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Negotiating the Spaces: Relational Pedagogy and Power in Drama Teaching

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Abstract

While there is a growing body of literature on relational pedagogy as a concept, less attention is given to the details of just how relational pedagogy manifests in classroom practice. Similarly, while issues of power, democracy and co-constructed learning feature in contemporary research, the details of how power relationships can be effectively altered between teachers and children warrants closer scrutiny. This paper explores how pedagogy is enhanced when spaces are negotiated between teachers and children in the real and fictional worlds of drama. The findings emerge from a two year collaborative research project between generalist elementary teachers and university researchers. Salient issues of trust, power sharing, and metaxis, which are part of relational pedagogy in the drama classroom, are explored. In particular, the paper discusses how

traditional power and knowledge positions are ‘disrupted’ through the drama strategy of ‘teacher-in-role’ – a strategy with both political significance and pedagogical force.

Introduction

This paper explores the meeting ground between the epistemological concepts of relational pedagogy and the philosophies and practicalities of drama pedagogy. This meeting ground is chosen for a number of reasons. First of all, many of the concepts explored in relational theory, though not specifically written about the drama classroom, have a particular resonance when manifested in drama teaching. For example, Bergum (2003) emphasizes the embodied nature of the relationship between people (teacher and learner) and the shared human space wherein knowledge is constructed, while hooks (2003) claims that the most important connections in teaching are the relationship between teacher and student, and teacher and subject, both of which she argues are (or at least should be) charged with emotion. She suggests that teachers’ passion for their subjects helps them to excite, enthuse and inspire students, and that care for their students helps them to empathize, encourage, and challenge. Concerns with embodiment, use of space, passion, emotion, empathy, and modeling that are core to relational pedagogy, have also long been central to teaching in drama.

While there is a growing body of literature on relational pedagogy as a macro-concept, less attention is given to the micro-level—the details of just how relational pedagogy manifests in classroom practice. Equally, while some attention is given within this literature to issues of power in teacher-student relationships the emphasis tends to be on the general nature of status positions, behavior management issues (e.g., Good & Brophy, 2000), and co-constructing learning in classrooms. In the latter, a growing body of research highlights the democratic nature of co-construction, which provides authentic opportunities for students to negotiate the curriculum with their teachers (Apple & Beane, 1999; Beane, 1997; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Boomer, Lester, Onore & Cook, 1992). However, this literature pays little attention to how power relationships may be strategically disrupted, or the pedagogical and social implications of such disruptions. For this paper, with its emphasis on drama, the details of how power relationships can be effectively altered between teacher and children becomes a key focus.

This paper explores how spaces can be negotiated and learning enhanced through the drama strategy of teaching in role. Specifically, this strategy is examined for the way it allows participants in drama to confront traditional beliefs about knowledge, ownership, and control.

Process Drama and Teaching in Role

Drama has been taught in New Zealand schools and universities for many years and its popularity has surged since it was defined as a core subject within the Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2000) and, more recently, as a mandated subject area for the NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement) at the secondary level. Though the New Zealand curriculum structure embraces multitudinous approaches to drama, the approach known as 'process drama' has an important place in the New Zealand context. This is partly because of a close and continued relationship between drama educators in the country and international practitioners of process drama, including its leading progenitor, Dorothy Heathcote.

In process drama, rather than working towards a performance, participants engage in a series of structured improvisations with an emphasis on the process of collaborative discovery and idea development. "In process drama, there is no external audience to the work, so that teachers and students are the equivalent not only of theatre actors, directors, and technicians but also of a theatre audience" (Edmiston, 2003, p. 223). Rather than focussing on technical skills (though these are certainly acquired through the process) the primary aim is to build skills of engagement, empathy, and problem solving. In a process drama experience, periods of action are followed by periods of reflection, so that participants are always making links between the fictional world of the drama and the world of their everyday reality. "Teacher and students interact in both words simultaneously and as necessary they move back and forth between them at will" (Edmiston, 2003, p. 223). A key feature of process drama is that the teacher or facilitator of the drama often participates alongside the students by taking one or more roles in the drama.

The phenomenon and the possibilities of teaching in role (or 'teacher-in-role') have been widely described and theorized perhaps most notably by Heathcote, Johnson and O'Neill (1984), Morgan and Saxton (1987), Ackroyd Pinkington (2001, 2004), Bolton (1998), and Edmiston (2003). Earlier writing about teaching in role tended to focus on the distinctions between teaching in role and acting in the theatre, as in this plea to teachers from Morgan and Saxton: 'Please *don't* act! The teacher must remember that the class is not her audience' (Morgan & Saxton, 1987, p. 49). Ackroyd Pinkington (2001) suggests that this perspective emerged because of a lingering suspicion of acting as a profession, an association between acting and falsehood, and also because of a very real imperative for the drama education movement to carve out its own distinct identity as something different from theatre practice. More recent work, including Ackroyd Pinkington's own writing, has sought to re-theorize the strategy of teaching in role, reclaiming it as 'acting behaviour' and celebrating the aesthetic features of the strategy (2001, 2004). Bolton also

points out the parallels between teaching in role and theatre, arguing that it is the essentially dramatic / theatrical aspects of teaching in role that make it so semiotically rich: “The teacher-in-role’s function is that of a dramatist, a dramatist who not only is supplying the words but also the accompanying non-verbal signals, so that the ‘reading’ required of the pupils is multi-dimensional” (1998, p.184). The most recent scholarship has focused on the power dynamics within the teacher in role-student relationship. Aitken (2007) parallels the theatre maker – audience member relationship and the teacher in role – student relationship in terms of how power is shared. Aitken (2007) argues that like theatre makers, teachers in role could be described as the ‘managers’ of the drama and also as ‘relationship managers’ in that they retain ultimate say over how aesthetic, social political, and power dynamics will be organized within the drama. For Edmiston, it is the potential of teacher in role to allow the teacher to shift authority and power structures within the imagined reality that is its most exciting feature: “One of the core reasons why as a teacher I use drama is because when we create an imagined world, we can imagine that we frame events differently so that our power and authority relationships are changed” (2003, p. 225). It was this potential for teaching in role to transform relationships that became the focus of inquiry for drama researchers within the ‘Art of the Matter’ project described below.

Brief Overview of the ‘Art of the Matter’ Project

‘Art of the Matter’ was a collaborative research project based in Hamilton, New Zealand. The project comprised 10 elementary school teacher researchers with classes of children across the Year 0-6 age range, working alongside three university researchers over a period of two years, 2005-2006. The overall aim of the project was to investigate how children’s development of ideas in the Arts can be promoted, enhanced, and refined in elementary classrooms and in doing so, build knowledge related to Arts pedagogy and research. There was also the associated aim of capacity building for Arts research amongst university and teacher partners. ‘Art of the Matter’ involved research in all four of the arts disciplines (dance, drama, music, and visual arts). This paper focuses on the drama findings.

The experienced teachers in the ‘Art of the Matter’ project were familiar with drama, including process drama. All used drama regularly in their programs both as an art form in its own right, and as a means of integrating across other curriculum areas. However, it is worth noting that these were generalist teachers, required to cover all curriculum areas on a day-to-day basis and not specialist drama teachers.

The design of the study drew on ethnographic, case study, self-study, and action research traditions of educational research. As with the other Arts researched in the project, case

studies of teachers' existing practices in drama were produced by the team of teacher and university researchers. These case studies highlighted themes and issues related to how children develop their ideas in the Arts, including what appeared to support or constrain this process. The case studies were devised from an amalgam of classroom observations including video and audio-tape, work samples, surveys, interviews with teachers and children, and reflective self-study comments. Classroom observations were undertaken by two university researchers working in tandem; one taking a continuous running record and the other noting particular supports and constraints to children's idea development in drama. A series of at least three lessons in drama were observed in a drama unit, and over the course of the two years some 18 lessons in six groups of three were observed. Notes were compared after each observation and discussions held with the teacher researchers to probe assumptions and clarify points. Analysis consisted of both inductive and deductive methods. Data were analyzed in terms of what appeared to support and constrain children's ideas; common rituals of practice were noted; and an inductive process of description followed by interpretation was undertaken by all the research team upon viewing video footage at regular roundtable meetings. Moreover, perspectives from teachers, university staff, children, and school policy documents helped to build rich, triangulated sense-making accounts of current practice (Stenhouse, 1985). These case studies provided a platform upon which to base the subsequent action research phase wherein teacher researchers devised questions of concern to explore problems, issues, and possibilities. Ongoing discussion amongst all the research team enabled the refining of both questions and methods. Teacher researchers were assisted in this process by the university researchers acting as critical friends as well as joint investigators (see also Ewing, Smith, Anderson, Gibson & Manuel, 2004). The teachers working in drama chose to focus on the influence of teacher-in-role as this was a significant aspect of their drama teaching. While the value of teacher-in-role is well established and accepted, the teachers particularly wanted to focus on how children's ideas were *developed* by teacher-in-role and what might support or constrain their ideas.

One of the themes that emerged from the study was the relational nature of teaching and learning in and through the Arts. The significance of relationships was manifested in a variety of ways. The most obvious was the child-teacher relationship, about which, as has been noted, there is a growing and extensive literature. However, the research also revealed other key 'relationships' as equally significant in the overall learning experience. The next section of this paper will consider these relationships in more detail, with particular reference to the 'disruptions' to relationship and the negotiation of spaces made possible by working in the frame of drama.

The Relationship between Teacher and Student: Trust, Power and Relational Pedagogy

Relational pedagogy as a concept tends to refer mostly to the relationship between teacher and student and even a cursory glance at most texts on teaching and learning reveals chapters on such topics as interpersonal communication, management of behaviour, attending to social and emotional dimensions, promoting discussion and interaction, and so forth (eg. Good & Brophy, 2000; Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 2003; McGee & Fraser, 2001). These texts emphasise that the main pedagogical relationship is the one between teacher and student. Just how this might manifest in the drama discipline requires closer examination. If we are to assert that the Arts, including drama, should tap the personal and emotional world of children (Richardson, 1988), and that children “of necessity, develop from both the inside out and the outside in” (Eisner, 2002, p. 93) then the teacher’s role is a particularly finely tuned one in order to build the trust necessary for children to risk the exposure, expression, and depth of emotional engagement, that is manifest in a rich drama experience. The relationship between teacher and child, while important in all subjects, is emphasized in drama where the personal, emotional, and imaginative world of the child may be exposed, and ideally enhanced. If the emotional world of the child is revealed then an atmosphere of trust is vital to ensure safety during the process. In drama, the distancing provided by the ‘frame’ of the drama helps to ensure safety, as discussed later. Within this frame, however, there needs to be some challenge or ‘charge’ (Palmer, 1998) so that children grow in their skills and abilities.

So what is the nature of the relationship between teacher and child in drama? Few would suggest that it is sufficient for teachers to work to a goal of delivering some kind of ‘charge’ balanced with safety for this assumes that teaching is what is *done to* children leading to learning as outcome. Most contemporary theories on learning acknowledge that learning is more complex and multifarious than any simple cause-and-effect analogy. Teaching in drama, described in terms of relationship pedagogy, might be characterised in Bergum’s description: “watchfulness, trust of the student, letting the student learn, with the goal of opening the space for the student [to] come into one’s own” (Bergum, 2003, p. 122). Bergum’s interpretation certainly challenges traditional concepts of power and traditional notions of knowledge construction. On the other hand, it also seems to imply that teachers are merely passive observers of students’ learning and this extreme, too, is not sufficient if learning is to be enhanced. What then does “opening the space for the student” look like and what is the teacher’s role in such a pedagogy? How can a teacher ensure that sufficient challenge is provided yet allow the necessary space for children to determine some of their own direction in the learning journey? The following sections outline how teacher-researchers in the ‘Art of the Matter’ project, used drama

strategies to disrupt traditional power relationships and negotiate creative pedagogical possibilities.

Opening a Space through Teacher-in-Role

By definition, teaching in role is a well established 'disruption' of the familiar teacher-student relationship. This is not to assume that co-constructing the drama is only achievable from within a role. Effective drama teaching is possible without the teacher going into role and, even where role is used, it can be extremely important to come out of role at times, as teachers on this project found. However, teachers involved in the project also found that by taking on a role they could 'open space' for children in a number of ways. During the improvisation that is necessarily part of teaching in role, teachers found they took risks alongside the children and often ceded decision-making power to the children.

In one junior class example, where the teacher in role as hungry wolf was searching for the pigs (the children), the pigs had to decide where and how they would hide. Where there was not enough room in each of the houses they had built, the children had to come up with alternative solutions, which, after some hesitation and confusion, they duly did. There was not enough room in the three houses for the 30 plus children to hide in and alternatives had to be quickly seized upon. It would have been inappropriate for the teacher in role as wolf to make suggestions of where to hide so the decision-making power was very much the children's. Where this kind of power sharing occurs, the teacher no longer 'owns' the drama. Rather, it is co-constructed (Prior, 2001). As Prior (2001) says, the major challenge for the teacher is to let go and share "the created world with their students" (p. 28).

Power sharing continued later in the drama too when the children (in role as pigs) learnt more about the wolf through questioning and found that she was lonely. They concluded that this partly accounted for her aggressive behaviour and came up with ways to include the wolf and build a new relationship. Once again the drama enabled children to offer their own fictional solutions within the imaginary world that had been co-created. Holland and O'Connor (2004) have argued that such co-constructed environments in the Arts allow teachers and children "to experiment and learn from each other" (J. 2). To share power and co-construct the drama in this way requires flexibility and accommodation from the teacher. The teacher in the pig drama commented on the need to have faith in the children to come up with alternatives and suggestions, and have the flexibility to respond to these.

Another way teaching in role can affect the teaching relationship is that it can liberate both teachers and students from the conforming rituals and mores of the everyday

classroom. There are many types of role a teacher might take: Morgan and Saxton (1987) identify at least nine different role possibilities for teachers, ranging from the 'Authority figure' (she who is in charge) to the 'Devil's Advocate' (she who deliberately takes the opposite point of view) to the 'Absentee' (she who was not there and thus does not know). Each of these role types, and each of the other six, carries its own possible status and power positionings (Edmiston, 2003) through which teachers can open up a new range of potential relationships with their students. Crucially, the new relationships can include positionings not necessarily sanctioned in the 'social roles' of teacher and student: The teacher can be 'naughty, bad and uncooperative' and children can take high status roles where they become 'responsible, resourceful and 'philosophical.' In the 'Art of the Matter' project, children in one class were visited by a teacher researcher in role as 'Mrs. Glow' – a property developer wanting feedback on her plans for the Waitomo caves (a local glow worm cave which the class had recently visited on a field trip). She suggested that the caves should be gutted and turned into a holiday theme park. At first the children were excited by the prospect but slowly, a few dissenting voices emerged about the ethical and environmental impact. When Mrs. Glow proposed that the cave's real glow-worms would be replaced by fake ones one child exclaimed, "But you can't lie to the public!" Another child who was disturbed about the threat to the life in the caves suggested, "You might like to build your adventure caves in the volcanic caves of Rangitoto. They aren't as old as our limestone caves and don't have life forms already in them." More forcefully, another child protested, "We are concerned about the destruction of the caves. They took millions of years to form and you are going to dynamite them!" Yet another child raised conscience issues asking, "What are you going to do with the money you make? Are you going to help a charity or give it to people to help the environment?"

The children's responses arose because the 'disruption' of teacher in role had allowed students an agency they would usually be denied in the classroom – few children would feel sufficiently empowered to speak like this to a 'real' classroom visitor. Their increased agency led to real engagement and, we suggest, real learning. The teacher commented on how the scenario provided an opportunity for children to bring their knowledge of the caves to their arguments and enter into a spirited dialogue of defence. As the learning became more authentic, so too did opportunities for assessment. By listening to the children's arguments the teacher was able to discern what they had learned scientifically about the caves, and also what their environmental values were. This provided much deeper insights to children's learning than could be offered by test responses or written projects. The negotiated space between Mrs. Glow and the children became an area of contested debate and purposeful argument. In such spaces children's level of status, personal, social, ethical responsibility and even knowledge can be higher than that of the teacher role.

Such transformations require both trust in the process of the drama and risk of the public scrutiny of one's constructed identity. The risk of exposure is lessened however, through the taking of a *fictional* role, giving license for more freedom in identity. The fictional frame of the drama allows participants to explore and push boundaries in the imagined world while remaining assured that their actions will have no consequences in the real world. Bolton (2003) identifies the importance of this safe frame, both for safety reasons and to deepen learning: "Tasks are and must be fictional. . . . At a level there is a 'no penalty' awareness felt by the doer, a sense of freeing the individual, so that they find themselves 'caught off guard' into identifying skills they did not know they had" (p. 136). The children were not at risk in any way when confronting Mrs. Glow and 'calling' her on her unethical and anti-environmental intent. In fact, the process gave them license to stand up for what they believed without the fear of censure or criticism. In such cases, power is democratically vested with all who participate in the classroom. The power children hold in this example is not illusory; it is made palpable by their investment in the issue at stake.

This project found that children were able to step into new roles that not only challenged themselves, but changed the perception and expectations of their teachers too. The teacher researchers commented on how many of the children grew socially in unanticipated ways. They noted some shy children becoming braver, quiet children being more assertive, and disruptive children learning to become more focused and engaged. In addition, boys were witnessed playing the roles of females and vice versa without self-consciousness. For example, one rather shy and reticent boy became Jack's mother, in 'Jack and the Beanstalk.' To deepen the quality of his initial rather timid response, the teacher came out of role to model and support his confidence in his role as the mother. After several repetitions focussing on voice and gesture as well as his innate knowledge of 'mother', the boy in role as mother was able to admonish Jack with a strident voice to, "Go and sell the cow!" shaking his finger emphatically as he did so. It is possible that these transformations made in role may have a lasting impact on the broader class culture too. In our research it was observed that in classrooms where drama was a regular occurrence, an atmosphere of playful and crafted spontaneity was generated that at times, extended beyond the actual drama lessons. This atmosphere appeared to be strongly tied to the forging and negotiation of relationships inside and outside the fictional world.

Relationship of Participants to Real and Imagined Worlds: Metaxis

Another key relationship underpinning classroom drama is the participants' relationship with the imagined and real worlds. Drama, particularly process drama, relies on building and sustaining belief in an imagined world. This in itself could be described as a useful disruption of the traditional teaching scenario. The presence of the imagined world adds

potential – it adds the ‘what if?’ factor in which participants are both more empowered and more safe than in the real world. It allows participants to try things out in an authentic way with the safety of the ‘no penalty’ awareness described earlier. At the same time, if the no penalty zone is to be maintained, participants must also retain an awareness of the wider social reality beyond the drama; they cannot be wholly subsumed into the imagined world. This suggests that what is occurring in classroom drama is an even more complex ‘disruption’ in which participants are aware of two realities at once – a highly potent state of dual awareness akin to what Boal (1995) calls ‘metaxis’. Edmiston (2003) claims that drama always has this kind of double reality. He also suggests that if the everyday world can be characterised as the ‘what is’ and the drama world as ‘what if’, then classroom drama can be described as ‘what is + what if’. He suggests that this dual awareness allows a fluidity of shifting in and out of role that is practical and pragmatic: “Teacher and students interact in both worlds simultaneously and as necessary they move back and forth between them at will” (2003, p. 233). Furthermore, like O’Toole (1992) and Bolton (1992), Edmiston identifies this essential tension between the real and imagined worlds as inherently productive: a force for learning in the real world. “Teacher and students are not immersed in an imagined world that is separated from the everyday world but rather they interpret their imagined experiences for meaning to connect with their everyday lives and thereby develop more understanding about a facet of life” (p. 222). O’Connor (2006) agrees, describing metaxis as the central and most powerful agency for changed understanding through drama.

Despite the power of metaxis, the project found that at times, the child’s capacity for metaxis can be so compelling that it can be a challenge for the teacher. A challenging synchronicity arose during the ‘Art of the Matter’ project in a class of Year 3 children where the teacher researcher had adopted the role as ‘the sun’ within a retelling of the Maori legend ‘Maui and the Sun’ (a traditional story wherein Maui and his brothers catch the sun with ropes and punish it so it will move more slowly across the sky, providing more hours of daylight). A grey day was suddenly illuminated as actual sunlight burst into the classroom at precisely the same moment that the teacher entered in her role as the sun. In a wonderful demonstration of metaxis, and presumably in a desire to solve the issue of why there were suddenly ‘two suns’, a child loudly volunteered, “that must be your mother” and, after an initial hesitation due to the sudden change in direction, the teacher fluidly adopted the new role cast upon her by the children. Through child initiative the entire drama shifted into the impromptu use of a phone conversation convention to invite ‘the mother’ (the sun outside in the sky) to lunch with the class. When the child disappointedly said, “but we don’t know the number!” the teacher continued to build belief through an impromptu; “Oh yes we do, it’s 0800 SUNSHINE.” The drama continued to explore mother–daughter relationships that held rich personal relevance rather than pursuing the planned power narratives of Maui, his brothers and the

Sun. The child's response to the sun's arrival demonstrated the level of commitment and conviction the child had reached, and her evident sense of 'permission' to create and make 'offers' within the drama. The teacher's response within role deepened the commitment and initiative of this child, while her use of the phone call convention allowed the child to deepen the idea and bring the rest of the group along with her.

As well as being an illustration of metaxis, this vignette also demonstrates a significant finding from the action research phase of the project. When addressing the issue of the development of children's ideas, teacher researchers concluded that the use of teacher in role deepens children's *commitment*. However, like the phone convention in this example, it is the skilful and timely use of drama conventions that deepens *ideas*. Teacher in role, it is argued, does not in and of itself deepen ideas. Its primary function, as argued here, is to usefully disrupt relationships with children in the real world, to signal an invitation to children to enter an imagined world, and to offer children power and responsibility within that world. The teacher uses role to model, to hook the children into the drama, and then to gradually hand over creative power to them.

How is the transfer of power to be managed? Bolton (1998) observes how children must, in a sense, 'earn' the privilege of sharing power: "that moment of taking over from the teacher-dramatist can only occur when the pupils are ready to interpret committedly, imaginatively and rationally in the light of what has gone before" (p.186). This moment is not an easy one for the teacher to judge. For the teacher to hand over power successfully requires a thorough knowledge of the children, a sense of security in one's social role as 'teacher' and a degree of skill and ease with the conventions and strategies of drama. In our observations, the skilful management of power and role appeared to rely to a large degree on the teacher's intuition. The example of teacher in role as Sun, is a clear illustration of how complex interactions within a drama sometimes rely on this sense of intuition more than formal planning. This may ask a lot of the generalist teacher, who could well be required to operate in entirely different paradigms of teaching and learning. Nonetheless, the project found that intuition, negotiation, opening spaces and being responsive to what children bring, made for deep engagement by children and co-ownership of the drama. While teacher in role opened the space, the actual conventions of drama were the tools that enabled children's ideas to unfold and expand. This finding from the project was significant in that teacher in role clearly does not ensure the development of children's ideas, or their ownership, but the timely, skilful use of drama conventions do provide this. The nuance required to ensure this happens is the ineffable yet vital aspect of teaching.

Participants' Relationship with the Medium: 'Role' Within and Outside of the Drama

Another 'relationship' that emerges in teaching and learning in the Arts, is the participants' relationship with the 'medium'. In process drama, this can be seen as a relationship with the elements of drama. The Arts in the NZ Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2000) document defines the elements of drama as role, time and space, action, tension and focus (p. 36). A participant in drama will be in a relationship with all these elements. For our purposes, however, we will limit the discussion to the principal element – that of *role*. While the term 'role' is usually used to refer to the fictional roles within the drama, and while the literature of drama education abounds in terminology of *shifting in and out of role*, we consider it is more useful to echo Edmiston's sociological, even political perspective. Edmiston writes: "participants do more than take on roles and adopt frames in process drama. As teacher and students interact in both the everyday world and imaginary worlds, they position one another." (Edmiston, 2003, p. 229). So how does the successful teacher of drama position herself when 'in role' as teacher outside of the drama? Gallagher (2000) characterises the teacher as:

the person in the equation who creates the spaces of possibility, who does not find solutions but nurtures the questions, while asking the learners to bring what they already know to bear on what they are learning. . . . Drama teachers must often *feel* when to move in and when to move out. The striking of this careful balance is often more easily executed if the teacher is seen to be 'in role' (in the game) with the students. (p. 114)

Gallagher's image of the teacher as the creator of 'spaces of possibility' strongly recalls Bergum's (2003) notion of 'opening the space' for students, discussed earlier. Gallagher's final comment also hints at something of the social, even political 'disruption' that occurs when teachers use role. While the teacher may be in role as someone opposed to the student, there is a sense in which by using role and subverting the norms of the classroom, the teacher also generates an atmosphere of social, creative, and even political egalitarianism with the students – a sense of 'we are in this together'. Given this, and given the ultimate aim of drama teaching as the shifting of power to the student, drama teaching begins to appear quite a political act. Edmiston is very clear about the political objectives in his own practice:

A long-term aim of mine as a teacher is as much as possible to share power and authority with students. I want students to have more opportunities to use words and deeds to act appropriately but in ways that are often not sanctioned in classrooms. . . . I want a culture to develop that is more egalitarian than most

students expect walking into the room. (p. 225)

Other drama teachers may not be as consciously political in their aims as Edmiston but we suggest that the discourses and structures of teaching in role, when used in a way that ‘opens spaces’, ‘nurtures questions’, and brings about shifts of authority, carry within them an inescapable political aspect.

With teaching in role—being such a powerful agent for creative and social action—it is clearly important how role is signaled and managed. Our observations in the ‘Art of the Matter’ project led us to the conclusion that there were powerful educational reasons for teachers to consciously and repeatedly signal the transition from the character role to teacher role. Children’s commitment to the drama was consistently enhanced through the lead taken by the teacher entering role to reinforce *this is a game we are playing together*. Conversely, when the teacher was clearly out of the character role the metacognitive skills of reflection about the emerging drama, selecting new drama pathways, practicing a new skill through teacher or peer modelling, and analysing what had been learned, occurred most easefully when operating as reflective practitioner alongside the children. So, signalling the role is important for children’s learning. If teaching in role is also about opening up possibilities for power and authority for children, then arguably it becomes even more important for the teacher to signal carefully when they are moving in and out of role. As O’Toole and Dunn (2002) put it: “to keep the truth from the children, outside as well as inside the drama, is merely mystifying and disempowering – keeping the power firmly with the teacher” (p. 6). There is a sense, too, that not signaling the role, but springing it on the students, would be to demonstrate a lack of trust in the medium of drama. O’Toole and Dunn uncompromisingly say, “The teacher who trusts the power of drama does not need to use deceit” (p. 6). For anyone accustomed to thinking of drama in terms of a naturalistic performance, it can be tempting to believe that the ‘audience’ watching the performance should not see the ‘actor’ moving into role, or that to ‘slip out’ of role is some kind of failure. Another misconception, born of the naturalist realist discourse, is the sense that the more ‘real’ something is in drama, the ‘better’. During the ‘Art of the Matter’ project, teachers became increasingly aware of the importance of trusting the medium of drama and recognising that for the purposes of drama teaching what occurs in the socially real world is not, by definition, more real or ‘better’ than what occurs in the imagined world. This privileging of the real is a theme highlighted in education more broadly. The emphasis on real-life contexts, relevance, and authenticity is prevalent in many theories on pedagogy and curriculum (e.g., Apple & Beane, 1999; Ashton-Warner, 1963; Beane, 1997; Dewey, 1938). What the project found is that the notion of ‘real’ is a negotiated concept in itself. The imagined world of drama, in many respects, is no less authentic for being fictional. Indeed, the possibilities are expanded when the tyranny of the real is put on hold. All writers of fiction and drama know this; the ability to spin stories is enhanced when the textual world is made authentic but not

necessarily, real or literal. Indeed, the power of many fictional texts is in the strength of the story to *feel* real, but not be shackled by the real. For the generalist elementary teacher this is an important distinction and teacher in role provides one of the few opportunities for them to navigate from the fictional and real world and back again. However, this is not always seamless and can raise dilemmas.

One of the drama episodes from the project demonstrates such a dilemma in action. A teacher researcher was working with a group of Year 6 children at the end of a sustained cross-curricula process drama about farms and farming methods. Children had gained a lot of factual knowledge about different agricultural practices, and had strong opinions about their benefits and disadvantages. On the occasion in question, the teacher researcher went into role as an agricultural advisor from the government. She set a task for the children to come up with presentations advocating the advantages of different methods of farming. The reward for the presentations was to be a (fictional) cheque for a substantial sum of money (which the teacher researcher had designed beautifully on her laptop). At the end of the session, the teacher researcher was caught in a dilemma of her own making. As teacher she was unconvinced by the under-conceived presentations yet felt trapped into resolving the drama and reaching its expected resolution of presenting her cheque in role. The teacher researcher reflected that she allowed external pressures from the real world (the presence of the university researchers with their video cameras, the children's interest in the physically real 'cheque', the lack of time in the lesson) to take precedence over her instincts as a teacher of drama. By stopping the drama, coming out of role, and raising questions of quality with the children the next day, the children had opportunity to craft a more convincing presentation. The handing over of the cheque with the university researcher in role as 'the official agricultural ministry photographer' had a good deal more 'authenticity' in terms of the imagined world than the previous lesson. The quality of the children's work was also immeasurably higher as a result of the out-of-role intervention. As Gallagher (2000) confirms, "being both inside and outside the drama can be a precarious place for teachers" (p. 114). Stepping out of role reduces this sense of precariousness by allowing teachers to dialogue with the children about what went on in the drama. Stepping out of role is only a 'problem' if we view drama teaching in terms of a 'show must go on' mentality with the teacher holding all the power. Once again, if we move beyond the discourses of naturalism and polished performance, then stepping out of role can be seen as a significant and empowering act, allowing the mood of egalitarianism, honesty, and risk taking to continue in the real world of classroom dialogue. Indeed, this is essential if high standards and quality learning are to be maintained. Teachers of drama, as with any subject area, need to be mindful of the value and the standard of the learning that occurs. It is important that teacher in role is not just opening a space and watching what happens. Teachers on the

project found that their ‘teacher role’ remained highly influential and finely nuanced and that they needed to remain aware of their teaching role at all times.

Relationships with ‘Outsiders’

Researchers in the project also noted another unanticipated drama ‘relationship’ emerging between researchers from outside of the classroom and the participants in the drama. During the ‘Art of the Matter’, the university researchers visited a number of classrooms and were generally ignored. In some schools visited, children were accustomed to the presence of cameras and researchers in the classroom. In addition, care was taken to film students covertly, so there was no undue sense of ‘playing to the camera’. However, a tension did occur when everyone in the room was agreeing to participate in an imagined world except the university researcher who, as non-participant observer, was filming events. During the farming drama just described, the university researcher was able to resolve this by shifting from their research role as non-participant observer into a role in the drama as the ‘official photographer’. Thus, they entered the shared reality of the drama and opened up further dialogues with the children in role as farmers. It was noticed that children felt able to interact and interrogate the presence of the university researcher within the fictional context and so relationships in the room felt less, not more contrived. We suggest that research carried out within fictional drama contexts should consider making use of opportunities for ‘researcher-in-role’ to elicit impromptu dialogue with participants rather than solely relying on filming and post-event interviews from an ‘objective’ observer stance.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the notion of relational pedagogy, particularly in the context of drama. It is important to acknowledge that the relational nature of learning and teaching in the Arts is not solely one of teacher-child or even subject-child. Such paired notions of relationship miss the constellation of ongoing encounters children are having while learning—relationships with the art medium, relationships with their peers, relationships with themselves and combinations of all of these in the flux of classroom life. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address all aspects of all these multifarious relationships, but we have attempted to address some of the key relational aspects of drama teaching, in particular the teacher-child relationship and the participants’ relationship with the medium of role, within and outside the drama.

Power is always present in relational pedagogy. We have argued that this power need not be solely wielded by the teacher nor the total preserve of the child but that there are spaces to be negotiated, created, and extended by both parties. Using examples from our

research, we have illustrated some of the ways teaching in role can liberate teachers and students from traditional classroom roles and positionings by encouraging a sense of collaboration and mutual risk taking and by permitting a new range of behavioral, expressive, and social conventions to be explored. It has been suggested that the 'disruptions' of traditional power and knowledge positions that occur when teaching in role are intrinsically linked to the dual nature of reality that occurs in drama (metaxis). Further, we have argued that the process of consciously stepping in and out of the role, as well as carrying pedagogical force, may have deeper political significance for children's agency. Relational pedagogy in the Arts occurs when teachers work alongside children to explore where learning *may* go rather than teachers determining where it *will* go. This openness enables children to participate more fully and actively construct knowledge through engagement with their teachers, their peers, and the real and imagined worlds of drama.

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