning of deep understanding. Meanwhile, I have considered the connection between process drama and culture learning. By learning the theory of Vygotsky, I have learned the significance of participation and interaction through the definition and interpretation of the zone of proximal development. By learning the features of process drama, I have discovered in which aspects process drama can connect to a deep understanding and cultural learning.

Based on the theory learning, in chapter 3.0, I have described the applied

methodology and my practical work with participants. I have discovered many interesting ideas through examining the process of the workshops and discussing with the participants. From the analysis of my practical work data, I have found that role-play is an instrumental and important theatrical form for a deep understanding of culture. In role-play, the participants can imitate the actions of the characters in order to arise a connection. Then the participants come as roles to visit a fictional situation which maintains a perspective of culture. They are convinced by the fictional world and start to be engaged in the circumstances. Afterwards, they start to conduct empathy for the roles. They may modify their action, even though in some case the cultural consciousness is different with their own. This modification shows a cultural exchange happens.

Therefore, I draw my conclusion in two aspects. On one hand, the discussion focuses on two features of process drama that could provide a space for a deep understanding of culture. On the other hand, the discussion focuses on role-play could generate an internal emotional engagement for participants that could stimulate empathy for a deep understanding of culture.

There are two aspects shows that process drama as a dynamic and comprehensive theater form could contribute to a deep understanding of Chinese culture. First, deep understanding requires a rich and comprehensive knowledge about the subject. Thus, the episodic form involves different drama strategies and conventions could provide multiple perspectives for the participants to view the subject. It could let participants discover diverse aspects of an event or situation. In addition, in different episodes, the participants could experience different roles and perspectives. Changing of roles and perspectives can provide a deep learning of the situation. Second, an important aspect of cultural understanding requires understanding the behaviors of others. Process drama, it provides an opportunity for the participants to explore and contemplate the motivation of the behaviors. When the participants are investigating the identity, the purpose, the status, or the attitude of a role (O'Tool & Haseman, 1988, p. 13), these

aspects are all involved in explaining the motivation of the behaviors. And the motivation of the behaviors demonstrates the cultural awareness and its source.

Role-play as an indispensable part of process drama could also promote an internal emotional engagement, which could assist a deeper understanding of culture. The participants have been through four stages to process a qualified engagement in deep understanding. 1) Imitating the roles' behavior and postures 2) Suspending the disbelief of the fictional situation 3) Modifying self-behaviors and opinions for agreeing with the role. 4) Generating empathy for the role. After this four stage, the participants may have a qualified emotional engagement that leads to a deep understanding of the role and its cultural context.

Therefore, through the process drama, the participants will work in an authentic experience through participation and interaction. They may acquire a better understanding of an unfamiliar culture, and this awareness may offer many benefits. Firstly, they will get the knowledge of some culture signs and symbols. Secondly, they will learn the awareness of equality and eliminate prejudice. When they understand the diversity of the cultural origin, it is valuable for improving the relationship between different nationalities and communities. Thirdly, in the process, the participants could apply their competence of conceiving cultural patterns and confronting articulated incidents. Meanwhile, it would also give them a chance to think about their own cultural pattern and their own lives through meeting the differences and diversities. However, certainly, the outcome of the drama workshops would not achieve the entire anticipation that I have mentioned, but the most important part of this experience is to carry out an opportunity for the participants to view, to conceive, to contemplate. Different participants have different acquirement from the participation, and maybe they have harvested more than the process itself.

Through this research process, I have discovered and researched about many aspects of process drama. I have learned the application and significance of process drama,

and I have understood the usage of role-play deeply. In the practical work, I have examined how the teacher may conduct a process drama and analyze the process. Moreover, I also have gained knowledge on how the researcher can utilize art-based research and qualitative methods, and I have experienced how the researcher can do her research through drama conventions. Furthermore, I positively have found some interesting and meaningful results about the connection between process drama and cultural understanding, and I have also acquired so much more than that theoretically and practically through the whole research process.

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