Strategies for 'Teacher-in-Role' through fairy tales to enable participants 'living through' drama

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***Abstract:** The article explores the integration of fairy tales and Drama in Education (DiE) through the 'Teacher-in-Role' (TiR) strategy, allowing participants to engage deeply with the narrative and experiential learning. By embodying characters within fairy tales, participants address virtual problems as real-world scenarios, expanding their learning spaces. The concept, developed by Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, leverages TiR to enhance student engagement, problem-solving, and cognitive development, aligning with Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development. The article highlights the educational potential of fairy tales, emphasizing their power to stimulate imagination, reflect human experiences, and convey moral lessons. It argues for fairy tales' superiority over fables and myths due to their rich narrative structure and detailed character development, providing a robust framework for TiR activities. This pedagogical approach offers a safe, imaginative space for participants to explore and understand complex social issues, bridging the gap between fantasy and reality in educational contexts.*

***Keywords:** Fairy tales; Drama in Education; Teacher-in-Role; Living through drama*

1. Introduction

This article provides an in-depth discussion of the application of Teacher-in-Role (TiR) in the strategy of Drama-in-Education (DiE) to the field of fairy tales. DiE is a learning experience of living through drama. The first consideration is to select course materials and teaching content that can attract the attention and interest of participants. Fairy tales developed from folk literature are the best choice, because they constitute a bible for human experience. A person undergoing education realises a transformation from knowledge to ability and then to quality. Human experience is transformed into behaviour, and the original materials are dug deep to combine fairy tales and DiE organically. Through a drama strategy like TiR, the roles can live through drama. The virtual problems in fairy tales are treated as real problems in order to help participants open up the learning space.

2. The concept of Teacher-in-Role

In the 1950s and 1960s, Dorothy Heathcote broke away from Peter Slade and Brian Way to develop TiR (Davis, 2014). Heathcote is the foremost figure in the development of TiR, but Gavin Bolton also contributed (Heathcote, 1995). Heathcote developed this work form based on her long-term practical experience, including teaching drama subjects and drama experiments with children (Heggstad, 1998). She wrote many articles about her work and the philosophy of DiE. There are also a lot of second-hand materials related to her theory and practice, as well as some video materials of her lectures and some comments on her related work such as 'Three Looms Waiting'. Bolton was a close partner of Heathcote. During their years of cooperation, Bolton wrote and published many related theory and practice articles and books. Heathcote and Bolton's work aimed to achieve the renewal of DiE in subject content and methods. They always paid attention to the huge potential of drama, and they hoped to develop drama into a working method that was not limited to cultivating people's personality and character (Heggstad, 1998).

'TiR refers to a teacher playing a specific character in a drama, using the characteristics of the drama's role to trigger student participation, to achieve the possibility of mastering drama and learning opportunities to achieve the purpose of teaching' (Neelands & Goode, 2015, p. 54).

Helane Rosenberg believed that 'Heathcote uses a TiR (this is her most famous strategy) to push

children into obsessive or problem-solving situations, in which the immediacy of the circumstances [would force] participants into action' (Rosenberg & Pinciotti, 1983, p. 40).

Gavin Bolton (1984) believed that this is an essential principle of learning strategy and teaching, which uniquely flips the underlying assumptions in the traditional teaching context. Roles provide a 'negotiation' mechanism for the classroom-making of interactive classrooms, which are no longer a difficult concept for teachers to achieve. Those that cannot be 'negotiated' with the teacher can be negotiated with the 'role', which is democratic; the style of classroom provides the space and conditions.

3. Teacher-in-Role and the zone of proximal development

Lev Vygotsky proposed the theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). He believed that there are two levels of student development: one is the current level of students, which refers to the level of problem-solving that can be achieved during independent activities; the other is the possible development of a student obtained through teaching. The difference between the two is the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1980). To put it simply, what they can do independently and what they can do with the help of adults is not the same; they are at different levels. As such, students need the help of adults or more capable peers to reach the problem-solving level. This also means that teachers play an important role as facilitators in TiR.

As an early-years classroom example, Konstantinos Amoiropoulos stated in his speech 'The relevance of drama for the early-years classrooms' that 'knowledge does not spring directly from the mind.' In class, he usually first tells his students a story and then asks them some very complicated questions about the story. This is the ZPD that the students may not be able to cross. Through the form of drama, such as TiR, teachers and students play roles together and carry the roles into virtual situations. When this situation occurs, a teacher can help the students to cross the ZPD in that role. At that moment, he/she is not a teacher, but instead a role in the story, a person who has an equal relationship with the students. In the traditional sense, the relationship between teachers and students, where the teacher speaks on stage and the students listen from the audience, is completely changed at this moment. They discuss the solution to the problem together, instead of the students finding the correct answer to satisfy the teacher. This is something that is difficult for teachers to do in the traditional classroom situation. Therefore, these virtual situations and virtual roles enable teachers to interact with students and encourage them to cross the ZPD.

Morgan and Saxton (1987) mentioned several advantages of TiR. The first advantage is that teachers can observe the surrounding events with the students in the drama; second, they can control the rhythm and tension through the internal rhythm of the event; third, they can support, encourage and open communication, and maintain a consensus with students; fourth, they can share discoveries and generate new cognitions with students; and finally, and most relevant to the ZPD, they can explore new cognitions with children.

4. 'Living through 'drama

In Dorothy Heathcote's early practice, she pioneered a completely different approach from mainstream teaching – living through drama. Heathcote places participants in the event and allows them to explore themselves by living through drama. 'Living through' drama means' it happened to me'. Heathcote's teaching method is recorded in the documentary 'Three Looms Waiting'. This teaching method often started with a simple virtual situation set up by Heathcote, placing children in a virtual disguise that seemed real, as though they were living in a drama. This was facilitated by playing some roles and by the pioneering TiR method. Through TiR and living through drama, students can see the'real' self-circumstance, reflect on and develop their understanding of the situation, and analyse the society of life.

The dramatic style of living through drama profoundly influenced some of Heathcote's successors. For example, Gavin Bolton emphasised that when a child participates in living through drama, he both exists in the virtual world and also watches himself in the real world (Bolton & Heathcote, 1999).

5. Teacher-in-Role and 'living through' drama

Dorothy Heathcote proposed that drama be used as a learning medium, and that teachers lead participants in order to achieve the 'making of the drama' together. Through the experience of living through drama, knowledge learning in practice makes meaning (Heathcote et al., 1984).Gavin Bolton explains the overlap between the two in four important areas in his 'Drama in education and TIE' article: mode, structure, purpose, and engagement with meaning (Bolton, 1993). In particular, the structure aspects highlight the TiR activities.

'Structure' means that in a complete DiE activity, 'there are two plays taking place at the same time, namely "student's role" and "teacher's role"' (Davis, 2010). This concept emphasises the design of drama structure: the structure is designed for students to participate in the design of their personal experience and to set up a 'learning area' that can develop their learning ability. For development to be realised, the TiR section's structure design focuses on drama tension. Through TiR, students are accommodated in dramatic situations and in the context of drama, live through drama in roles, and develop learning areas for participants (there are cases of this in the Bondian drama part).

6. Fairy tales

What is a fairy tale? George MacDonald's (1980) answer was to read Green, read Anderson, read Stardust, read Narnia... Maybe after reading all these books, you will understand what a fairy tale is.

Fairy tales are fascinating and can stimulate the creative imagination of a participant. They are stories with a fantasy nature; fantasy is the fundamental feature of fairy tales. People can associate life with the fantasies in fairy tales. In essence, this type of fantasy is a reflection of a special form of life in people's minds. Fairy tales express certain things in life through imaginary scenes, by means of associations, images, metaphors, symbols, etc., in order to clarify the essence of certain things, to express the author's particular views on life, or to present ideals, hopes, praise, exhortations, satire and criticisms.

7. The power of fairy tales

Fairy tales have power that cannot be ignored. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1817) point of view was that a person should live in the countryside before the age of 15. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1982) said that the way to cultivate a good person is to let him go to nature and value life. We have gained too much knowledge about the sun and rain, and even lost the sense of the sun and rain (Kawai, 1995). People need to find the original sensibility of things, and so they need fairy tales. The most beautiful forests and villages exist in fairy tales. They are a bridge between fantasy and reality for children. They fall in line with the imagination of children, and at the same time, in line with the real world. Fairy tales are children's first step into the world.

Fairy tales are the epitome of reality; they are often full of metaphors. American psychologist Bruno Bettelheim (2010) said that a fairy tale is a wonderful experience that gives children a deeper understanding of their feelings, hopes and anxieties, without showing them for everyone to see. Thinking about the relationship between fairy tales and the real world, participants will subconsciously think about themselves and their existing lives.

7.1 Bondian drama and fairy tales

The establishment of the site in a fairy tale helps to open a 'gap' for participants – creating a learning area. Bondian drama emphasises learning through experience (Bond, 1996). The virtual fairy tale site provides a place for learning. Based on Bond's core concept, Chris Cooper expanded his understanding of the concept of 'site' and defined four specific fields in the scene range (Cooper, 2013, p. 132):

Site A: Social site, that is, the real world we live in

Site B: Story site, that is, the location/situation where the drama event occurs

Site C: The objects/actions/questions in the story, used to imply and convey the social site and story site

Site D: Imaginative connection of the audience

Here, take the Italian fairy tale 'Nick Fish' as an example to elaborate on the experience and learning of the Bondian drama site combined with fairy tales:

The main plot of the story: Once upon a time, Nick and his mother lived in the port of Messina. Nick was very naughty. His mother cursed him to become a fish, and the curse was fulfilled. Nick turned into a half-fish, half-human monster and was unable to go ashore. The king heard the news that Nick had become a monster. He ordered Nick to swim around Sissi and tell him what the deepest sea was and what was on the bottom of the sea. Nick fulfilled the king's request. The king also ordered Nick to survey the depth of the sea near the lighthouse. Nick spent a few days trying to do so, but almost lost his life, and failed to complete the task. The king told Nick to survey the same place again, threw his golden crown into the sea, and threatened that he would kill Nick if the latter could not recover the crown. Nick had to obey orders, but he did not come back that time.

The social site in the fairy tale is the world of conflict between the needs of the self and others. The story site is the port of Messina. The central object in the story is the golden crown, and the central action is the king throwing the golden crown into the sea. The central object and the central action help develop the story site in order to transfer the social site more efficiently to the minds and imagination of the participants. In the process of building a site in the classroom, the teacher can, through TiR, become the king, let one of the participants become Nick, and help the participants experience the dramatic conflict in which the king throws the crown into the sea and tells Nick to recover it. At this time, the golden crown symbolises power but is also regarded as a tool by the king. The king tries to force Nick to obey his orders through power. When the power is no longer effective, he takes the action of throwing the 'power' into the sea. With the appearance of this action, the meaning of the golden crown also changes. The symbol of power becomes a bargaining chip to carry humanity: when a person whose authority constitutes his entire existence threatens to give up his authority to achieve his goal, the other party has no choice. This is because he is facing the most vulnerable aspect of human nature: the exile of self-worth. Nick can only bear the responsibility of the 'people' that the king gave up by throwing away his authority. Nick knows that the consequences of taking on this responsibility come at the cost of his life.

Fairy tales can turn abstract principles and moral concepts into concrete and strong ones. Sites are often linked to society and life; this builds the opportunity for knowledge and experience learning from fairy tales.

7.2 Why choose fairy tales as materials instead of fables or myths?

Both fairy tales and myths originated from folk oral creation and dissemination. The two have a deep relationship, and both take fantasy as their main feature. Myths are the oldest literary style, and feature highly imaginative stories created by people in ancient times that reflect the relationships between man and nature and social patterns (Segal, 2021). They take the image of a supernatural God as the centre of their narrative. They are a product of a specific historical stage in ancient times and a part of history. Fairy tales, which were born out of myths and legends, are the same; they are fantasy products based on reality. With society's development, fairy tales have slowly evolved into a form that features children as the main objects, tortuously reflects real life, and entrusts beautiful ideals. Fairy tales have always developed in step with the times from the day they were created. As long as humans exist, as long as human fantasy exists, fairy tales will exist. Fairy tales do not reflect man's primitive religious ideas about nature. They often use anthropomorphic techniques to tell stories about animals, plants and even inanimate objects. The fundamental difference between the two is the difference in content. Myths describe the stories of gods, and fairy tales reflect people's lives. The content of fairy tales sometimes involves supernatural factors such as gods, monsters and fairies, but the gods and ghosts in fairy tales are not the masters of the world but instead the incarnation of people's ideals, hopes and wishes.

Fairy tales also have a very similar literary style to fables, but fables are generally short and concise, written in a few hundred words. Fables often use a simple personification to illustrate a philosophy, a thought, a lesson, a persuasion or an experience, and express a certain persuasive thought (Horgan, 2014). Therefore, in order for people to make a quick connection between the thoughts set out in a fable and the lesson or allegory itself, the structure of the fable must be as compact as possible without too much plot; otherwise, it will distract people. Therefore, fables' requirements for shaping and characterising characters are not as strict as those of fairy tales. A fairy tale contains a moral meaning

and a more detailed description of characters' plot and role. It tells an interesting story first and foremost, with the vividness of the story being increased by anthropomorphic description. Therefore, fairy tales are far more complete than allegories in terms of story structure, and have more requirements than allegories do in the shaping of artistic images and the characterisation of characters. For example, in 'The Race of the Tortoise and the Hare', which is an ancient fable, the hare loses to the tortoise in the race because he is proud and complacent, and sleeps a lot. This fable could also be the subject of a fairy tale. However, in fairy tales, hares and tortoises must have thoughts and feelings and a site for the competition and the details of their actions. Moreover, a fairy tale would need to shape the audience's image to be more expansive than just the tortoise and the rabbit. The audience would also need some information about the main characters' thoughts, the storyline, and the character development.

8. Case design – focusing on the specific application of the TiR strategy in fairy tales

The combination of fairy tales and TiR provides a possibility for trial and error. Fairy tales are not all pretty; neither is reality. There are many dark and bloody scenes in Grimm's and Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales. Most of Andersen's works involve death. As a result, some people think that the tone of his fairy tales is too gloomy, and the pessimistic mood too strong, making them unsuitable for children to read. However, fairy tales are virtual, and acting is also virtual, so drama can protect children from understanding reality by keeping them safely in the virtual world. Children know that the story is virtual, and will confidently use their real-world experience to deal with conflicts in the drama. Drama provides a kind of protection for children, but also the possibility for exploration and development.

'Little Red Riding Hood' is a classic work by the German fairy tale writer Grimm; there are more than 100 versions of the story. The earliest ending of 'Little Red Riding Hood' features the protagonist being consumed by an evil wolf. Later, in the Brothers Grimm's rewritings (1812), the brave hunter kills the wolf and rescues Little Red Riding Hood. In a more recent version, Little Red Riding Hood cuts through the big bad wolf's belly with scissors to save herself. Regardless of the story's ending, it is worthy of an in-depth discussion with children in the class. This course uses the pretext of the Little Red Riding Hood story and focuses on the design of the TiR section:

Pretext: Once upon a time, there was a little girl whom everyone loved; she liked to wear a red velvet hat that her grandmother had given her, so everyone called her Little Red Riding Hood. One day, her mother asked her to deliver medicine to her grandmother, who lived in the forest. She did not leave the road, or go too far. However, she met a wolf on the way to her grandmother's house...

Task 1: Context. 'Once upon a time, there was a little girl whom everyone loved.' Question: What kind of child does everyone like when they meet? Encourage them to connect with life and start answering. This little girl is about the same age as you (the students). She likes to wear a red velvet hat that her grandmother gave her, so everyone calls her Little Red Riding Hood. Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother lives in the forest. Three roads lead from Little Red Riding Hood's home to the forest. (The facilitator picks up his pen while talking and traces the paths on the paper that has been collectively drawn.) One big road and two curved paths.

Here, the introduction part of the story has been completed. Through questions, drawings, etc., children are helped to understand the basic background of the story and enter the situation "safely" under the protection of dramatic language.

Task 2: Teacher-in-Role. The facilitator becomes Little Red Riding Hood's mother, and a participant plays Little Red Riding Hood. Little Red Riding Hood's mother tells Little Red Riding Hood that her grandmother is sick, but that she (the mother) has urgent work to do and cannot leave the house. The mother decides to let Little Red Riding Hood travel through the forest alone to deliver medicine to her grandmother and tells her not to leave the road or go too far. Little Red Riding Hood agrees.

Task 3: Teacher out of role. The teacher helps the participants to reflect on the fragment played out just now, focusing on discussing what someone would pay attention to when going to the forest alone. Why does the mother tell Little Red Riding Hood not to leave the road? What is security? What is the danger? Why does the grandmother live alone in the deep forest? Since the forest is so dangerous, why does the mother let Little Red Riding Hood go alone? The teacher should encourage students to discuss Little Red Riding Hood's best strategy for delivering medicine to her grandmother and returning home safely.

Task 4: Teacher-in-Role. TiR becomes a wolf, and lures Little Red Riding Hood to tell him the address of her grandmother's house. He tells Little Red Riding Hood that her route to her grandmother's house is wrong, and tells her to go another way. At this point, Little Red Riding Hood needs to improvise.

The improvisational part here is an answer the participants gave about their past experiences. Push the virtual questions in fairy tales to them as if they were real ones. In this way, students can acquire knowledge through the whole process of participating and experiencing fairy tales. At this point, the 'living through' drama has been completed.

Task 5: Teacher out of role, collective reflection. A discussion ensues, based on Little Red Riding Hood's behaviour and answers. If Little Red Riding Hood chooses to believe the wolf, the group should discuss why Little Red Riding Hood does not know about wolves. The 'wolf' is a very typical symbolic character that can be connected to students' real lives, for example in 'strange strangers' or "uneasy social elements"... If the students encountered these people in real life, how could they protect themselves? Of course, if Little Red Riding Hood did not listen to the wolf and dealt with his deception in a clever way, the group can explore and expand on the qualities of Little Red Riding Hood's character.

9. Discussion

When growing up, human beings repeat and change their own story, using different types of language, to reflect what they say about themselves. This kind of narration is a result of the way that humans think and the influence of language on thinking (Vygotsky, 1931). This understanding of human experience and identity as a 'story' is not a romantic metaphor but a conclusion based on different interpretations of thinking, language, culture, education, anthropology and psychology. Drama opens up precisely this space for self-expression and the need for self-expression. The classic fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood" has been passed on from generation to generation. People tend to regard Little Red Riding Hood as a naive child who is easy to deceive. In the DiE "Little Red Riding Hood" class, the facilitator bears safety education in mind based on the different age groups of the participants, whether in early childhood or the adult world. The facilitator can still use "Little Red Riding Hood" as an example when carrying out safety education for college freshmen, effectively linking the virtual story scenes with real-life situations and reminding participants of social focus incidents such as 'female college students accidentally disappearing and being victimised'. Female college students also face unknown dangers, just like Little Red Riding Hood. When they encounter bad drivers, rapists, and social unrest – the 'wolves' of their own stories – how will they solve their problems and escape from danger? Heathcote (1984) explained that drama teachers should 'find a moment, use the experience of participants to push them to challenge their actions and decisions, and then lead to a credible result that will satisfy them. In children's growth education, adults often emphasise the dangers of social reality to children but fail to explain how to solve and deal with these dangers. In the DiE classroom, the facilitator leads the participants into the scene to face and solve the problems of exploring the forest path. Thus, through TiR dramatic strategy, a learning area is opened up in fairy tales, allowing children to think imaginatively about themselves and the society in which they live and to complete the experience of living through drama.

10. Conclusion

This paper explains the concept and usage of Teacher-in-Role through the application cases of Site in the fairy tale courses in Bondian drama and the cases designed by the author. TiR does not need to perform like an actor, but what a teacher needs to know in which role to play and what attitude this role exists. Entering the role is for the character to 'living through' the drama' and put this virtual question before it as a real question, so that the students can acquire knowledge through full participation in and experience of these tales.

With fairy tales and TiR, one provides a model for human experience, while the other meets the needs of human experience by living through drama. Education is a social process, DiE is a form of social life, and fairy tales provide a social life sample. This kind of sample content is classic, covering almost all the experiences and dilemmas in human development. It is a reflection and clarification of social experience. The combination of the two provides students with more "safer" thinking and expression.

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