



Theatre for Teacher Education to Prepare Teachers in an Inclusive Classroom: A Historical Perspective of India and Southeast Asia

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Received: 09 Oct 2023; Received in revised form: 11 Nov 2023; Accepted: 21 Nov 2023; Available online: 01 Dec 2023

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Abstract— Education should be about transformation, whether for teachers or learners: transformation in conceptual understanding and the methods of completion of tasks. It is true that enormous and widely dispersed influences from regions outside of Southeast Asia—from China, India, the West, and Islamic nations—have left their marks on the region's theatre. It's also true that theatre from one nation in Southeast Asia has frequently influenced theatre from nearby nations. But it is also true that throughout the various countries of Southeast Asia, theatre has grown in different directions in response to local conditions and influences. In this evolutionary process, several diverse theatre styles have come into being. In Indonesia and Thailand, two nations with highly established theatre industries, there are over a dozen different theatre genres. With the passage of time, there have been major changes in the field of second language teaching; among the more recent promising and productive ones is task-based language teaching. In ESL classrooms, funds and resources are always an issue and often, the stakeholders are concerned about the paucity of resources in ESL contexts. Theatre is an absolutely cost-effective resource useful for task-based pedagogy. This paper focuses on probing how theatre can be a useful tool for teacher education to prepare teachers in an inclusive classroom from the perspective of India and Southeast Asia. This paper aims to link how Indian Theatre arts can influence the teaching and learning of the English language in Southeast Asian nations. This paper further identifies conceptual and theoretical frameworks from the fields of theatre and teacher education for an inclusive classroom. Additionally, it tries to find the links between teacher education and theatre, which might benefit ESL/EFL learning in the classroom by using theatrical techniques. Therefore, the paper aims to propose how teacher training can be enriched with theatre as a resource.



Keywords— Theatre, teacher education, ESL, theatre pedagogy, India & Southeast Asia, inclusive classroom

I. INTRODUCTION

Two-thirds the size of India, a 2000-mile-long peninsula extends southward from the Asian continent. Burma is in the west, Thailand (Siam) is in the middle, and Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam are in the east. Malaya is located at the peninsula's southern point, just above the equator. In the south, the continent disintegrates into two large arcs of volcanic islands. Java, Bali, Sumatra, Borneo, and the other Indonesian islands form an arc that arcs 3500 miles

southeast across the equator to Australia. The other, which includes the Philippines, extends an additional 2500 miles northeast to Taiwan. Southeast Asia comprises this vast land and sea area, which is twice the size of Europe and as large as the United States and Canada combined. The range of theatre is nearly mind-boggling. Eight of the twenty-five major theatre forms currently performed include shadow plays in Java, dramatic folk rituals in Bali, masked pantomime in Thailand, spirit dances in Burma, folk-song

dramas in Laos, classical opera with Chinese influences in Vietnam, puppet plays in Sunda, and the Royal Ballet of Cambodia.

It has been observed that there is a lack of funds in educational settings where teacher education is not completely successful because of the paucity of infrastructure and technology. The way teacher trainers are being trained, they are not getting the same opportunity when they enter the actual classrooms. That is why it has been seen that there is always a huge difference between the private school students and the public school students. Theatre can be a useful tool for inclusive classrooms that can take place even in cost-effective conditions. The teachers need to be trained in a way so that they can generate inclusive cultures of pedagogy across all kinds of schools. Using drama activities in the classroom would lead to this desired inclusiveness through cost-effective measures. Perego and Boyle (2008) state, "drama activities provide students with a variety of contextualised and scaffold activities that gradually involve more participation and oral language proficiency; they are also non-threatening and have much fun". According to Dougill, drama activities help to bridge the gap between the carefully controlled classroom work and the complexity of language in the outside world. Desiatova (2009) states how drama brings the real world into the classroom since the crucial is the aim rather than linguistic.

The main aim of an inclusive classroom is to place students with disabilities and special needs in the general education environment. An inclusive classroom is indeed a broad concept associated with the structure of the institutional system in terms of educational practices and teachers' training, educational programs, curriculum content and the school's physical environment. In an inclusive educational system, the system should be in a way that equal opportunities are being provided to all.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It's not a new idea to use theatrical exercises as a means of teaching and learning. The use of drama and theatre as instructional tools has a long and illustrious history. The only real change is that their applications have shifted slightly.

Drama and theatre arts have a long and storied history dating back to antiquity. Historically, church buildings were the primary setting for staged plays, but this has changed throughout time. Moore (2004) argues that acting as a way of education is both effective and enjoyable.

It reintroduces feelings to the educational setting, which has traditionally kept them separate from academic pursuits.

Emotions, according to recent studies of the brain, facilitate knowledge acquisition. Students' comprehension of a topic improves when they can connect emotionally to it. When instructors employ the arts in the classroom, they facilitate the fusion of learned knowledge with fresh information. Using drama in the classroom combines learning with emotion (Moore, 2004).

Dodson (Dunar, 2012) claims that since the 1970s, the theatre has played a minor but persistent role in the classrooms of both Britain and the United States. Dunar (2012) states that one of the first and most prominent proponents of theatre in the L1 classroom was Bolton, who utilised it as "the centre of the curriculum" in all his seminars. Later, theatre became more often used in the classroom to teach a second language.

"Learning by doing" is precisely what Dewey (1921) calls the dramatic arts. Dewey also emphasised the value of creative thinking. He defined imagination as "the gateway through which meanings are derived from past experiences that are carried over into the present."

In the context of India and Southeast Asia, the use of theatrical activities has yet to be found sufficiently. The teaching and learning process can be effective if different theatre/drama activities are incorporated in the classrooms.

III. A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THEATRE EDUCATION IN INDIA AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

The historical perspective of Theatre Education in India and Southeast Asia can broadly be discussed into three dimensions; the cultural setting of theatre, the development of theatre genres, and theatre traditions.

3.1 THE CULTURAL SETTING OF THEATRE IN INDIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Southeast Asia has had four cultural eras. Each culture has shaped theatre differently. From 2500 B.C. to A.D. 100, animism-practicing northerners settled Southeast Asia. Theatre started here. Indian culture spread throughout Southeast Asia except Laos, northern Vietnam, the Philippines, and the easternmost islands of Indonesia from A.D. 100 to 1000. Dance-drama and puppet theatre were founded during this time. From 1300 to 1750, Malaya and Indonesia (excluding Bali) converted to Islam while Chinese-related peoples took over Burma, Thailand, Laos, and parts of Vietnam from Malay settlers. Court theatre flourished during this period. The US and Europe ruled Southeast Asia save Thailand from 1750 until World War II. This age produced the most "popular" theatre forms.

One of the pivotal moments in Asian history was the gradual spread of Indian culture into Southeast Asia throughout the

first millennium of the Christian era. Trade existed between Indian and Southeast Asian ports in the centuries before the advent of Christianity, but the first "Hindu" settlement in Southeast Asia wasn't mentioned until about the year 100 A.D. In what is now Cambodia, the state of Funan utilised Indian script (similar to the Hon script of Central Asia) for writing, and the ruler declared himself to be a Brahman, according to a Chinese source.

3.2 THE CULTURAL SETTING OF THEATRE IN INDIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

India, China, Islamic nations, and the West have shaped Southeast Asian theatre. Indeed, Southeast Asian theatre has often influenced neighbouring theatres. However, Southeast Asian theatre has developed differently in response to local situations and influences. Theatre has evolved into numerous genres. Indonesia and Thailand, both theatre powerhouses, have over a dozen forms. Local audiences usually understand and name the different genres of theatre. Except in exceptional situations, each theatre troupe will present only one sort of play, unlike Western troupes that pride themselves on being able to perform Shakespeare one night and Sophocles the next. Thus, discussing theatre's growth must include its genres.

A. INDONESIA

Theatre has flourished primarily in three locations among Indonesia's more than two thousand islands: Bali, the "Javanese" region of Java (central and east Java are spoken by Javanese), and west Java is spoken by Sundanese. Each region's theatre forms are distinctive enough to merit examination independently.

a. JAVA

Wayang kulit (shadow drama), wayang beber (paper-scroll play), and wayang topeng) or simply topeng (masked dance) are the earliest forms of Javanese theatre we know. During the thousand years when Indian cultural influence was prevalent in Java, they crystallised into distinct genres, but it is almost certain that their origins date back to animistic times. Wayang kulit is a traditional style of shadow puppet theatre that may be traced back to the civilisations of Java and Bali in Indonesia. The puppet figures in a wayang kulit performance are rear-projected onto a tight linen screen using a light source made of coconut oil (or an electric light source). To bring the shadows to life, the dalang (also known as a shadow artist) moves carved leather figures back and forth between the lamp and the screen. The stories told through the medium of wayang kulit frequently revolve around the age-old conflict between good and evil. Wayang beber is an Indonesian wayang performance art that uses stretch sheets of paper or fabric with stylised wayang drawings and dalang storytelling. Wayang beber performances began in pre-

Islamic Java and extended into Islamic realms like the Sultanate of Mataram. Mahabharata and Ramayana tales are shown. Panji stories increased after Java adopted Islam. Pictorial ballads from mediaeval and early modern European fairs resemble wayang beber. In Surakarta (Solo), Central Java, wayang beber artists still exist. Topeng is a dramatic type of Indonesian dance that is performed to the accompaniment of gamelan or other traditional musical instruments. It features one or more performers who wear masks and are dressed in elaborate costumes as they interpret classic narratives of legendary monarchs, heroes, and myths. The topeng dance is a traditional kind of Indonesian dance that is performed in a number of different parts of the country. The most distinguishing feature of topeng dance is that its performers hide their faces behind masks while they perform. Depending on the context, the dance may be done by a single dancer or a group of dancers.

b. SUNDA

Sundanese wayang golek, in which golek doll-puppets perform Mahabharata and Ramayana stories, is the most popular type of theatre in west Java. It's wayang kulit in disguise, according to the Sundanese. The Sundanese preferred daylight wayang performances, which precluded shadow plays, so they adapted existing stories to a new performance style. Indonesian specialists say Sundanese wayang golek was formed during the last 200 years. Mataram, central Java's most powerful and prosperous kingdom, introduced wayang kulit to Sunda in the early eighteenth century. Sundanese court scribes translated Javanese wayang stories in the mid-1800s. Sundanese wayang golek was invented shortly after.

c. BALI

The performing arts of Bali, particularly those pertaining to theatre, have garnered more attention than those of any other region in Southeast Asia, and their notoriety is entirely merited. There is nowhere else in the world where the performing arts thrive as much as they do on the island of Bali, which is home to one million people. At any given time of the year, you might find yourself in one of the many villages of Bali seeing a performance of some kind. The Balinese New Year celebration, which lasts for 10 days, features the greatest number of different kinds of shows. A wide variety of dance, dance-drama, and theatre styles are all part of the Balinese cultural repertoire.

B. MALAYSIA

People from the Malay Peninsula have a lot in common with people from Java, Sunda, and Bali. All of them are Malay, and they all believe in spirits. For hundreds of years, Hindu culture shaped all of them, except for the Balinese, who later converted to Islam. But while Javanese, Sundanese, and Balinese people have always been very creative in the arts,

Winstedt says that Malay culture has always been "derivative." In drama, this is true. Wayang kulit came to Malaysia from Java, Chinese opera came from different parts of south China, and bangsawan is the only one that was made in Malaysia.

Three different types of wayang shadow plays are recognised in Malaysia today: wayang djawa, wayang melayu, and wayang siam. The first two are exact replicas of wayang kulit from Java. The language of the plays is Malay, not Javanese, and the musical accompaniment is not in the same style as a Javanese gamelan ensemble, but the fundamental style of the puppet figures and wayang kulit are Javanese. The primary distinction between wayang djawa and wayang melayu is that the former typically have only one movable arm and are less stylized than the latter, suggesting that wayang djawa figures were introduced to the Malay Peninsula relatively late (after the seventeenth century), whereas wayang melayu figures represent an earlier style of Javanese puppet, possibly of pre-Islamic origin.

C. CAMBODIA

Many of the folk dances performed in rural Cambodia today likely have ancient origins. A typical deer-hunting dance is the trot. Players wearing masks stand in for the demon, bull, girls, deer, and hunter. They dance out the tale of a deer hunt to the sounds of chanting and drumming. This dance was reportedly first performed before the hunt to enlist the assistance of animistic spirits.

Cambodia's primary tradition of dance-drama originates from the earliest times of Indian influence. At least by the fourth century, Cambodia was among the first places to embrace Hinduism. At this time, Sanskrit writing was developed, and a large number of inscriptions are known that span a period of 1,000 years up until the collapse of Angkor in the fifteenth century. A sixth-century inscription specifically states that arrangements were made for the daily recitation of the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas and that giving copies of these writings to temples was considered virtuous.

Cambodia's most well-known theatre is Lakon Bassac. It gets its name from the southern Vietnamese district where it first appeared, which is bordered by the Bassac River. Cambodians have resided there since the Khmer Empire. These individuals developed a particular play form in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Lakon Bassac, or "theatre of the Bassac," was the name they gave it.

D. THAILAND

The earliest type of Thai theatre is Lakon jatri. Its origins were most likely a part of animistic ceremonies. Jatri is a

term for "sorcerer," and lakon jatri performers have long been believed to have magical abilities. In Thailand, dances are a component of spirit offerings or act as introductions to various animistic rituals. These dances are widespread. Lakon jatri is one such drama that developed after first absorbing Indian dance and then later Buddhist themes. The Hinduized Mon kingdoms of central Thailand were familiar with Indian dancing. We can still watch one of the most peculiar and ancient Indian dance routines done in lakon jatri today. The Natya Sastra makes reference to it. Until his head is visible between his legs, the dancer sways backward.

During the early days of lakon jatri, a typical company included three actors in addition to singers and musicians. Because of the likely religious nature of the event, participation was restricted to men only. One actor took on the role of a valiant male character, another actor portrayed a feminine character, and the third actor took on the roles of a clown, an ogre, and an animal. The clown would frequently wear a mask. The musical accompaniment was straightforward, consisting of a flute, a number of drums (including the hand drum in the shape of a pear that was initially utilised solely by lakon jatri troupes), and a few small bell cymbals.

E. BURMA

Burma has a long history of spirit dances. These dances are done to appease one or more of the thirty-seven nats that live there. Burma is the Southeast Asian country that is closest to India. Because of this, it learned Indian dances early on. In 802, a group of Burmese people went to China to show the ruler their culture. They played music and sang songs that had Sanskrit words in them. Burma had dance and music for hundreds of years before it had its own type of theatre. In the sixteenth centuries, professional entertainers did Burmese dances that were inspired by Indian dances. They called themselves "spirit dancers," and their shows were called "nibhatkhin," which means "spirit play." In reality, these performers were nomads who pretended to be religious so they could do other things. This is similar to how Okuni, the prostitute who started kabuki in Japan around the same time, pretended to be a "priestess" when she danced religious dances.

F. VIETNAM

Hat cheo is most likely the oldest type of play practiced in Vietnam. According to one idea, hat cheo originated from the folk songs, dances, and buffoonery that the peasants of northern Vietnam would perform at festivals and at harvest season. Over time, these folk plays would emphasise social satire to the extent that they do today. Chèo, which is typically performed by Vietnamese peasants in northern Vietnam, is a type of musical theatre that is mainly sarcastic and frequently incorporates dancing. Although it is

increasingly being played indoors and by professionals, it is typically performed outside by semi-amateur travelling groups, stereotypically in a town square or the courtyard of a public building.

G. PHILIPPINES

Filipinos acquired a simple Indian-derived alphabet in the early Christian era likely through contact with Java but it was never used to write something as intricate as literature. The epics were originally put down in writing by Westerners. Given that the Philippines were thousands of miles away from India and at the westernmost tip of Asia, Indian culture barely made it to these islands.

3.2 TRADITIONS OF THEATRE

Southeast Asian theatre has grown in many social settings. The "folk theatre tradition," "court theatre tradition," "popular theatre tradition," and "Western theatre tradition" are four major "traditions of theatre" based on social environment. Folk Theatre Tradition: Folk theatre is predominantly associated with rural existence. It is connected to ancient animistic beliefs and rituals. There are performances at irregular intervals and on rare occasions. Villagers who act or dance as a hobby or to achieve prestige are the performers; they are not professionals. Court Theatre Tradition: Under the patronage of the courts, a variety of theatre genres developed that were thought to be more advanced than local cultures, such as Southeast Asian, Chinese, and Indian. Court retainers, who resided at the court, were funded by the king and catered to his needs, were court actors. The court's grounds were the site of performances. Although the general public was occasionally permitted to attend, attendance was typically restricted to the ruler's invited guests, and there was no admission charge. Popular Theatre Tradition: The least comprehended of the four traditions is popular theatre. However, it has distinctive characteristics distinguishing it from folk and court theatre. Popular theatre pertains to the city and town, just as court theatre and folk theatre belong to the palace and village community, respectively. Western Theatre Tradition: The modern, highly educated social elite in Southeast Asia is the source of Western theatre. The drama's structure was based on Western drama. University students and recent graduates, particularly those who studied in Europe or America and are Western-oriented, tend to be where performers tend to come from.

IV. DRAMA AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

People believe that drama is synonymous with a play. Actually, drama includes plays. Boyles (2012:5) stated that drama is "an art form" comprised of various cultures.

Therefore, it can be utilised by anyone, regardless of age, race, gender, or ethnicity. Because drama is a part of everyone's lives, it can be used to educate students of all types. Drama is defined by The Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary (2012) as a composition in verse or prose arranged for enactment (as by actors on stage) and intended to portray life or character, or to convey a story through the actions and typically dialogue of the enactors. According to Boyles (2012), the term "drama" is derived from the Ancient Greek word for "action." Thus, drama is associated with human action that takes the form of a narrative. It contains information, concepts, and feelings associated with human existence. When drama is used in the EFL classroom, learners will engage in enjoyable, interactive communication.

V. IMPORTANCE OF USING DRAMA IN AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

Drama helps students learn how to engage and communicate with one another while also offering a fresh way of viewing the world. Drama, which is replete with human behaviour, depicts social reality. As a result, students who participate in theatre activities might connect intriguing meanings to a task from their own lives by constructing social reality. Activities involving drama are not merely a requirement.

On the other hand, drama might be a different approach to exploring the world. According to Almond (2005), theatre is significant because it takes a whole-person approach, which means it involves the learners' intellects, emotions, and natural instincts in addition to spoken language. Drama places English language learners at the centre of the educational process, which helps them develop their own understanding.

VI. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Theatrical exercises can take several forms in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Incorporating mime, role play, and simulation in English language classrooms can effectively teach learning in Southeast Asian nations.

A. Role Play

The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines role play as acting out a different character, particularly when learning a new skill. It may be a technique for delving into the problems raised by complex situations. Through role play, participants can expand on prior knowledge and transform it into characters for the story. Additionally, it gives students the chance to act, learn to assume the roles of others, and develop their social skills while learning about

social issues. Participants in role-play are assigned roles, which they act out in a predetermined scenario.

B. Mime

The definition of mime given by The Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary (2012) is a performance art in which a person assumes a role or conveys a tale through nonverbal means such as body language and facial expressions. Mime is a great way for students to act out emotions, including fear, joy, sadness, and more. The term "mime" was coined by Dougill (1987) to describe "a non-verbal representation of an idea or story through gesture, bodily movement, and expression." Then, the mime boosts their self-assurance in front of the whole class. He says Mime is the best way to learn a new language.

C. Simulation

Jones (1980) defines simulation as functional reality in a simulated organised environment. Simulation then lets students interact with different discussions. Simulations teach social interaction. They might practice greeting, dating, and shopping. Students can practice in realistic simulations. Participants evaluate and complete a task in simulations. Simulation training promotes oral skills. English language students can benefit from participating in simulations since it allows them to hone their acting skills via repeated role-playing and improvisational exercises.

VII. INCORPORATING DRAMA IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

Teachers are not reluctant to try theatre activities in the language classroom because they know their efficacy. A teacher's role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) theatre exercises is that of facilitator or guide. Therefore, according to Gaudart (1990), educators shouldn't provide students with copious amounts of guidance. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers should know what is expected of them. Since classroom instructions are merely a suggestion, only the barest minimum is required of instructors. Students should be encouraged to exercise their own judgment when deciding how to act in a given scenario.

Participating in dramatic activities with them is not only entertaining but also educational for them. They get the opportunity to hone various communication skills, including articulating opinions, persuading others, debating, eliciting opinions, finding solutions to problems, and analysing circumstances. Students will not receive any form of error correction while participating in the drama exercise. It is for the purpose of preventing them from becoming frustrated when they make mistakes. After they have participated in drama activities, an assessment of those errors can be made. The primary objective of implementing

dramatic techniques is to encourage the student's engagement in communicative activities, which includes overcoming resistance to speaking the target language and developing abilities in effective communication.

VIII. ANALYSING THE ROLE OF THEATRE FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

In the English as a Foreign Language classroom, the use of drama as a creative tool can bring forth fresh and valuable knowledge about a foreign language's teaching and learning process. It is possible for the teacher to strengthen her or his understanding of teaching by acting as a researcher in the classroom. This researcher studies instruction and the development of the students. The instructor should make recordings and evaluate the learners' language accuracy and fluency to gain insight into the learners' strengths and weaknesses in their performance in theatre activities. The findings are achieved by recording everything that happens. This information pertains to the subject matter's composition, pronunciation, and linguistic application. Participating in theatre exercises that include using various terminology might help one discover their speaking performance strengths and shortcomings. On the other hand, there are some issues with the sentences' grammatical structure and pronunciation.

IX. CONCLUSION

In India and Southeast Asia, the performing arts, particularly theatre, have long been regarded as a form of communication. Theatre can provide a safe space for teacher education of English language learners for an inclusive classroom to investigate complex social issues and moral dilemmas via the shared experience of creating a performance with others. Drama can help learners develop self-assurance in decision-making and problem-solving skills. Roleplay, mime, and simulation are all forms of theatre that can be employed in an English as a Second Language classroom in India and Southeast Asia. Learners benefit from drama by expanding their imaginations, boosting their self-esteem, and learning to work together more effectively.

These methods have some drawbacks, one of which is that they require a lot of groundwork, which is challenging for most pupils. These paralinguistic qualities have several benefits, including easier verbal and nonverbal communication. Language learners' creativity would also improve. It would encourage self-learning and confidence in students.

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