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The Impact of Drama Pedagogy on Student Achievement, Attitude, and Empathy: An Action Research Study

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THE IMPACT OF DRAMA PEDAGOGY ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, ATTITUDE,
AND EMPATHY: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

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DEDICATION

Ophelia says in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "We know what we are, but not what we may be." I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Loretta M. Barkell, who taught me strength and passion and confidence to know who I am, but never to be afraid to explore what I may be. I am who I am because of you.

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ABSTRACT

This action research study evaluated a problem of practice which emerged from the apathy and passive responses of students to reading classic literature in the high school English classroom. Teachers instructed while students received information with little investment on their part. The purpose of this study was to determine how to help students read closer and develop a deeper comprehension and appreciation of literature while expanding capabilities within the affective domain.

Through a convergent mixed methods action research design, the study addressed three research questions that explored how drama pedagogy affected student comprehension, their attitudes toward reading classic literature, and their perceptions of their empathy toward others. Qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments of pretest and posttest assessments, Likert scales, and reflective journals were used to assess comprehension, attitudes, and perceptions of empathy related to the use of drama pedagogy.

The study revealed that drama pedagogy strategies did increase comprehension and improved students' attitudes about studying Shakespeare's work *Othello*. The study also revealed that the use of drama pedagogy was the impetus for more open classroom discussions. The findings and supporting themes suggest implications for professional development at the school, district, and state level that helps teachers develop and practice drama pedagogy strategies within the classroom. Future research will determine if the drama pedagogy approach to teach literature is effective on other genres of

literature such as prose and poetry and with all levels of students.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Due to the difficulty of reading and analyzing texts with complex vocabulary and themes at the secondary level, students are often disinterested with classic literature (Larson & Marsh, 2005). This negative experience taints future experiences and rather than looking at how the literature is taught, students believe they are at fault or believe they do not possess the skills to read the challenging and complex works of literature (Dewey, 1938). Dewey (1938) stated that students believed they were wholly responsible if they did not achieve in a traditional school setting and eventually developed a dislike for the subject. A student's dislike of a subject may not be the actual subject matter, but rather the method in which it is taught or delivered by the teacher (Dewey, 1938).

Each reading experience should prepare a student for subsequent reading experiences that are deeper and of a more complex level (Dewey, 1938). All experiences with a text should provide an opportunity for students to practice a skill set that builds on learning for a new text. For example, the difficult task of reading classic literature helps students prepare to read something more complex in the future; the complex text forces students to practice strategies to read context clues, navigate a difficult passage, or contemplate the ramifications of a social issue. However, not all students have the ability or the desire independently to conquer a difficult text. Many students have struggled with reading for most of their school careers and oftentimes secondary teachers are

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unsure how to help them (Ranzau, 2016). One approach to help struggling or unmotivated students be engaged in and comprehend the language of classic literature is through drama pedagogy. Not just a tool for elementary classrooms, drama pedagogy can transform how students receive, interpret, and appreciate literature as well as help students build empathy, practice sensitivity, and raise social awareness of current issues (Ranzau, 2016). The use of dramatic pedagogy as a means of deepening students' comprehension of classic literature, increasing engagement, and raising social awareness to increase sensitivity and empathy is the subject of this proposed action research study.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this action research study was based on John Dewey's and Jean Piaget's theories that are encompassed in today's model termed constructivism. While their theories differ, the main concepts of building knowledge from experience and authentic learning are present in both theories. The five basic principles of the constructivist theory state that:

- learning is an active process of "meaning-making gained from experiences and interactions" (Miller-First & Ballard, 2017, p. 25),

- learning occurs when students are involved in "cognitive conflict through planned problem-solving" (Miller-First & Ballard, 2017, p. 26),

- learning is social and collaborative,

- learning has an embedded assessment and reflection aspect, and lastly,

- learners take responsibility for their learning (Miller-First & Ballard, 2017).

These five principles shape classroom practices that is common in inquiry studies, problem-based learning, and drama pedagogy. Drama pedagogy is built from the theory of constructivism; drama is an active process that constructs ideas, beliefs, and meaningful interactions through the language-rich area of English Language Arts (Smith & Herring, 2001). Drama as a learning process minimizes passive learning and creates a student-centered classroom (Smith & Herring, 2001), which is commonly found in constructivist learning environments.

Constructivism and active learning. Dewey (1938) rejected the belief that education should include memorization and repetition; he believed students should have complex real-world experiences and discover new learning through inquiry. Dewey proposed that students learned better by actively doing rather than listening and comprehension could be proven through action (Dewey, 1938). He believed that reading through dramatization helped students see the literature as a whole, not just the recognition of words, which helped reading be less superficial and secured attention that was free from self-conscious thoughts (Dewey, 1938). New knowledge would then be acquired through active involvement in learning and the acquisition of knowledge would be demonstrated through creativity and collaboration, not competition (Jonassen, 1994). Dewey focused on interventions between students and their emotional, sensory, and intellectual environments woven together (Dewey, 1934). He addressed how students bring artistic experiences, especially those of verbal-linguistic media, in their "meaning-making" (Blom, 2017, p. 47) and in order for a student to make meaning with new information, the emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual, similar to that found in drama pedagogy, must work together and communicate (Dewey, 1934).

Piaget's theory was a framework for how students completed tasks and their thinking about those tasks throughout different levels of cognitive development (Ackermann, 2001). Ackermann (2001) stated that the implications of Piaget's theory in the classroom is that "teaching is always indirect" and knowledge, as Dewey (1934) stated, comes from experience and is constructed in the mind of the learner. To Piaget, learning should be active and authentic.

Drama pedagogy. Dewey's beliefs that students should be actively engaged in learning and their interests should purposefully be incorporated in the creation of curriculum directly connects to Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert (1995) approach. In *Drama for Learning,* Heathcote and Bolton (1995) described the Mantle of the Expert approach to teaching as one that uses the experiences of students incorporated with drama to teach literature (Bolton & Heathcote, 1995). Through drama pedagogy students not only experienced the close-reading of literature, but also saw the words enacted; students could then construct knowledge from the drama experiences and make connections to the literature accessible and believable. Students have the ability to visualize text, relate the text to themselves and their world, ask questions, and make statements of understanding with greater accuracy. With these "enactments" (Wilhelm, 2002, p. 9) reading becomes transformative and provides students with an experience to see the world in a new way.

Problem of Practice

The Problem of Practice (PoP) for this proposed DiP stemmed from multiple conversations, observations, and experiences of teachers and administrators at the research site, Pseudonym High School (pseudonym), in a suburban southern school

district. The school district has 22 schools, 17,191 students, and 1,305 teachers. There are four high schools and one center for technical studies; three of the high schools are zoned and one is a school of choice. The high school in this study is zoned and its students often attend classes at the center for technical studies. All high and middle schools are 1:1 with technology.

At the research site, teachers noticed a lack of engagement and underachievement from students and sought to determine the cause. Through conversations, teachers wondered about the nature of reading as taught in their secondary classrooms, as well as a recent shift in curriculum, and an increase in the integration of more technology may have contributed to students' lack of engagement. Students were less active in their learning, less social in face-to-face situations, and more social through technology, which led to a lack of empathy toward others and less interest in traditional English curricula. The teacher-researcher developed this proposed study to determine how to prevent or combat the behavior with changes in teacher pedagogy.

Often a sedentary and cloistered activity, the reading of classic literature in English 2 was challenging and students were, as a result, often disengaged while reading. Required reading frequently was completed in isolation by the student at home, if completed at all, and followed by a teacher-led discussion in class about the deeper meaning of the literature. During whole class discussions in the English 2 classroom, the teacher-researcher observed few students contribute while the majority of the students compliantly and passively received the interpretation of the literature and regurgitated it on a summative assessment, showing little true understanding of the text or reflection and without an emotional or intellectual connection to the words on the page. Students were

either not willing or unable to verbalize any connections they had made to the text. Many students struggled to independently interpret the style of language the author used and also lacked the skills required to translate the vocabulary and structure of the language into one they could understand. In addition, students often felt disconnected from characters who were not living in the present time period or in a life similar to their own. Due to these difficulties, students often struggled to reach the level of comprehension required to be deemed successful on classroom assessments.

Integration of technology. Technology has begun to transform the classroom at the research site during the last five years. The research site was a 1:1 school and every student had a Chromebook issued by the school district for school-related assignments. However, the use of technology made the more traditional methods of teaching less engaging for students. Students preferred lessons with animation, sound, and action similar to that found in Web tools and online lessons. Students begged to watch the film related to the literature and often turned to online summaries of texts such as SparkNotes and Shmoop rather than reading the original novel or play. Technology made students' lives easier and fast-paced; patience for a lengthy play or novel became limited and as a result, reading from a novel and textbook became less engaging and more challenging. Students needed a new strategy to read classic literature to maintain interest and engagement.

Content in the ELA classroom. The research site in this study ten years ago experienced a shift in course requirements in the English department. The district office personnel determined that students, if they felt prepared, could take English 1 in the eighth grade in order to earn credit for high school courses and to add more in-depth and

challenging content to the eighth grade English Language Arts curriculum (R. Cox, personal communication, February 9, 2017). This decision had a ripple effect at the high school level; prior to this policy students who were in English 2 were 15 and 16 years old and in their second year of high school. Currently, the majority of students in English 2 are ninth graders, 14-15 years old, and in a combined class of both sophomores and freshmen. All of these factors affected the way in which English 2 was taught.

The curriculum for English 2 had not changed although some works of literature, even though the students have taken English 1, were difficult in both context and content. In addition, the transition to high school affected student achievement. According to the statistics provided from the high school data collection and the journal *Education*, ninth graders had the lowest grade point average, the most missed classes, the majority of failing grades, and more misbehavior referrals than any other high school grade level (2013, para 2). This information increased the need for teachers to make the ninth-grade curriculum more meaningful and accessible to students as well as to find ways to increase engagement in the content.

The adjustment for teachers in the English department was to determine the best methods to teach ninth grade students taking an English 2 course that was created and mapped out for 10th grade students while meeting the English 2 English Language Arts state standards. Teachers had to take into consideration the attention span, writing ability, and maturity of a ninth-grade student compared to that of one in 10th grade when determining how to select and integrate texts into the curriculum (Wong, Wiest, & Cusick, 2002).

Population shift. In addition to the curriculum shift, the population of the secondary school presented in this study in recent years shifted to a more diverse population. The school in this study housed the STEM magnet program for the district and its diversity was different from the general school population. The STEM magnet cohort during the 2018-2019 school year was composed of 206 students: 71% students as white, 18% Asian, 9% African American, and 2% Hispanic. The majority of the students were raised in a community that was predominantly white and Christian and partially due to their community and to their age, some of the students exhibited behaviors of insensitivity to those who were unlike them. While the behaviors of a few students did not define the beliefs of all, the teacher-researcher incorporated a culturally relevant approach to literature to guarantee a more personalized experience with all races, genders, and religious beliefs.

The teachers in the program noticed a lack of empathy for the religious beliefs and heritages of others as well as had overheard comments regarding which race was the most intelligent and which race was less intelligent. This competitiveness also permeated gender roles. The STEM magnet program was an honors magnet program and acceptance was based upon test scores, grades, and teacher recommendations. All of the students were identified as gifted and the majority of their courses were comprised of honors and Advanced Placement courses. While the STEM community was equally balanced in gender, to many of the students, females were statistically not the dominant gender in the fields of math and science; therefore, females should not dominate the conversation or earn the highest grades. At times an intolerance and lack of empathy for those different from themselves was heard in the discussions within the class has

regarding gender as well as racial issues. While few of the students made derogatory statements aloud in the classroom directly about their peers and never made comments to the teachers, the opinions were overheard in small group conversations and, the teacher-researcher found, in the students' reactions to the characters and plot development in the literature the classes read.

Due to these changes within the school, many conversations evolved regarding creating and planning a more active approach to teaching literature to include a focus on not only cognitive but also affective domains. Drama pedagogy was a timely and necessary inclusion within that conversation. The teachers in the English department hoped that an attempt to use new approaches such as drama pedagogy to teach literature would help rejuvenate an interest in reading, reach struggling learners, and make reading a transformative experience (Wilhelm, 2002). The teacher-researcher in this proposed study researched what ways the skills and strategies presented through drama pedagogy would most influence student achievement such as the comprehension of language when reading classic literature.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the present action research study was to determine if the use of the active methodology of drama pedagogy improved the comprehension of language in classic literature, impacted the attitude toward the study of classic literature, and affected students' perceptions of their empathy toward peers' race, gender, and religious views with English 2 students enrolled at Pseudonym High School (pseudonym) in accordance with the identified Problem of Practice (PoP) for this Dissertation in Practice (DiP).

Significance of the Study

The proposed action research study had the potential to affect the teaching practices of teachers at the research site and the experiences in the classroom of the student-participants. Drama pedagogy is a strategy for teachers to help students become more physically active in their learning and connect with the characters who could appear to be flat figures on a page. This study examined what possible strategies teachers could use to engage students and help them become active learners. In addition, the study determined if the use of drama pedagogy in the study of literature improved students' attitudes toward classic literature and increased students' perceptions of their empathy.

Based upon the results of this study, it was felt that students at all levels and grades could benefit from the use of drama pedagogy. Through this method of teaching, students could control and "negotiate their own learning, build subtexts, and connect contexts between the fictional world and the real world" (Ranzau, 2016, p. 43). It was felt that a valuable positive effect to teaching literature using drama pedagogy would help students find an independence in and love for reading. From the use of drama pedagogy students could discover for themselves what to look for in a text (Ranzau, 2016).

As a part of the plan for drama pedagogy students would interact with one another and learn the characters in a work of literature well enough to "become them" in the classroom; through that experience the class could address social issues such as gender, religion, and race. The literature would provide a venue for discussion and an opportunity for students to experience how people who are different from them feel in situations that could be similar to their own, or entirely different. Through the method of drama pedagogy, teachers wanted to help students build empathy toward others and

created a community of learners who listen, understand, and hopefully, respect one another.

In order for students to comprehend language, connect with literature, and have an engaged role in their own learning, they needed a classroom that provided an active approach to learning literature and practicing language as well as connected to their world and what was important to them. When the grades were averaged and the last class bell rang, most English teachers wanted their students to love reading as well as language; they wished for their students to form greater connections to and understanding of the characters, to possess greater empathy, and the ability to discuss current social issues such as race and gender as a result of reading literature. Drama pedagogy has the capacity to meet the needs of all students in the classroom and increase not only comprehension of language but also empathy toward others.

Research Questions

The teacher-researcher posed the following research questions to guide the conceptual and methodological aspects of this convergent mixed methods action research study:

1. *What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the comprehension of language of ninth grade students in the study of classic literature?*

2. *What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the attitude of ninth grade students in the study of classic literature?*

3. *What are ninth grade students' perceptions of how drama pedagogy affects their empathy toward peers' racial, gendered, and religious views in the study of classic literature?*

Research Design

Action research seeks to discover solutions to problems (Mertler, 2017). It is cyclical and iterative in nature and lends itself to classroom research as the teacher will be regularly reflecting on her practice and adjusting as needed. Since action research is used for the purpose of reflecting on and improving one's practice, it is the best choice for this research study (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Mertler, 2017).

The teacher-researcher chose action research for this convergent mixed-methods tudy because she wanted to collect all of the data at the same time as students at this age mature and change quickly in both ability and opinion. The reading of one work affects another. The study was completed convergently to pinpoint simultaneously the ability level and the attitude of the students at the time of the intervention. Emphasis was placed on quantitative data (scores from a pre- and post- test and an attitude scale) but qualitative data was also used to "help support, explain, or elaborate on the quantitative results" (Mertler, 2017, p. 125). The teacher-researcher used student reflective journals to gather qualitative data but also used field notes and interviews to augment and clarify feedback found in the journals. Mixed-methods and action research combined the perspectives of an insider and outsider; this was appropriate for this study as the teacher will shift roles from teacher to observer.

The research site. The site was a suburban high school, grades 9-12, with a population of 1,773 students. The racial demographic of the school was 55% white, 35% African American, 4% Asian, 3% multiracial, and 3% Hispanic. Thirty-two percent of students were in poverty (TANF, Medicaid, SNAP, foster child or homeless). Approximately 70% of the students participated in Advanced Placement

courses and 42.7% were identified as gifted (State Department of Education "2018 Report Cards"). The entire STEM program in which this study was conducted during the 2018-2019 school year was composed of 206 students: 71% students as white, 18% Asian, 9% African American, and 2% Hispanic.

Description of the participants. The 39 student participants were in the ninth grade (14-15 years old) and enrolled in honors English 2. The ninth graders were students in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) magnet program at Pseudonym High School acceptance was based upon scores on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test which was taken in the winter of their eighth-grade year as well as grades in eighth grade courses, and teacher recommendations. Since this was a STEM class, many of these students saw the study of literature and general English class as secondary to their interests in the STEM fields.

Intervention

The teacher-researcher taught a unit of seven 90-minute class periods on Shakespeare's *Othello* to two different classes of English 2 students. She taught the intervention class using drama pedagogy methods and the control class using traditional teaching methods. Both classes took a 10-question multiple choice pre- and posttest. The teacher-researcher asked students to complete an attitude scale (in the form of a Likert scale) regarding their attitude toward classic literature prior to the intervention and at the end of the intervention. Students also wrote three reflective journals at key points in the intervention about their experiences with drama pedagogy and their perceptions of their empathy toward their peers as a result of reading the literature. The teacher-

researcher planned all lessons, conducted all interviews, taught all lessons, and completed all grading and coding of the assessments.

Data collection methods and instruments. To examine the intervention of drama pedagogy, two different sections of the same course were used. Each group was taught the same classic text, Shakespeare's *Othello*, and both groups completed the same data collection instruments of the pre- and posttest (Appendix D), attitude scale (Appendix B), and reflective journal (Appendix C); however, one class was taught using drama pedagogy and the other class was taught with a traditional seat-based whole class lecture method.

Data Analysis

This convergent mixed methods action research study resulted in data that was both quantitative and qualitative. Descriptive statistics were used to determine whether the findings occurred by chance or were the result of the intervention. The results of the paired *t*-tests, descriptive statistics, and the patterns in the qualitative data were analyzed.

Analysis of pre- and posttest. To analyze the quantitative results of the pretest and posttest given, the teacher-researcher used a paired *t*-test to determine if a statistical significance between the student-participants' pre- and post- test scores existed. The teacher-researcher used the paired *t*-test to determine if the p-value was less than or equal to the predetermined alpha level of .05. The difference between the mean and standard deviation of the scores proved if there was some gain as individuals and as a class due to the intervention of drama pedagogy.

Analysis of the attitude scale. The qualitative data was analyzed to determine if there were themes, trends, or patterns that emerged. The frequency of responses on the

attitude scale was analyzed to determine if students experienced an increase in confidence in understanding and connecting to the language of Shakespeare. The attitude scale was given prior to any lessons regarding Shakespeare and at the end of the study. Since the attitude scale was given twice, it helped to determine if students shifted their preference of reading with others, performing the play, or reading alone.

Analysis of the reflective journal. The reflective journals and field notes were used during the collection of data to inform the teacher-researcher of thoughts or behaviors the teacher had not covered in the attitude scale. Since the journals were open responses, the students had the freedom to express themselves in their own voices; they were able to say what they wished and how with no regard to grammar or spelling as to encourage openness and authenticity. For the reflective journal, students were not controlled by set choices and were asked to reflect on certain aspects of the lesson.

Analysis of field notes. The field notes were collected while students performed and collaborated and were not aware of being observed; students were more honest and the behaviors organic. In addition, to focus on the affective domain and to provide additional qualitative data both prior to the performance and after the performance, the teacher-researcher collected students' responses to the reflective journals at three key points in the intervention about their levels of empathy and compassion for the character in the scene, their connection to the character, as well as their understanding of the social issues such as gender and race presented in the scene.

Ethical Considerations

When conducting action research, the teacher-researcher must first consider the ethics of good teaching (Dana & Yendol-Hoppy, 2014). Once a teacher reflects on those

practices, he/she is able to conduct sound research that is reliable and valid. Teachers must ensure no harm will come to the students involved and that the expectations of regular teaching will not be interrupted or affected.

  Consent. Consent to participate in the proposed study was obtained from the parents and the student-participants prior to implementation. The purpose of the study, the methods of the study, and the planned use of the information and data gathered from the study were provided in the consent letter, which was mailed home to the parents of the student-participants. Parents and student-participants were also be informed of the anonymity of the results when gathered and reported. The letter informed and reassured parents and student-participants that there were no repercussions for a student who did not agree to participate in the study and no benefits for students who choose to participate (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Mertler, 2017).

  The teacher-researcher obtained permission for the action research project from the district office personnel to meet the research guidelines of the school district as well as the appropriate instructions and forms to conduct the research. She composed a letter to parents (see Appendix A) to explain the research and its goals with the Dana & Yendol-Hoppy (2014) and Mertler (2017) templates in mind (see Appendix A). The teacher-researcher regularly completed a "self-interrogation" and "posed ongoing questions that needed to be continually revisited as you teach and inquire into your teaching practice" (Dana & Yendol-Hoppy, 2014, p. 155). Reflection was valuable and played an integral part in completing action research ethically; the teacher-researcher planned for and included a considerable amount of time to reflect upon the process and research participants in order to guarantee successful research.

The teacher-researcher did not anticipate any particular concerns regarding the research, as all of it occurred in her classroom with only her students (all parents granted written permission to participate). The research in the classroom was based upon strategies to teach literature, none of which caused harm or changed the regular pace of classroom instruction. Students could opt out of any of the activities in class; however, none chose to opt out of any activity. The English 2 state standards continued to be taught. No personal information was required and the information students wrote in a reflective journal was voluntary and kept private. As the research began to take shape, the teacher-researcher considered any ethical issues that arose.

Limitations and Delimitations

Predicting student behavior and their prior knowledge was a difficult challenge and could pose a weakness to the study. Students could come to the study knowing the Shakespearean text chosen to use as a cold text. There were extraneous factors in areas such as vocabulary or prior experience with Shakespeare that could have aided or hindered students in the study. Most students read Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as ninth graders; however, some students had teachers who asked students only to watch the film and never read the words on the page. Students also came to the study with preconceived notions about drama pedagogy either from a prior teacher or their involvement in theatre programs. To help the teacher-researcher understand their prior experiences the students wrote the reflective journals and completed the Likert scale with questions regarding prior experience with Shakespeare, drama, and performance. The teacher-researcher addressed these responses in the data.

Another possible weakness was assessing and evaluating a student's perception of his/her empathy. A limitation could be found in their willingness and ability to verbally express such emotions without prompting from the teacher-researcher. Working with teenagers provided other concerns; there were simply certain days and times of year when students were unwilling to participate effectively. As an experienced teacher the teacher-researcher possessed the skills to redirect many behaviors in the classroom, but human nature supersedes any measures she took to motivate teenagers on a pep rally Friday or rainy February morning. She carefully chose the timing of the study by having flexibility in the collection of the data.

Summary

The proposed action research study aimed to determine if drama pedagogy could improve comprehension, increase empathy, and shift students' attitudes toward classic literature at the secondary level in the English Language Arts classroom. The following chapters present required information for the action research study. Chapter Two is a comprehensive literature review that synthesizes the research on drama pedagogy and its effects on students both on the academic and the personal level. The value of active learning is described in conjunction with the importance of close reading skills for all readers, including those who are English language learners. The practice of drama pedagogy is discussed in connection to the reading of Shakespeare and to the affective domain. Chapter Three reviews the methodology used in the research study. Chapter Four discusses and analyzes the data. Chapter Five describes future plans as a result of the findings of the study.

Glossary of Key Terms

Active learning. Instructional methods other than lecture that require students to be engaged more than watching, listening, or copying notes and requires students to think about what they are doing (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Fedler & Brent, 2009; Prince, 2004).

Drama pedagogy. "A collection of drama-based teaching and learning strategies to engage students with the content they are learning" (Lee, Patall, Cawthorn, & Steingut, 2014).

Empathy. "The ability to understand and appreciate another person's feelings, experience, etc." (Empathy, 2016).

Self-esteem. "Appreciating one's own worth and importance and having the character to be accountable for oneself and to act responsibly toward others" (California State Department of Education, 1990, p. 1)

Social awareness. "Being aware of the problems that different societies and communities face on a day-to-day basis and to be conscious of the difficulties and hardships of society" (Social awareness, 2013).

Traditional instruction. A teacher-centered approach to teaching when students receive information passively (Huson, 2018).

Theater of the Oppressed. "A system of physical exercises, aesthetic games, image techniques and special improvisations whose goal is to safeguard, develop and reshape this human vocation, by turning the practice of theater into an effective tool for the comprehension of social and personal problems and the search for their solutions" (Boal, 1979, p. 14).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a traditional classroom, our students mostly receive new information through lectures. In settings such as this, students become passive learners who rarely have to synthesize new information (Thomas & Garcia, 2012). In the English Language Arts classroom, students read along with the teacher and may contribute to discussions, but frequently wait for the correct answer from the authority in the classroom, the teacher. Since literacy practices at the secondary level are generally private because students read to themselves on their own time, teachers are often unaware of what a student has learned (Smith & Wilhelm, 2006). As a result, the students simply regurgitate the information on an assessment with no ownership and quickly forget the lesson. Lessons are not meaningful and therefore are forgettable. The ability to scaffold and build skills such as the study of vocabulary and analysis and synthesis of literature is lacking. Subsequently, students struggle to independently analyze complex literature or make connections to the literature they are reading; comprehension decreases while frustration levels increase (Smith & Wilhelm, 2006).

With an influx of technology due to initiatives that provide each student with a laptop and therefore an impressive amount of television, social media, and today's movie options at students' fingertips, our students more than ever need a student-centered, active, and engaging approach to learning and retaining new information that requires complex problem solving, analysis, and synthesis. Students are mindlessly fed

information without the ability or opportunity to construct their own opinions or knowledge. As a result of our students' lifestyles and a need for active teaching strategies, teachers have developed many different methods to teach and engage students such as cooperative learning, problem and project based learning, and collaborative learning (Prince, 2004; Prince & Felder, 2007). Teachers search for learning that is social through lessons that include discussion, negotiation, and shared activities (Smith & Wilhelm, 2006). Another meaningful and substantive way to engage students with an active teaching approach to learning is through drama pedagogy.

Purpose of the Literature Review

Literature reviews are essential in any research as they will support the argument of the writer with a variety of experiences oftentimes not possible to duplicate in the researcher's situation (Machi and McEvoy, 2016). The research provides historical and longitudinal data that helps to focus the research question and possibly eliminate portions of the study that have been duplicated elsewhere.

The strategies used for this literature review began with open searches on ERIC and Education Source about drama pedagogy and performance-based instruction through the University of South Carolina's Thomas Cooper Library online access. These non-specific searches produced a variety of journal articles, reference books, and web pages about the history, method, and approaches of drama pedagogy. The outcomes of the studies concerning the use of drama pedagogy included an increase in reading comprehension by all students, especially English language learners; a sense of confidence in the students; and a newfound appreciation for learning while playing an active role in their own learning.

Influential founder Dorothy Heathcote's (1978) publications and Augusto Boal's (1979) texts were a natural place to start. After reading and reviewing the impetus of the method between the 1970s and 1990s, I studied modern journals which not only showed how drama pedagogy helped struggling readers in the classroom, but also how it connected to the affective side of learning. This in turn led me to additional research on the psychological effects of using drama and performance in the classroom. Further studies also provided evidence of how drama pedagogy helped teachers find innovative ways to approach difficult subjects and discuss social issues such as gender, race, and religious intolerance with students.

While my intent in studying drama pedagogy began with reading comprehension and test scores in mind, I found the study of the emotional ties to drama and how that has changed classrooms to be particularly intriguing and potentially most influential to this research in my particular context. These studies will helped me not only look at the variety of drama pedagogy methods and their effect on reading comprehension, but also how the methods might affect student attitude toward literature and create a community in the classroom that is open to discussion and debate to confront the issues of the modern world through the study of literature.

The purpose of this review of literature is to provide a rationale for the use of drama pedagogy in the secondary English Language Arts classroom. The first section of the chapter begins with an examination of active learning and engagement in student-centered classrooms compared to that of a lecture-based teacher-centered classroom. It will provide a discussion of Dewey's Theory of Experience (1938), Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory, and Bloom's Affective Domain. The third section presents

research regarding drama in the classroom. Included in the section is the history of drama pedagogy and how drama pedagogy supports reading and social issues in the classroom. Lastly, the literature review will discusses strategies to incorporate drama effectively in the classroom.

Active Learning and Engagement

Heathcote (1978) and Boal (1979) promoted an active learning classroom for student engagement and interaction. Active learning, according to Markant (2016), is learning that includes a variety of "instructional techniques that have a physical aspect, require deeper processing, elaboration or explanation of material, planning of learning activities, question asking, metacognitive monitoring, and social collaboration" (p. 142). Active learning classrooms are unlike traditional fixed-seat settings and include pedagogies such as cooperative learning, flipped classrooms, and team-based learning (Chiu & Cheng, 2017). These student-centered classrooms create a physical and emotional community that promotes collaboration and promises increased participation and engagement (Thompson & Turchi, 2016) and helps to engage a student mentally, physically and emotionally (Boggs, Mickel, & Holton, 2007). Research indicates that active learning classrooms support academic performance in that they reduce failure rates (Beichner et al., 2007).

In opposition, lecture-based instruction, often used to save time and efficiently distribute information, allows students to fake their learning only to discover on the assessments that they did not understand the material (Tovani & Moje, 2017). During a lecture, students are fed information without time to process or think about their learning; Medina (2008) determined that adults on average attentively listen for ten minutes before

requiring a break. Class periods and blocks typically range from 45 to 90 minutes, which means students often are not attentively listening for the majority of a class period. Passive learning such as taking notes or listening to a lecture does not require participation from the student (Tovani & Moje, 2017), and students do not construct their own meaning from that type of learning.

Tovani and Moje (2017) studied what students desire in learning new information and they reported that students most requested time to process, collaborate, and think, and to have an opportunity to get feedback about their learning. These behaviors requested by students are found in the active learning classroom and promise to engage students emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively (Tovani & Moje, 2017). Emotional engagement is found in content that is relatable or connected to the student personally or addresses a social justice issue, such as race or gender. Cognitive engagement is discovered when students realize their learning matters beyond the classroom and is tied to a bigger event; lastly, behavioral and emotional engagement occurs in strategies such as problem-based learning and drama pedagogy (Tovani & Moje, 2017).

Hyun, Ediger, and Lee's (2017) study of active learning in classrooms found that students' satisfaction with active learning classroom structure and group learning situations was higher than that of experiences in traditional classrooms. The rigid atmosphere of traditional classrooms was eliminated with a shift to an active learning focus that included opportunities such as group-based activities, in-class activities, and instructor consultations (Hyun, Ediger, & Lee, 2017). Students ranked their satisfaction with their learning and the findings proved that students reflected on learning positively when involved in active learning pedagogical activities. Faculty shared with the authors

that creating active learning lessons required more class preparation (Hyun, Ediger & Lee, 2017) as they help students act as facilitators rather than listening to lectures. And as a result students were more responsible for their learning (Hyun, Ediger, & Lee, 2017). Day and Wong (2009) noted in their study that students were less motivated when they were taught using a lecture-based approach and more engaged and interested in a problem-based learning group; the problem-based learning group demonstrated improvement in comprehension and application particularly over the course of the time the class spent together that year and in other projects the teacher engaged students in completing.

Yew, Dawood, Narayansany, Palaniappa, Jen, and Hoay (2016) reported in their study of active learning approaches to learning that how students responded in the classroom was greatly affected by the pedagogical choices the teacher made. This reinforces the theory that the teacher's decisions can limit, or help to develop, and encourage a student's learning (Hickcox, 2002; McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006). The ability to be aware of how students learn, how to track that learning and cognitive growth, and how to design lessons to address the desired learning outcomes has become almost as important as the lesson taught (Biggs, Kember, & Leung, 2001).

These findings are also consistent with Ambruster, Patel, Johnson and Weiss' (2009) study showing that in student-centered learning classrooms students' attitudes about learning improved. Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998) argued the use of progressive curriculum theories bring student and teacher experiences alive in the classroom. As a result, students leave the passive roles they play at school and learn to engage with the content of the course. When students are taught with an active learning approach and

have more control over their learning, they are more responsible for their learning (Hyun, Ediger, & Lee, 2017) and the approach can lead to improvements in various forms of memory (Markant, 2016). In conjunction with the results of the multiple studies on active learning, Yew et al. (2016) also stated that teachers need to learn to create opportunities for students to experience deep learning. Consistently the above researchers have provided empirical evidence that active learning communities result in positive effects on student comprehension.

Vygotsky and Dewey. Vygotsky's (1978) claim that there is a relationship between physical action, intellect, and affect in social and cultural contexts (Franks, Thomson, Hall, & Jones, 2014) connects to the research that supports an active learning classroom. Learning occurs when people use language and participate in life in an active and social way; we learn through doing (Vygotsky, 1978). Thompson and Turchi (2016) state that the teacher's role, as Vygotsky (1978) suggests, is that of an expert who gives students the social context to connect their new learning to prior knowledge and learning experiences so they create new content. Language, thinking, and feeling are all connected in dynamic learning experiences. Similar to Dewey's (1938) theories, purposeful learning with experience and social interaction is essential in the active learning classroom.

The affective domain: confidence, self-esteem, and empathy. Bloom's (1956) three domains, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, affect the way students learn. The cognitive domain is most frequently thought of when creating curriculum, identifying standards, and studying data; the affective domain addresses the manner in which students receive, respond to, and approach things emotionally (Bloom, 1956). The

affective domain categorizes what makes students aware of new information and what makes them care about what they value and respond to, as well as key behaviors in gathering and retaining new information (Bloom, 1956).

While the cognitive domain and quantitative data results are what many district officials, school administrators, and educators focus on while creating curriculum and planning instruction, the affective domain is equally as important and critical to include in a student-centered classroom (Dunn & Stinson, 2012). Dunn and Stinson (2012) found that teachers need to find a link between classroom experience, personal experience, and emotion in order for students to find meaning in their work. In learning experiences where no emotion is connected, very little is remembered (Dunn & Stinson, 2012); however, when lessons are planned with the affective domain in mind, students have more meaningful experiences. Often advanced and gifted students are weighed down with background information, literary terms, and guided reading questions (Laba, 2007) that are required by testing organizations and advanced courses. Laba (2007) believes that a teacher's focus on an end of course test or advanced placement exam can sometimes hinder students from seeing the connections of the literature to themselves, which makes the literature lifeless and boring. Teachers are focused on analysis; they forget or cannot find time to include the personal aspects of literature. Contrary to the practice of having advanced students read in isolation and with no supportive strategies to understand the reading, Laba (2007) states that reading aloud, coupled with movement, aides students in discovering and clarifying themes in writing.

The inclusion of active learning approaches such as those found in drama pedagogy helps tap into the affective domain. According to Dunn and Stinson (2012),

the "dynamic interplay between emotion and intellect is at the heart of quality arts education" (p. 217). Hwang and Chang (2016) found in their study that students whose teachers incorporated and promoted the affective domain in learning helped lessen the cognitive load of participants resulting in a more positive experience with learning. This emotional link is often found in active approaches to learning and one that drama-based strategies fulfills. The affective domain quality of the dramatic strategies helped students understand the plot and connect to the characters in a unique way.

Drama in the English Language Arts Classroom

An active learning approach that helps to create a student-centered classroom is the use of drama, performance, and theater-based activities in the English Language Arts classroom. The blending of literature and theater makes language study a collaborative, active learning experience easily accessible to all teachers (Thompson & Turchi, 2016). Drama pedagogy techniques such as role-play, scene study, and performances of partial or entire works behave as a path to close reading and move students from the traditional seat-based fixed desk environment to a community of performers who study characters and discuss issues present in the literature. When drama activities are used in the classroom, students are no longer the spectators in learning but instead engaged with learning and using the opportunity to make learning personal and meaningful (Biggs, 1987). Teachers and students, rather than speeding through a play, focus on scenes and rehearse and review to find multiple meanings, approaches, and solutions similar to that of a rehearsal room in a theater (Thompson & Turchi, 2016).   As a result of this active approach, students develop a close understanding of the text.

Similar to Biggs' (1987) study, Yew et al.'s (2016) study on role-play and drama in the classroom shared that the students became "cognitively and emotionally immersed in the learning context" (p. 55) when they used an active approach to reading. The study described students who did not want conversations and discussions about the reading to end when class ended because they were so engrossed in the learning. Students developed new and different perspectives (Yew et al., 2016) and wanted to further study the topic addressed in class that day. Students returned to class with a renewed interest in learning because the material and approach had actively and emotionally connected the students to the subject matter.

Founders of drama pedagogy methods. Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert is a "dramatic-inquiry based approach to teaching" (Heathcote, 1991). This active learning approach asks students to assume a fictional role, act as experts, and work from a specific point of view to explore while they learn (Heathcote & Herbert, 1985). Students use dramatic imagination to take on social realities. Aitken (2003) stated, "Heathcote has identified 33 different drama conventions that can be utilized to deepen role-taking, so that students can not only walk in the shoes of someone else but might also speak their thoughts, write their words, ask or respond to questions, engage in dialogue with another and so on" (p. 50). Heathcote's system reverses the conventional teacher-student role and allows the students to share responsibility of the work in a classroom, develop ownership, and shift the energy to the student and away from the teacher (Heathcote, 1991). The system creates a student-centered classroom. Teachers and students move out of their usual roles and become participants in conversations about

social issues (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). The students are decision-makers, critical thinkers, and problem solvers when participating in the Mantle of the Expert.

Another system that uses active drama approaches in the classroom is Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (1979). Boal's system of games, techniques, and exercises transforms theater into a tool to discuss and understand social and personal problems. Through participation in the activities of the Theatre of the Oppressed, students search for solutions (Boal, 1979) and in turn, the use of theater evokes change. Boal's belief is that teachers attempt to ask better questions of students through the use of theater rather than providing students with what we think are the right answers (Boal, 1979). Students are required to be independent thinkers in Boal's system.

Both Heathcote (1978) and Boal's (1979) theories regarding drama in the classroom attempt to create a student-centered classroom that allows students to study literature from within and authentically identify with characters, language, and situations. Their theories not only require students to be actively involved in reading literature, but also encourage students to be critical thinkers and problem solvers in a modern world. Through the use of the affective domain, personal connections are made to their learning and an emotional reaction makes learning authentic. These theories enable teachers to reach students in an effective and enjoyable way.

Close reading. Close reading is a means to help students find more than the surface level meaning of a text, which leads to deeper comprehension (Boyles, 2012) and requires the reader to focus on a small amount of text (Thompson & Turchi, 2016). The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) describes close reading as:

Close, analytic reading stresses engaging with a text of sufficient complexity directly and examining meaning thoroughly and methodically, encouraging students to read and reread deliberately. Directing student attention on the text itself empowers students to understand the central ideas and key supporting details. It also enables students to reflect on the meanings of individual words and sentences; the order in which sentences unfold; and the development of ideas over the course of the text, which ultimately leads students to arrive at an understanding of the text as a whole. (PARCC, 2011)

The purpose of close reading is to help the reader move from discovering and deliberating about the small details of the argument to understanding and developing the larger conflict in the text. It can also increase a student's reading proficiency and increases his/her ability to read texts for college and career (PARCC, 2011). Close reading is a tool to help students achieve deeper comprehension and analyze a text with a critical eye. Thompson & Turchi (2016) believe the ability to do this differentiates between those who rely on a teacher to tell them what a text says and those who are willing and able to "grapple, wrestle, and tease out subtle details that matter" (Thompson & Turchi, 2016, p. 15). Teachers want to create independent readers and thinkers and the ability to close read helps get a student to that ideal independent place.

The ability to read closely creates a relationship between the reader and the text but in order to closely read effectively, the skills to read, hear and witness are necessary and ones that a teacher must first model (Thompson & Turchi, 2016); close reading is a skill that needs to be taught and practiced with multiple genres of texts. To read in this manner, one must read a text repeatedly and when given strategies on how to re-read with

meaning, how to read aloud individually, and how to read chorally to find meaning, the student experiences success with comprehension (Thompson & Turchi, 2016). Students who close read effectively are able to articulate why the small details as well as the larger conflict matter. The skill of close reading is made more manageable through dramatic activities and is helpful for all levels of readers, both struggling and advanced.

Close reading and drama. There is a strong connection between drama and reading comprehension (Kelner & Flynn, 2006); drama helps students to develop skills that are a part of the reading process such as contextualizing texts and connecting texts to their own values and emotions (Booth, 1985). Drama pedagogy provides students with a unique opportunity to close reading strategies and explore meaning in texts from an inside perspective because the student takes an active role in the story (Adomat, 2012). Rather than reflecting on a story from the outside, a student can learn from the mind or motives of a character through speaking the character's dialogue or performing the descriptive text of the author. Students see the point of view in a new way and have the opportunity to embody a character when drama-based pedagogy is used. As a result, a student's interpretation of the meaning of the reading goes beyond the literal and from that experience students can move to discuss complex issues connected to the reading (Adomat, 2012).

Kelner and Flynn (2006) suggest a five-step process for integrating reading and drama:

1. State and explain objectives,

2. Provide an acting tool or warm-up,

3. Teach a drama strategy that includes the objectives,

4. Reflect on the drama activity to help students process and understand, and

5. Assess objectives from both the drama and the reading perspective.

Kelner & Flynn (2006) argue that following these steps helps students to think clearly through speaking and listening. The reflection piece provides a metacognitive element to the learning as well as a monitoring opportunity for their own reading comprehension. The metacognition helps students become more aware of how they are reading, which in turn, helps students become more capable readers (Kelner & Flynn, 2006). This is especially true for struggling readers who need reading to be made visible; the concept of making reading visible makes the value of drama even stronger (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). A teacher can make reading visible and help explain the text through role-play and reenactment that is hands-on and provides a chance for a discussion about the reading (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

LoMonico's (2009) study with high school students who participated in performing a scene as a form of close reading produced positive experiences with reading, specifically with Shakespeare. Students commented how feeling the words and using emotions and gestures helped them understand the plot and feel affection for characters (LoMonico, 2009). They also indicated being able to pick up on and identify sarcasm and irony in the text more easily with the performance approach to the reading. One student commented, "When you read it by yourself silently, you're examining Shakespeare from the outside and trying to look in. When you're acting it out, though, you're inside the play, looking out at the world. Then it comes alive" (as quoted in LoMonico, 2009, p. 36). The mental requirements for understanding drama are similar to those for reading (Sun, 2003). In drama a transaction (Rosenblatt, 1978) occurs between

the reader and the text and a student grasps the meaning (Sun, 2003). When a teacher includes drama pedagogy in the teaching of a text, a clarification occurs through the visual decoding, fluency, and metacognitive knowledge (Sun, 2003). The active approach of drama and theater-based activities reaches students in ways that passive traditional seat-based learning cannot. Close reading through the active approach of performance and dramatic activities creates a positive experience with class literature for students and affects their continued studies with complex texts in a positive way (O'Brien, 1985).

Close reading can occur through many theatre-based strategies. One technique to study the literature more closely is through blind casting, conscious casting, and cross-cultural casting and an "explicit exploration of identity" (Thompson & Turchi, 2016). Another is through what Smith & Wilhelm (2006) call "hot seating," in which students take on the role of a character and other students interview the character. These activities not only force students to slow down and read a text repeatedly for close reading, but also promote discussion and give students the opportunity to respond in a personal and purposeful and social way (Smith & Wilhelm, 2006). These activities force students to listen to one another, identify and record patterns and habits, and build on one another's knowledge and experience. Students quickly realize there is more than one teacher in the room and oftentimes, it is this self-awareness that provides a new sense of pride and ownership to learning.

Drama to Discuss Social Issues and Community Concerns

Modern day students need a wide range of skills to process new information as opposed to students who as little as ten years ago grew up in a more static

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community. Students live in an increasingly complex and multicultural world full of technology that provides them access to more information than any generation before. Additionally, students exist under pressures of stress and depression; as a result, many students suffer from low self-esteem, a lack of self-confidence, and an inability to communicate (Warwick, 2012). These symptoms can explain low and non-performance at school and behavioral problems (Warwick, 2012). Students need the skills and ability to communicate and collaborate effectively regardless of differences (Tovani & Moje, 2017; Warwick, 2012).

For teachers, this rapidly, ever-changing and complex world full of social issues and community concerns means difficult discussions that need to take place in order to form a classroom community necessary for student success. According to Thompson and Turchi (2016) the best place to discuss complex issues is through complex texts. The use of drama pedagogy to address social justice and community concerns helps teachers make oppression visible and helps create an environment where students can explore and discuss how to challenge issues (Edmiston, 2012). There is a potential to discuss social justice issues in every classroom with all standards and assigned lessons (Shelton, 2017).

Dramatic activities for exploration. The use of drama in classroom reading creates an opportunity to explore complex and sensitive topics (Boggs, Mickel, & Holton, 2007). A student can become the character in the text and experience his/her life or perform as that character would in new situations. Either way, the student is given a voice that is not his/her own to interpret a situation or conflict; therefore, removing him or herself from the plot and possibly seeing the conflict in a different way (Aitken, 2003). Drama does not bind a student to his/her identity because he or she can see the

experience or issue through the eyes of another person aside from him/herself. A new point of view is provided as well as a non-threatening way to discuss a topic. Students are not bound by "conventions of social behavior" (Aitken, 2003) or by rules of common sense or reality. A character can hear another character's thoughts and behave in a way that is not socially acceptable. The student does not have to share his/her own personal opinion, but can share that of the character. For example, a student can become Huck Finn from Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* or Dickens' Sydney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities* and share a perspective on slavery or the French Revolution that was not accessible prior to the dramatic activities. From that experience students live in the text which will lead to better comprehension and retention (Yew et.al., 2016).

This use of drama provides a level of freedom from reality that traditional methods do not provide; freedom opens up situations to the students and forces them to confront the actions and decisions of a character and use problem-solving skills to create a satisfying outcome (Bolton & Heathcote, 1995). This freedom helps students move into character beyond plot and surface-level analysis and leads to a deeper comprehension. A new complexity is discovered as well as "multiple truths" about literature (Aitken, 2003). The teacher provides an opportunity for the students to draw on prior knowledge and experiences and as a result, students practice both verbal and nonverbal communication (Heathcote, 1975). Prior experiences take on a new dramatic role in the teaching of literature.

Through dramatic activities students can also physically experience a decision-making process, like that of Shakespeare's *Othello*. While reading one of Othello's monologues aloud, students in Thompson and Turchi's (2016) classroom physically

move a 90 degree turn at the end of each sentence to represent Othello's tortured and indecisive mind. The turning can also provide a gateway for a discussion about the phrase "to turn Turk" and what that meant in a Christian and non-Christian sense for Othello (Thompson & Turchi, 2016). Students can also study Othello through the frames of race, color, and religion, adding a social justice experience to the study. The physicalization of Othello's words helps students understand the nuance and meaning of his rhetoric.

Similar to findings by Yew et al's. (2016), DuPont (1989) reports that drama is an effective strategy to discuss social issues because students experience situations similar to those in real life by having to make decisions, debate alternatives, discuss social issues, and develop a dialogue (Tate, 2005). These experiences in the classroom will then extend to their personal lives for problem solving. Edmiston (2012) analyzed the pedagogy of a ninth grade English teacher who taught in a high poverty, inner city classroom. Through her lessons she shared the experiences students had to stop oppressive practices. The teacher stated that the use of dramatic inquiry or performance for anti-oppressive teaching "opens up the possibility for young people to shift among viewpoints by embodying the consciousness of different characters and by participating in dialogue to interpret a dramatized crisis. In doing so, a status-quo oppressive practice may be opened up to exploratory meaning making by the group" (Edmiston, 2012, p. 118). The conversations that were reported in Yew et al. (2016), DuPont (1989), and Edmiston (2012) provide statistics and narrative descriptions to support the use of drama pedagogy in the classroom not only to improve reading comprehension but also to address current social issues.

Teaching Shakespeare with dramatic activities. According to the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature, 84% of American high schools teach *Romeo and Juliet*, 81% teach *Macbeth*, 51% teach *Hamlet,* and 43% teach *Julius Caesar* (Applebee, 1989). In public, Catholic, and independent schools, Shakespeare's works were the top two most commonly taught titles. The Common Core State Standards require only one author, Shakespeare, by name in the teaching of English Language Arts. The English Language Arts standards for grades 11-12 have two standards that include Shakespeare; one in the Craft and Structure strand and one in the Integration of Knowledge and Ideas strand. The standards state:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7

Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.) (Common Core State Standards, 2009).

Shakespeare has been a cornerstone of American curriculum and most students leave high school having read several of his plays. Many teachers comment that Shakespeare is hard to teach and learn and the language is difficult to understand (Folger,

1991) and the plays are tough to bring to a student's level. Students remark their first experience with Shakespeare affects their attitude toward all other works by Shakespeare (O'Brien, 1993). Shakespeare's works are prevalent and widespread; this proves there is a definitive need for teachers to have the appropriate skills to reach students with his plays, although very few pre-service programs specify how to teach Shakespeare (O'Brien, 1992). Teachers also need the training to help students actively learn the language and plays as well as build an appreciation for Shakespeare's works due to the author's prevalence in our society (O'Brien, 1993).

A natural place to test the validity of teaching using drama pedagogy is in the teaching of Shakespeare. Thompson and Turchi (2016) encouraged teachers to facilitate lessons with multiple modes of expression in order to develop skills in reading Shakespeare and other texts. They state that students must read, write, speak and listen in order to gain the ability to analyze complex literature (Thompson & Turchi, 2016).   A student learns Shakespeare by participating and performing the words of Shakespeare (O'Brien, 1993). The close-reading and analysis required to perform a line, scene, act, or play cannot be duplicated with passive approaches to learning a play, such as through written study questions (LoMonico, 2009). Performance requires students to interpret and analyze characters, their motivations, and their relationships (Edmiston & McKibben, 2012) and provides an opportunity to practice close reading. The close reading occurs when students perform and they make connections through performance that could be missed, would normally be ignored, or have been considered too difficult for students. The work for performance is collaborative and provides an opportunity for exploring a text with new and effective strategies to understand Shakespeare. Students

are engaged with the words and work to find meaning through their speaking of the lines (Edmiston & McKibben, 2012).

A student's first experience with Shakespeare affects all other subsequent experiences with the author (O'Brien, 1993). An awareness of this fact about our students' perception of literature should encourage teachers to make the first experience with Shakespeare a positive and enjoyable one that will help scaffold learning for reading a more difficult text. The first teaching of Shakespeare could change and affect a student's high school experience (LoMonico, 2009). If the entire English department helped to unlock Shakespeare with enjoyable, theatre-based experiences, the students will be better at reading, understanding, and performing (LoMonico, 2009). The learning would be scaffolded to become increasingly more difficult and demanding, but after the four years of high school, students would be more adept at not just Shakespeare, but all literature they are required to read (LoMonico, 2009). LoMonico's (2009) students in his study reflected on close reading through performance. The experience of the students was summarized when one student said, "I understood the intricate plot. I discovered the rich nuances of the phrases and began to feel a true affection for the characters. Through my performance, I recognized Shakespeare's masterful use of subtle ironies and sarcastic remarks" (p. 36).

Social Concerns and Curriculum Theory

In a social efficiency ideology of curriculum, the curriculum revolves around arming students with the skills and preparation that will ensure they leave school with the ability to be productive members of society. Therefore, educators are instruments for helping to develop a future society (Shiro, 2013). In a social reconstruction ideology

educators teach curriculum through a social lens and they are also agents of change to combat racism, poverty, illiteracy, and many other issues that will help prevent society from destroying itself (Shiro, 2013). Both of these ideologies encourage skills taught in the classroom that can transfer to the real world; the use of dramatic activities can help students learn to navigate social issues and broach difficult conversations in their own lives. As our world changes and social issues become more prevalent in daily thought, a student's ability to empathize with those who are not like him/her is even more important (Thomas & Garcia, 2012).

Constructivists believe that learning is an active process in which the learner constructs meaning for him or herself (Schiro, 2013) and is one in which students are provided the freedom to create diverse meaning and their own understandings (Dupont, 1992; Gullatt, 2008). The teaching in a constructivist classroom usually includes inquiry and group work; the learning in a constructivist classroom is open-ended and in the hands of the learners, not the teacher (Wilhelm, Baker, & Dube, 2001). Wilhelm, Baker, and Dube (2001) argue that constructivist teachers are those who are aware of their purpose, research their classroom, and revise their plans after feedback is solicited from the students. This classroom experience for students means that learning is more meaningful and memorable and in turn, students are more successful and possess a feeling of greater satisfaction with their learning. This student-centered learning theory supports the motivation behind using an active teaching strategy such as drama pedagogy. Drama-based classrooms are considered constructivist learning communities because through the theater-based activities and dramatic strategies, students discover new information and as a result can express themselves creatively and with imagination (Eisner, 1992).

Dramatic strategies for conversations about social issues. Complex social justice issues can be addressed through dramatic activities such as tableaux and role-play. The drama acts as an impetus for discussion and while students cognitively approach learning literature, they also emotionally connect to literature. Downey's (2005) study of the use of drama pedagogy to address social justice with middle school students provided evidence that drama can offer a balance between feeling and learning, but also challenged students and pushed them to make connections to real life. The author used drama in her social studies classroom as a catalyst for inquiry and springboard to explore themes. Through tableaux, a strategy where students read a poem and freeze a scene at key intervals in the text, she provided a backdrop for her students to visually and kinesthetically connect to the text (Downey, 2005). The experience created a sensitivity to social justice issues and a recognition of their power and responsibility in society, similar to what a social reconstructionist would encourage. The tableaux promoted divergent types of thinking and offered an opportunity to explore social issues in the classroom (Downey, 2005).

Similar to Downey (2005), Shelton (2017) used drama in the classroom to address controversial and debatable topics such as discrimination, bullying, and sexual orientation. The dramatic activities linked to meaningful texts, in Shelton's 2017 case, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice,* opened up the students to conversations that would not occur otherwise or as naturally. Shelton (2005) saw this teaching of social justice through literature as a way to help students feel safe in who they were and a way to help teachers start the difficult conversations that needed to occur in the modern classroom.

In opposition to these experiences with social justice in the classroom, the Common Core Standards, which were created for assessment purposes, have removed the personal and social dynamics of language and literacy skills from the list of required standards (Common Core Standards, 2009). These skills are not measurable (Brass, 2014) and therefore, not included in the standards. And while the Common Core Standards claim to be in line with a social efficiency ideology of curriculum construction (Brass, 2014), the missing link of including the emotional realities of students' lives and the affective domain with learning presents concerns to teachers about curriculum that lack the requirement of skills students need to be successful in society. The use of theater-based strategies in the classroom has the ability to meet the required standards and the cognitive domain, but can also fulfill a social responsibility to discuss social justice interests in the classroom and address the necessary affective domain.

English Language Learners

A need exists for educators to engage English Language Learners (ELLs) in ways beyond drills and memorization for language acquisition; learners need meaningful and "expressive academic language uses" (Anderson & Loughlin, 2014, p. 264). Dramatic arts integration in the form of a play by Shakespeare offers English Language Learners a valuable experience with English unlike the rote, low level curriculum ELLs often encounter in school (Porter, 2009). Drama activities encourage language growth and can provide an opportunity for students to combine nonverbal communication with verbal communication (Brouillette, 2012, p. 139). "Language as action" (Anderson & Loughlin, 2014) as seen in dramatic activities integrates form and function with social and cognitive connections in a meaningful way (Anderson & Loughlin, 2014). In conjunction with

constructivist theories, Anderson and Loughlin's (2014) study found that connecting

classroom drama activities to language use improved the quality and quantity of extended

engagement especially in that of English language learners.

Vaca and Vaca (2008) argued that a requirement to help ELLs construct meaning

and connect with a text is active engagement. Students can phrase their understanding in

their own words and language with strategies like graphic organizers, group discussions,

and collaborative activities such as theater-based approaches (Vaca & Vaca,

2008). Similarly, the dramatic activities Brouillette (2012) studied directly impacted

vocabulary acquisition and the typical results were that the ELL students can understand

a language when it is physical. Students physicalize the words and participate in visual

experiences with words and sentences that aid in vocabulary acquisition and memory.

Not only did students in Brouillette's (2012) study increase their vocabulary but also their

ability to write with more details and description.

Drama supports students from diverse language backgrounds in ways that

traditional seat-based instruction cannot. Including Shakespeare in an ELL curriculum

adds a level of complexity and analysis that language learners can savor and

appreciate. Walqui's (2014) fourteen-year study combined an active learning approach

with a learner-centered classroom to develop curriculum and plan productive activities to

help reach ELLs. She learned that with secondary English language learners active

strategies as an instructional approach helped students meet their goals of learning

rigorous and complex texts if the learning incited an interest, if they had support, and if

the content and language were taught simultaneously. Multiple studies concluded that

dramatic activities in the classroom facilitated the linguistic specificity, complexity and

productivity due to its authenticity and integration to language (Anderson & Loughlin, 2014).

Summary

Active learning strategies stand in conjunction with the beliefs of Dewey (1938) and Vygotsky (1978) and the constructivist approach to learning: experience and play will help students receive, understand, and retain information. The active learning strategy of drama pedagogy provides students with a path to a more advanced analysis of literature, specifically Shakespeare, through close reading, critical thinking, and synthesis. Dramatic activities give students a way to connect personally with a text and a venue to discuss social issues such as gender and race.

An active, student-centered classroom also moves the authority solely from the teacher and allows students to recognize there are many authorities in the classroom with a variety of truths (Thompson & Turchi, 2016). As a result, students listen to themselves, believe in themselves as authority, and develop a newfound confidence in studying literature (Thompson & Turchi, 2016). Learning is no longer a spectator experience with rote memorization and learning but rather one of meaningful construction and application (Yew, et.al., 2016). O'Brien (1993) supports the teaching of Shakespeare through active theater-based strategies because the language, plots and characters offer an intellectual experience that students deserve. The ownership of Shakespeare's language, as Thompson and Turchi (2016) point out, is complex, but there is also true beauty in the text. The beauty of metaphor, allusion, repetition and the analytical skills required to recognize and analyze that beauty is transferable to studying all subjects in life, not just Shakespeare (Thompson & Turchi, 2016). We all require facility with difficult texts no

matter what our career or path in life. In addition, creating an emotional connection to a text through the affective domain, social issues, or personal connections can provide a student with a freedom for interpretation and an ownership that would otherwise not take place

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Approaches to teaching literature, particularly Shakespeare, are varied at the secondary level: parallel text, modernized versions, graphic novels, literary criticism such as New Criticism, and performance are all possible methods to approach the teaching of literature. Each of these approaches, as varied as the students in the class, can affect student achievement. One strategy will not be effective for every student and through the differentiation of instruction students will develop a better understanding and possibly a passion for literature (Shoemaker, 2013). Students, especially those who struggle with comprehension and lack the motivation to read, need instruction beyond traditional methods of reading literature (Shoemaker, 2013).

Oftentimes in their daily lives students mostly receive information and are passive learners who rarely are required to synthesize information independently (Thomas & Garcia, 2012). Teachers are expected to teach beyond the recall of information and basic reasoning; lesson plans and curricular choices should require cognitive rigor as well as depth of knowledge and include opportunities for students to use complex and extended reasoning in their daily study of literature. The state standards require the ability of a student in English 2 to be beyond the basic level of regurgitating information back on a test; therefore, approaches to literature that are passive and disengaging will not aid in student achievement but instead unintentionally encourage them to be uninvolved in their own learning (Turchi & Thompson, 2013). Turchi and Thompson (2013) posit that if the

goal of teachers is teach them the tools to "decode, understand, and analyze" texts, then the old approaches tied to passive learning are not adequate to prepare students (p. 35).

The problem of practice of this study arose with the passivity and apathy mentioned above coupled with students' constant access to technology. Technology made engaging students with characters from a written text more difficult because students believed there was always something more exciting, real, and active elsewhere-- and they could find it quickly with their phones or laptops. Students also saw the study of literature as flat and not connected to their lives when compared to social media or movies. At the research site each student had a school-issued Chromebook for completing assignments and research; however, the push for the use of technology also increased the hours of time students spent on social media or playing video games they downloaded. While one purpose of the Chromebooks was to increase achievement, many students' study and classroom participation habits and behaviors declined.

While technology changed the classroom, the increase in diversity at the research site also changed the classroom. Discussions students engaged in needed to be more inclusive and open to all races, genders, and religions and teachers needed venues to have difficult conversations about social issues with students. Many of the students lived in communities of similar students and migrated toward peers who are only like themselves in both thought and practice. Students needed opportunities to practice tolerance and empathy.

After gathering information from other teachers and administrators who saw these same behaviors changing student achievement and their high school experience, the

teacher-researcher sought opportunities to augment her ability to teach literature with strategies to engage passive students and therefore increase comprehension, increase empathy, and shift students' perceptions toward literature. One of these strategies to actively teach literature was drama pedagogy. The teacher-researcher was hopeful that this action research found solutions to the educational problem stated above (Mertler, 2017, p. 18). The purpose of the study was to determine if drama pedagogy aided students in comprehending the language of classic literature, increased empathy toward peers, and developed a more positive attitude toward Shakespeare in a Southeastern suburban ninth grade English 2 classroom. The following research questions guided the conceptual and methodological aspects of this convergent mixed-methods action research (Creswell, 2007) study:

1. *What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the comprehension of language of ninth grade students in the study of classic literature?*

2. *What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the attitude of ninth grade students in the study of classic literature?*

3. *What are ninth grade students' perceptions of how drama pedagogy affects their empathy toward peers' race, gender, and religious views in the study of classic literature?*

The following chapter discusses a justification for the use of action research design followed by a description of the research site, the participants, the intervention, and the instruments. All facets of the intervention are described including the role of the teacher-researcher and the data collection methods. The instruments used in the study are a pretest and a posttest to measure comprehension of the language, a Likert scale to

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measure attitude, and student reflective journals to measure students' perceptions of empathy toward their peers.

Action Research Methodology

An action research methodology was chosen for this study because action research is cyclical in nature as is the proposed study. The observing, doing, and adjusting of Parsons and Brown (2002) and the planning, acting, developing, and reflecting of Mertler (2017) is what guided this study. The teacher-researcher chose action research for this study as action research is ideal to determine the effectiveness of new teaching methods such as those that impact student learning, and the systematic investigation of such methods (Mertler, 2017, p. 54). The teacher-researcher, who created the instruments for this study, wished to reflect upon her use of drama pedagogy in the English Language Arts classroom and improve upon it. The proposed study was insider participatory action research (Herr & Anderson, 2015) and its approach was convergent mixed methods (Creswell, 2007). Through her position in the study as both an insider and an outsider (Herr & Anderson, 2015), the teacher collected concurrent quantitative and qualitative data.

Convergent mixed methods research design. This study focused on the use of drama pedagogy as a teaching method and its effect on student comprehension, attitude toward Shakespeare, and perception of empathy toward their peers. The teacher-researcher chose a convergent mixed methods study design to gather quantitative data to determine the comprehension of language and qualitative narrative data to assess student attitudes toward Shakespeare and their perceptions of their empathy toward their peers. She chose a mixed methods design in order to gain multiple perspectives regarding the

intervention. The teacher-researcher recorded field notes as an outsider during the intervention to gather genuine reactions. The triangulation of this data provided a clear picture of a student's broad experience in the classroom (Creswell, 2007). Students had both cognitive and affective experiences while studying literature; therefore, this study addressed the quantitative and qualitative aspects of learning.

This action research was a convergent mixed-method research design. Quantitative data in the form of a pre- and post- tests was collected to measure achievement; qualitative data, in the form of a Likert scale (see Appendix B) and reflective journals (see Appendix C), were collected to corroborate the quantitative findings. The students responded to Likert scales and wrote reflective journals several times prior to this study; therefore, the practice was familiar to them. The data collection instrument of the reflective journal provided an opportunity for students to reflect and the teacher-researcher to develop an action plan for future interventions. The teacher-research was an insider and outsider in the study because she knew the students and their abilities and personalities and they knew her as their teacher, but she was not sure how they would behave during the study with her as a silent observer. The use of the triangulation enhanced the validity of the study as it "determined if the behaviors exhibited and comments made by the participants are consistent regardless of the type of data representing them" (Mertler, 2017, p. 11). Results from and about students were observed, written, and spoken. The qualitative data was coded (Creswell, 2007) and the responses were grouped according to themes and topics.

The nature of the quantitative research design included both a Likert scale and a pre- and posttest. The Likert scale was given twice: once at the beginning of the first part

of the investigation to determine students' attitudes toward drama pedagogy and again, as Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014, p. 115) suggest, at the end of an inquiry. The purpose of this was to evaluate a possible change in the students' attitudes toward the drama pedagogy.

Research setting

The school district was located in the Midlands region of South Carolina; there were 22 schools in the district, 17,372 students and 1,247 teachers (South Carolina Department of Education, 2016). The district has experienced growth and a shift in demographics over the past 15 years, particularly an increase in Hispanic students and a decrease in White students. Over the past five years the district increased its career and technical curriculum options with the building of a center for technical studies and supported the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields through multiple program offerings at schools throughout the district, including the high school where this research takes place.

Research site. The high school (grades 9-12) in this action research was in the Midlands area of South Carolina close to the state capitol; the school was located in a suburban area and has approximately 1733 students. The enrollment of the school was 55% White, 35% Black, 4% Asian, 3% Hispanic, and 3% two or more races. Twenty five percent of the students were eligible for the free lunch program and 7% were eligible for reduced price lunch. The End of Course test results for the school were above the state average; according to the tests 75% of the students were proficient in mathematics and 83% were proficient in reading. Seventy percent of the students participated in AP courses and 64% passed the AP tests they take. The graduation rate was 89% and

suggested the majority of the school population was a community of learners who were motivated to achieve.

The school site of this action research operated on an A/B Block Schedule. Each student took four classes each day for 90 minutes, which met every other day (A days) for an entire school year; students took four additional classes for 90 minutes that meet on alternate days (B days) for an entire year. This style of scheduling with long blocks of instruction affected classroom instruction and the action research study. Since class blocks were 90 minutes in length, they allowed for a longer time for students to work on projects or to complete longer assignments; however, the 90-minute block was an impetus for the need to introduce more variety in the methodologies and strategies used to teach English. The average teenager cannot maintain an attention span for that length of time. The average attention span is 10 to 12 minutes (Vawter, 2010), which convinced teachers to minimize direct instruction and find more active ways for students to close read and discuss literature.

Sample

The sample of students who were participants in this action research study were 39 ninth graders who ranged in age from 14-15 years enrolled in English 2 Honors STEM courses and taught by the teacher-researcher. The students were on an advanced track and took English 1 in the eighth grade, which counted toward high school credit; students were required to complete four credits of English in order to graduate. They applied to and were enrolled in the school's STEM magnet, a program that implemented authentic cross-curricular and hands-on experiences through project-based learning in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math. Student acceptance to the program was based

on eighth grade math and reading test scores and an essay application. The school district offered a school of choice policy and allowed students from throughout the district to apply to the program; zoning was not a factor used to determine acceptance in the program, however transportation was not provided for those outside the school zone.

Ninth graders in the STEM magnet program were teamed for the five core subject areas: algebra, biology, English, human geography, and physical science. For these five courses students were grouped together; only students in the ninth grade STEM program were in these sections. Due to the nature of this teaming style, students traveled together to all of their classes except for electives such as physical education and the fine arts. Naturally, being with the same students all day created a community unlike the typical ninth grade classroom. The students knew one another well and were willing to take academic and personal risks that many other classroom settings would not tolerate or encourage. However, for many of these students, English courses and the study of literature were seen as secondary to that of the study of math and science. Both a positive and negative aspect of the teaming of the STEM magnet ninth graders was that these students were highly competitive and motivated not only to succeed but also to be the best in the class. These students got discouraged when they earned a 98% on a test and found a grade below an A to be a failure. The competition often stifled some students' participation in a discussion or presentation, but mostly, the competition motivated students to be at their best when in class.

A unique facet of the STEM program was its shift in demographics from the overall population of the school. The overall STEM student community of 206 students was 18% Asian; the overall school population was 4%. There were 9% African

American students in the overall STEM program while the overall school population was 35%. In the 2018-2019 cohort of freshmen in this study (39 students) the demographics were similar: 69.2% white, 20.5% Asian, 7.7% African American, and 2.6% multiracial. Due to this shift, a sensitivity toward others as well as an empathy and tolerance for those not like themselves was necessary.

The control group class of 21 students met first block of the day. This was the first block of the day and students often arrived sleepy from an early morning. The class was comprised of 10 females and 11 males. The teacher-researcher found this class to be slow to work in the morning and comfortable in their chairs. The intervention group of 18 students met after lunch and was comprised of 14 males and four females. This class was lively and energetic after lunch and often came to class in high spirits and active after having social time with friends and two other classes that day. The students in both of these groups were primarily focused on academics and most of their extracurricular activities were academic-based; students were on the science team, the robotics team, and Model UN. Many of the students were in band and orchestra and a few were involved in athletics.

Positionality

The teacher-researcher primarily acted the role of teacher for the drama pedagogy portion of the lesson. She provided directions and set guidelines at the beginning of the strategy and then stepped aside to observe the responses and reactions of the students. She answered questions and redirected as necessary, but provided students with the space to grapple with the content and make decisions on their own. In order to observe students unobtrusively the teacher-research used an unstructured observation method that was

flexible and monitored behaviors that naturally occurred in the classroom and applied to the study (Given, 2008); this method allowed her to engage as the teacher in the classroom but also allowed for periods of observation (Mertler, 2017) and to experience the intervention as both an insider and outsider. Through this manner of observation, the teacher-researcher gathered field notes about actual behaviors to align with a student's written feedback in the reflective journal. This unstructured observation allowed her to observe behaviors that students did not report or realize about themselves (Mertler, 2017).

While students planned performances and worked together, the teacher-researcher informally met with students and collected informal, spontaneous interviews in the form of field notes such as those Dana & Yendol-Hoppey (2014, p. 103) described that are naturally occurring conversations. These were part of daily interactions (Mertler, 2017) that the teacher had on a regular basis with the students. Through the observations and reflective journals, she "gained a sense of students' thoughts, perceptions, and experiences in the classroom" (Mertler, 2017, p. 138) with the drama pedagogy. The use of these methods as well as incorporating peer debriefing and using detailed notes with reflexivity ensured the validity of the qualitative portion of the study (Mertler, 2017).

The study took place in the fall after the first interim of four weeks; this timing provided the background for a prolonged involvement in the research participants. By this point in the year the teacher-researcher knew the students on both an academic and personal level; the students were comfortable and settled in the routine of the classroom which allowed her to determine what is typical or atypical behavior in the action research study (Mertler, 2017).

Teacher-researcher. The teacher-researcher taught at the research site school for 19 years during which she has taught English 1, 2, and 4 at college preparatory, honors, and advanced placement levels. She also taught a reading lab which helped struggling readers pass the former state-mandated high school exit examination (HSAP). The experience of teaching classes filled with both struggling and reluctant readers, many of whom were functionally illiterate in the 12th grade, made the teacher aware of how the current system of teaching reading to students does not work for all students. Based on her experiences with students who did not possess the skills to read a complete novel in high school and experiences with students who were not challenged in higher-level English courses, she determined that new methods of teaching English Language Arts to secondary students must be found. This action research determined if the strategy of drama pedagogy increased student achievement and improved reading comprehension as well as helped students gain an appreciation of literature and reading.

Intervention

The two-week intervention for this convergent action research study was the inclusion of drama pedagogy in the instruction of literature. The teacher-researcher taught one class of 21 students using the traditional method of lecture and seat-based instruction and taught the other class of 18 students using drama pedagogy strategies. Both groups took the same pre- and posttest; however, one class was taught using drama pedagogy and the second group was taught with the traditional seat-based lecture method. This method determined if the drama pedagogy was the cause of student comprehension, shift in attitude toward Shakespeare, and increase in empathy toward peers.

Implementation of drama pedagogy. First developed by Dorothy Heathcote and

Augusto Boal, the use of drama pedagogy actively engages students in learning (Smith & Herring, 2001). The goal of drama pedagogy is active learning in which students practice language skills, communication and problem solving through performance (Heinig, 1993). The model also promotes empathy and social awareness (Davis & Behm, 1978). With the inclusion of drama pedagogy students are kinesthetically involved in the experience of the literature (Heinig, 1993). In a drama pedagogy experience all students read the literature aloud and physically perform the lines and movements that would naturally accompany the words.

During the intervention one class of students was asked to perform and read scenes as a whole class or small group. This study focused on student comprehension of language of Shakespeare's work after participating in drama pedagogy methods. In addition to taking a pretest and posttest assessment to measure comprehension of language, students were asked to complete at the beginning and end of the study a Likert scale about their attitude and a series of three reflective journals about their perceptions of empathy toward the characters.

Data Collection Instruments

This section describes the instruments that were used in the study. These instruments included a multiple-choice pretest and posttest for comprehension of language, a pre- and post- intervention Likert scale referred to as an attitude scale to gather data regarding student attitude toward Shakespeare and drama pedagogy, and a reflective journal to determine student perceptions of empathy toward their peers. All instruments were aligned with standards and validated with at least two of Creswell's (2007) validation strategies; the multiple-choice pretest and posttest were pilot tested by

four students and two other English teachers at the research site to obtain peer review

confirmability and debriefing (Creswell, 2007). There was also prolonged engagement

and triangulation to build credibility (Creswell, 2007). The teacher-researcher also

collected field notes of observed behaviors and student comments to the teacher or their

peers throughout the duration of the unit of study.

Table 3.1

Research questions and instruments

Research Question	Type of Data	Data Collection Instrument
What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the attitude of ninth grade students in the study of classic literature?	Quantitative	Attitude scale (pre- and post-Likert scale)
What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the comprehension of language of ninth grade students in the study of classic literature?	Quantitative	Multiple-choice pretest and posttest
What are ninth grade students' perceptions of how drama pedagogy affects their empathy toward peers' race, gender, and religious views in the study of classic literature?	Qualitative	Reflective journal and field notes

Multiple-choice comprehension of language pre- and post- test. The teacher-

researcher used a pretest posttest design to collect quantitative data to respond to the first

research question:

What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the comprehension of Shakespeare's

language by ninth grade students engaged in the study of classic literature?

The teacher-researcher created a 10-question multiple-choice comprehension of

language test for an 80-line scene in act 3, scene four of Shakespeare's *Othello* to assess

student comprehension of language. The questions on the test ranged from asking students to identify the situation in the scene to the true intent and tone of words the characters used to communicate. Students were asked to identify the shift in the scene. The selection of this scene was twofold: the language is a challenge but approachable for the students and the scene is at the midpoint of the entire play. At this point of the reading students had experienced reading two other acts of Shakespeare's work and knew the characters in the scene. Students were given a copy of the scene to reference while they answered the multiple-choice questions.

The multiple-choice test questions were created by the teacher-researcher and analyzed by two other English teachers to establish internal consistency and ensure validity. Four students piloted the pre- and post- test prior to all students completing the assessment. Student participants were asked to complete the pre- and posttest during a 90-minute class period and were given as much time as they need.

Attitude scale. The teacher-researcher created an attitude scale in the form of a Likert scale to collect quantitative data for two of the research questions:

1. *What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the attitude of ninth grade students in the study of classic literature?*

2. *What are ninth grade students' perceptions of how drama pedagogy affects their empathy toward peers' racial, gendered, and religious views in the study of classic literature?*

The attitude scale was pilot tested by two teachers in the English department and two students who are enrolled in a different English course taught by the teacher-researcher. Those involved with the pilot test were asked to clarify instructions,

determine if the statements on the scale fit into the available responses, and if any wording of the statements needed to change. Several words were changed due to vocabulary; there was uncertainty of whether the students would understand the questions worded in that manner. A few other sections were changed to clarify the questions' intent.

Students responded to statements on a continuum from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The statements on the scale revolved around the reading of literature, the act of performing, the teaching method, and students' attitudes toward others. The responses were coded by the teacher-researcher to find patterns and themes and to determine if the intervention affected the attitude and empathy of ninth grade students in English 2. The attitude scale was given at the beginning and end of the intervention after it was pilot-tested by similar students in English 2.

Student reflective journals. Three times during the intervention students completed reflective journals to collect quantitative data for the third research question:

What are ninth grade students' perceptions of how drama pedagogy affects their empathy toward peers' racial, gendered, and religious views in the study of classic literature?

The qualitative assessment of the three different reflective journals gathered responses about students' attitudes toward literature and their perceptions of their peers' racial, gendered, and religious views. The teacher-researcher created the guided questions for the reflective journals and also provided space and class time for journal writing. The journal consisted of open-ended questions to elicit students' thoughts while reading, the strategies they used to comprehend the language of the reading, and their

likes and dislikes for the method of teaching (drama pedagogy or traditional). The teacher-researcher coded the responses for patterns and themes to determine if the intervention affected student perceptions of empathy. Students were given approximately 30 minutes to respond to the journals, which consisted of no more than five questions; the journal questions were different for each of the three responses. The journals were assigned at the beginning, middle, and end of the study.

The teacher-researcher had students write the reflective journals on a Google form. She chose this method because students were comfortable with the technology of Google docs due to frequent use for most writing assignments. They also generally typed faster than hand writing responses and therefore are more willing to type longer responses as typing does not hurt their hands as much. Lastly, the responses in the Google form were easier for the teacher-researcher to read if students have illegible handwriting.

Data Collection Methods

The convergent mixed-methods design consisted of a quantitative analysis of student performance on a pre- and post- multiple-choice test as well as responses on an attitude scale. The qualitative data analysis of empathy and attitude came from the three reflective journals. The intervention and assessments were administered according to the timeline in Table 3.1.

Before beginning the intervention period and the unit on Shakespeare's *Othello,* the students completed the attitude scale, reflective journal, and the multiple-choice pretest prior to any reading or introduction. These were untimed. All students in the study took the same 10-question multiple-choice pretest which was created by the

teacher-researcher. The test questions revolved around act 3, scene 4, in which Othello and his wife Desdemona were engaged in an intense conflict. The teacher-research chose this scene as it is the midpoint of the complete play and at the apex and turning point of the main conflict. The scene also provided a fruitful scenario for drama pedagogy methods and post-performance discussion.

Students completed the attitude scale during the class period prior to reading any Shakespeare or *Othello*. Students completed the same attitude scale at the completion of the unit. Students took the multiple-choice pretest and responded to the reflective journal prior to any instruction regarding Shakespeare's language or the play *Othello*. The teacher-researcher determined this timeline in order to guarantee that students' responses represented their knowledge, attitude, and understanding prior to any instruction or intervention from the teacher.

The students took the multiple-choice pre- and posttest on a Google form; the Google format was chosen because of the school's 1:1 technology initiative and the speed of feedback for the teacher-researcher. Each student had his/her own Chromebook provided by the school district and each student had access to Google Classroom, which was where the multiple-choice test answer sheet was be posted for student access. The passage and questions were on paper in order for students to annotate and eliminate distractors on their copy of the test as they needed. Students in this class regularly took tests and quizzes on a Google form; therefore, the logistics of the test process were not new or confusing to the students.

After the multiple-choice pretest, students read Shakespeare's *Othello* in its entirety. One class read and studied *Othello* in a traditional method of seat-based

instruction where students primarily read the play aloud in a whole group setting from their seats with assigned character roles. The other class studied the same text with the intervention of drama pedagogy.

The second reflective journal took place at the midpoint of the *Othello* unit prior to the posttest. The purpose of this timing was to assess any change in perception or attitude from the beginning of the unit. The multiple-choice posttest took place after the second reflective journal. The teacher-researcher determined the responses on the second reflective journal should be gathered prior to the posttest so that student responses on the journal would not be skewed or affected by the post test results.

When students reached act three, scene four of *Othello* the teacher-researcher collected field notes from observations about the traditional reading experience and the drama pedagogy experience with the same scene used in the pretest. The traditional class read as a whole class with students assigned to characters. The drama pedagogy class read while standing and moving throughout the classroom as one would do in a performance. Specifically, to read act three, scene four in the drama pedagogy class students stood in two facing rows; one row read the part of Desdemona chorally and the other row read Othello's part. The scene was read four times and students directed their reading to the other character across from them. The first time the students engaged with the text they read in a standard volume and tone and directed their lines to the person across from them. After the initial reading the whole group discussed comprehension of basic plot. The second time the students engaged with the text the teacher-researcher direct the students to read to the character standing across from them in a whisper. After the second reading the whole group discussed the comprehension of how the whisper

affected the purpose and the characters' intents. The third time the students were directed

to read the text forcefully with a louder volume. After the third reading the whole group

discussed how the louder volume affected meaning and the characters' intents. For the

fourth and final reading, the students were directed to read the text in a mixture of the

tones after a collaboration in groups about which tone applied to which lines. During this

collaboration the teacher-researcher collected field notes. After the final reading students

discussed how the multiple approaches to the text possibly altered the reader's perception

and comprehension of the characters and the scene as a whole.

All students in both classes took the posttest after reading the scene. The posttest

was the same 10-question multiple-choice pretest they completed prior to the reading of

Othello approximately 4 class periods prior to this reading. Students were given a copy

of the test to write on and entered their responses to the posttest on a Google form.

Quantitative data was collected on student achievement by the multiple-choice pre- and

posttest results from both groups of students. Students read the remainder of the play

over the course of the next two class periods. At the completion of reading *Othello*, all

students retook the attitude scale and did the final reflective journal.

Data Analysis

The teacher-researcher used formative data analysis to determine instructional

decisions and eventually moved toward summative data analysis near the end of the study

to develop conclusions (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). In the convergent mixed-

method design of triangulation the data was weighted equally and the results "interpreted

simultaneously" (Mertler, 2017, p. 196) in order to gain a comprehensive view of the

action research results.

Quantitative analysis. The quantitative data was analyzed with a paired sample *t*-test to determine if there was statistical significance between the populations' achievement from the beginning of the intervention to the end of the intervention. The two populations compared were the pre- and posttest results for the drama pedagogy group and the traditional group. The attitude scale responses were aggregated for ordinal data to determine any statistical significance in the study. Since the pre- and post-test and the attitude scale were administered via a Google form, the data was collected in a spreadsheet and the teacher-researcher analyzed the data to determine the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation.

Qualitative analysis. The teacher-researcher coded and analyzed the qualitative data of the student reflective journal responses for patterns and themes (Saldana, 2009). The use of Saldana's initial coding searched for repeated words or short phrases to assign a "summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute" (Saldana, 2009, p. 3) to the student responses. The teacher-researcher analyzed the data for patterns of similarity, difference, frequency, sequence, correspondence and causation (Saldana, 2009). Saldana's (2009) method of coding provided the primary content of the qualitative data as well as summarized and condensed the responses.

When the data from the pre- and post- multiple-choice tests, the attitude scale, and the reflective journals were collected and analyzed, the teacher-researcher determined if there was statistical significance in the study.

Trustworthiness

The teacher-researcher used multiple instruments to gather data and allow for triangulation to establish trustworthiness (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Mertler, 2017). The

study was trustworthy through the reliability and validity of the quantitative data of the multiple-choice pre- and posttests. The teacher-researcher pilot tested all instruments she created with both experts in the field and students. The teacher reflected upon the expert and student suggestions and made changes to the instruments as necessary. The study was transferable as a description of the intervention as well as all instruments and their data were included in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The study was conducted in a fair manner with confidentiality and the teacher-researcher attempted to be aware of any personal bias (Creswell, 2007). All student responses were anonymous and coded with a numbering system; the teacher-research maintained a key for the coding system. Students submitted their work anonymously through Google forms and the data was stored in a Google folder only the teacher-researcher could access.

Summary

The purpose of this action research study was to determine if drama pedagogy affected the achievement, attitude, and perception of empathy of student participants in a Southeastern suburban English 2 high school. In this convergent mixed-methods study, the teacher-researcher used quantitative and qualitative data to determine the effectiveness of drama pedagogy. This research was an attempt to move beyond the traditional approach to the teaching of literature to a more active approach of drama pedagogy. The drama pedagogy offered students an instructional approach that helped them comprehend the literature, encourage engagement, and be an active participant in reading. The use of drama pedagogy not only increased comprehension but also provided students with experiences in problem solving, critical thinking, and presentation and

communication skills. Students learned to interact with each other, which could break

down barriers between peer groups and provide an open space for productive discussions

that may lapse from the literature to current events and social issues.

In chapter four the teacher-researcher describes the data and findings. She will

reflect upon the results of the use of drama pedagogy methods in the secondary

classroom.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The cloistered nature of the completion of reading in a secondary classroom and the integration of more technology contributed to the apathy and disengagement often seen in students. Students were often silent observers or passive learners in the classroom and saw reading assignments as something to quickly breeze through or not complete and use online resources for answers in the interpretation and analysis of the reading assignment. As a result, teachers of classic literature sought out strategies not only to engage and motivate students, but also strategies that help increase comprehension, practice close reading, and critically analyze a text.

The teacher-researcher identified this problem as a result of conversations with other English teachers both at the research site and teachers from other secondary schools throughout the United States. The teachers' observations were similar: students were disengaged in reading classic texts, especially those of significant length and written with diction and syntax different from their own. In addition, students' dependence on technology for finding answers quickly to what a text means through online sources such as SparkNotes and Shmoop kept them from practicing close reading independently. The teacher-researcher found that when students were confused or did not immediately understand a text, they would use Google to find the "correct" answer; and as a result, students were less engaged in their own learning. Reading became a correct answer on an assessment, not a process with which to grapple with a text independently or in a

group of peers. Students have become less likely to struggle through a text and practice close reading skills and therefore lack the ability to determine the accurate analysis of the literature.

To determine new strategies to help eliminate the passive reception of students to the teaching of classic literature and encourage an active approach, the teacher-researcher searched for strategies that were constructivist in nature. Dewey (1948) posited when students acted out an idea, the idea would become real to the students and any lack of understanding would be shown in the performance. Similar to Dewey's beliefs, the teacher-researcher implemented drama pedagogy strategies in her English classes to encourage an authentic interaction among peers, a deeper connection with the text and its characters, and an understanding of the language without the help of online sources. The teacher-researcher developed a study to explore if the use of a more active approach such as drama pedagogy to the teach literature in the high school English classroom improved reading comprehension, elicited a more positive attitude toward the reading of Shakespeare, and increased student perception of empathy toward others.

As a result of the problem in practice, the teacher-researcher gathered data to answer the following research questions:

1. *What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the comprehension of Shakespeare's language by ninth grade students engaged in the study of classic literature?*

2. *What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the attitude of ninth grade students in the study of classic literature?*

3. *What are ninth grade students' perceptions of how drama pedagogy affects their empathy toward peers' racial, gendered, and religious views in the study of classic literature?*

The teacher-researcher used the instruments of a multiple choice pretest and posttest to assess comprehension, a Likert scale to determine attitude, and a series of reflective journals to gauge students' perceptions of empathy and understanding. The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative findings in this convergent mixed methods action research study are described and interpreted in this chapter.

Research Design

The following section of this chapter will discuss the data collection and the results of both the quantitative and qualitative instruments followed by a triangulation of the data.

Data collection. To examine the intervention of drama pedagogy, two different sections of students enrolled in the same English 2 Honors course during the Fall of 2018 were used. All student names are pseudonyms in order to preserve anonymity and so that students felt comfortable expressing their true feelings regarding the reading experiences. The anonymity assures there will be no repercussions for honest responses. Each group was taught the same classic text, Shakespeare's *Othello*, and both groups completed the same data collection instruments of the multiple choice pre- and posttest, attitude scale in the form of a Likert scale, and reflective journal; however, one class, the intervention group, was taught using drama pedagogy prior to the posttest and the other class, the control group, was taught with a traditional seat-based whole class lecture method prior to the posttest.

Quantitative Data Analysis and Results

Quantitative data was collected in the form of a pre- and post-tests to indicate if drama pedagogy affected student comprehension. To calculate the results of the multiple choice pre- and posttest results, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Additional quantitative data was collected through a Likert scale, referred to as an attitude scale in this study, to determine students' attitudes toward reading Shakespeare and performing with their classmates. The teacher-researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the quantitative data from the pre- and posttests to explore the first research question:

> *What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the comprehension of Shakespeare's language by ninth grade students engaged in the study of classic literature?*

The following section will discuss the quantitative pretest and posttest results of the control group followed by a discussion of the pretest and posttest results of the intervention group.

Pretest and posttest. The purpose of the pretest and posttest was to determine if students' comprehension of the language of Shakespeare improved after the drama pedagogy was implemented. The pretest and posttest were composed of ten multiple choice questions and scores reported in the data were out of 100 points to be consistent with the state grading scale. The test questions focused on an excerpt from Act 3, Scene 4 of *Othello*; students had not seen or read the scene prior to the pretest (Appendix D). The test questions addressed four areas of the state's English 2 standards: conflict, tone, inferences, and craft techniques.

The pretest was conducted to determine the initial comprehension level and ability of students to understand the language of Shakespeare as the teacher-researcher had not yet read a Shakespearean text with this group of students. All of the students reported either having read all or most of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* or watched a film version of *Romeo and Juliet* in the spring of the eighth grade. One student, Adelina (pseudonym), the only one who scored a perfect 100 on the pretest, reported having read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Macbeth* at the private school she attended in the eighth grade. For the majority of the students this was their second time reading a Shakespearean play. The pretest with the passage from *Othello* and ten multiple choice questions was the same test used as the posttest to measure the growth, if any, of students' ability to comprehend the language of the scene.

Control group pretest results. The control group was a class of 20 ninth grade students enrolled in English 2 Honors. Most notable from the overall pretest results ($M =$ 67%) was student ability to read and analyze Shakespeare without instruction and prior to reading the play in its entirety. At least half of the students chose a correct answer for nine out of the ten questions on the pretest, which proved their initial ability to comprehend classic texts and/or test taking skills was strong. The ten-question multiple choice pretest was based upon four standards of the English 2 curriculum and required students to identify the conflict, interpret tone, develop interpretations through inferences, and address the purpose of craft techniques. The discussion of the results is organized by the categories of the standards.

Identify conflict. Fifteen out of the 20 students could decipher the conflict in the scene in response to question one on the pretest. The question asked students, "What is

the situation in the excerpt?" and with no other context about the play except for this scene, 75% of the students determined the correct answer was "Othello confronts Desdemona about the missing handkerchief." The teacher-researcher included this question in the test to determine if students could recall the facts of the scene, which is considered a low level of complexity in Webb's Depth of Knowledge (Francis, 2016) and Bloom's Taxonomy (Armstrong, 2017).

Interpret tone. Tone is the author's use of words to convey nonverbal emotions or observations that create an emotional meaning of a work (Hamilton, 2007, p. 156). Tone, according to the teacher, has repeatedly been a difficult concept for this group of students. The questions pertaining to tone, questions three ($M = 65$), six ($M = 55$), and seven ($M = 70$), had the lowest scoring correct answer averages in the pretest and proved that tone was difficult for some of the students in the control group to master. Oftentimes students did not understand tone because of vocabulary the author used or because it was difficult to recognize the inflections intended in the author's word choice. Identifying the shift, which was the skill required in question seven, was difficult as students see tone as a consistent attitude in a work, not an amorphous element.

Develop interpretations through inference. The skill of inference was applied in questions two, four, five, eight, and 10; students proved their ability to determine a suggestion and intention of a character through their correct responses. In question two students were asked to identify Othello's feelings in the scene. The majority of students ($M = 80$) answered correctly because they could easily sense Othello's frustration in his repetition of the word "handkerchief." In addition, the other answer choices were empathy, tolerance, or compassion, which are similar to one another and disparate to

frustration. If students were not able to accurately label and understand Othello's

feelings, they could use the test-taking strategy of elimination to find the correct

response.

Question four asked what the description of the handkerchief suggested and

question five asked students to determine Desdemona's true intention in the scene.

Students were able to infer about these behaviors and 80% of students chose a correct

response for both questions four and five.

Question eight required students to understand what Othello's use of the word

zounds implied. While many students admitted they did not know what this word meant,

55% of students in the control group chose the correct response in the pretest. Those who

chose the wrong response all incorrectly chose answer D, which stated "feels reverent

toward Desdemona." Students possibly did not know the meaning of the word reverent

and chose this distractor because they assumed the word they did not know was the

correct response.

Question 10 asked students to determine what "Desdemona's line 'you'll never

meet a more sufficient man' (line 106) illustrates…" and was the lowest scoring response

on the pretest ($M = 30$). When students took the pretest, they had no prior knowledge of

Desdemona or the plot of the play and therefore their ability to determine what her words

illustrated were lacking.

Address the purpose of craft technique. In the responses to question nine students

proved a strong ability to analyze figurative language; 80% of students determined the

purpose of the repetition of the handkerchief was to "indicate Othello's mounting

frustration with Desdemona," which may be due to a strong emphasis of the purpose of

craft techniques such as repetition in the prerequisite English 1 State Standards and course curriculum.

Control group posttest data. Notable on the control group posttest results ($M =$ 82.5) is that overall students were consistent or improved in correct responses with a traditional seat-based instruction of the scene; there was no decrease in the mean of any question on the posttest. The traditional seat-based instruction consisted of two students reading the scene aloud, in parts; one student read the role of Desdemona and another student read the role of Othello followed by a discussion of the scene. The increase in correct responses from 67% on the pretest to 82.5% on the posttest suggested the students developed and improved their ability to comprehend the language of classic texts with the traditional seat-based instruction.

Identify conflict. All of the students in the control group answered question one correctly about the conflict ($M = 100$) and were able to identify the situation in the excerpt as opposed to 75% on the pretest. This increase may be due to their having read the acts and scenes prior to this scene; whereas, in the pretest students had no prior knowledge of the characters or the plot.

Interpret tone. Students improved their ability to recognize the tone of the scene and its effect on the scene in questions three and six, but remained consistent in their ability to describe the shift of tone in question seven and did not show improvement from the pretest to the posttest. Determining a shift in tone is particularly difficult for students when they read a scene aloud as oftentimes only the vocalization of a passage does not help determine tone; there are limitations to the solely auditory experience.

Develop interpretations through inference. All of the students correctly answered question two ($M = 100$) and identified the feelings Othello's words evoked in the posttest, an increase from the pretest ($M = 80$). This may have been a result of the pre-reading of the scene. The pre-reading may have also helped students improve on questions four ($M = 95$) and five ($M = 85$) about the description of the handkerchief and Desdemona's true intent. Reading the acts prior to this scene introduced students to the handkerchief and its importance to Othello and Desdemona's intent in this scene. These plot elements guided and helped students determine correct responses and the characters' motives in the scene.

Students increased in their responses to question eight (from $M = 55$ on the pretest to $M = 80$ on the posttest) regarding Othello's use of *zounds* which may be in part to their new knowledge of the definition and inference of the use for the word *zounds*. The word is used earlier in the play and, at the point of the posttest but not the pretest, students had defined the word with the use of a Shakespearean dictionary. Since the students had taken the pre-test they were aware of a need to know what it meant for the posttest. While knowing the definition of the word did make answering the question less about guessing and more about knowledge, knowing the meaning of the word did not answer the question as it was about Othello's implication in his use of the word.

Question ten received the least amount of correct responses on both the pretest and the posttest (from $M = 30$ on the pretest to $M = 55$ on the posttest). The question asked students to determine what "Desdemona's line 'you'll never meet a more sufficient man' (line 106) illustrates…." Students' responses were scattered across the options of Desdemona's lack of empathy, lack of concern, lack of understanding, or lack of patience. The correct response, Desdemona's lack of understanding, may not have been

clear to students as they could not identify Desdemona's purpose in her statement. This could result from not knowing the character's intention in the scene or her tone in making the statement. If students had thought more about Desdemona's character and that she is always concerned, empathetic, and patient, they could have chosen the response of her lack of understanding. The results of this question reveal students had not yet mastered the characterization of Desdemona.

Address the purpose of craft technique. There was no change in the mean for correct responses on question nine ($M = 80$) which asked, "The repetition of the word "handkerchief" in the scene serves to…". Eighty percent of students answered the question correctly both at the point of the pretest and the posttest. All of the students who missed the question on the posttest chose B as their response which stated the handkerchief in the scene served to "indicate Othello's confusion about the handkerchief's whereabouts." Students possibly chose this response because it was the literal reason Othello asked about the handkerchief five times. However, finding the purpose behind Shakespeare's repetition is what students were asked to discover. An understanding of craft technique combined with a higher level of inference was required to find the correct answer.

The percentages of correct responses from the control group pretest compared to the control group posttest are displayed in Table 4.1. The scene from *Othello* and the pre- and posttest can be found in Appendix D.

Table 4.1

Control Group Percentages of Correct Responses on Pretest and Posttest

Item Number	Questions	Means of Correct Responses on Pretest n=20	Means of Correct Responses on Posttest n=20	Difference of Means from Pre- to Posttest n=20
1	What is the situation in the excerpt?	75	100	25
2	What feelings do Othello's words evoke in the audience?	80	100	20
3	What effect do lines 93-99 have on the tone of the scene?	65	90	35
4	The description of the handkerchief in lines 65-79 suggests...	80	95	15
5	Desdemona's true intent in the scene is revealed most by...	80	85	5
6	The tone of the scene is all of the following EXCEPT:	55	70	15
7	The shift in tone from line 90 to line 102 can best be described as...	70	70	0
8	Othello's final line of "zounds!" and the stage direction that follows of "*Othello exits*" implies that he...	55	80	25
9	The repetition of the word "handkerchief" in the scene serves to...	80	80	0
10	Desdemona's line "you'll never meet a more sufficient man" (line 106) illustrates...	30	55	25
	Mean	67	82.5	15.5
	Median	70	80	10

Comparison of control group pre- and posttest data. The pretest and posttest results of the control group of twenty students were compared and the results indicated an increase in comprehension of the scene from *Othello*. The pretest mean score (percentage of correct responses) for the control group (n=20) was 67% out of 100 possible points (*SD* = 19.8). The posttest mean score for the control group was 82.5% (*SD* = 13.3). The control group's mean score increased by 15.5%, which indicated an improvement in the comprehension of *Othello* with traditional seat-based instruction. The descriptive statistics for the pre- and posttest assessments of the control group are displayed in Table 4.2.

A paired samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the mean pretest scores to the mean posttest scores. There was not a statistically significant difference in the scores from the pretest assessment (*M* = 67; *SD* = 19.8) to the posttest assessment (*M* = 83; *SD* = 13.3) scores; $t(19) = 27.7$, $p = 0.14$, show below in Table 4.2. The traditional seat-based instruction had a slight impact on student comprehension and there was no statistical significance found in the control group's results.

The control group improved its comprehension with the use of a traditional seat-based instruction, which could be a result of the effectiveness of the seat-based instruction, the re-reading of the text, or an increase in student ability to read Shakespeare after more experience with the language. Two students answered all of the posttest questions correctly and proved mastery, an increase from one student on the pretest.

Intervention group pretest results. The intervention group was a class of 18 ninth grade students enrolled in English 2 Honors; 14 students were male and 4 were female. The class period was directly after lunch and the students were generally lively

and energetic at this time of day. They often came to class talking about something that has happened that day or giggling about something from lunch; they often took several minutes to settle into and focus on the routine of our class.

This class of students took the same ten question multiple choice test as the control group prior to any instruction (Appendix D). Overall, the intervention group's pretest results ($M = 54.5$) were positive and the many of the students displayed an ability to read complex texts and decipher meaning prior to any instruction or practice with Shakespeare's language. The pretest results are described below and organized according to the four skills assessed in the pretest.

Identify conflict. Students were asked to identify the "situation in the excerpt" and in the intervention pretest 56% of student were able to identify it. This result may be due to nature of a cold text and students had little or no reference of the situation or plot surrounding this particular scene.

Interpret tone. The intervention group struggled with the three questions regarding tone. Questions three, six, and seven asked students to understand the tone, its effect on the scene, and its shift. Twenty-two percent of the intervention group could identify the tone of the scene on the pretest and 44% could identify its effect. More students were able to identify the shift in tone which is surprising to the teacher-researcher as students were not able to pinpoint the tone in the other two questions. The shift in tone is typically more difficult for students to recognize. This result may be due to effective guessing or distractor elimination on the multiple-choice test.

Develop interpretations through inference. The intervention group's ability to infer while reading the scene was evident in their responses on the pretest. The majority

of the students could infer and determine Othello's feelings in question two ($M = 67$), the suggestion of the handkerchief's description in question four ($M = 72$), and Desdemona's true intent in question five ($M = 72$).

Question ten, as with the control group, was the lowest scoring for the pretest ($M = 30$) of the intervention group. The majority of the students were not able to identify what Desdemona's line "you'll never meet a more sufficient man" illustrated. This possibly may be due to the nature of a cold text and a lack of context of the entire play or its characters.

Question eight required students to infer what Othello's use of the word zounds implies. This question was difficult as it required an understanding of the word zounds as well as the purpose behind the use of the word; however, 67% of the students answered this correctly on the pretest.

Address the purpose of craft technique. Many students of the intervention group chose the accurate purpose of the repetition of the word handkerchief in question nine ($M = 67$) on the pretest. Similar to the control group, this success may be due in part to an emphasis on craft techniques such as repetition in the prerequisite English 1 course. All of these students took English 1 last year.

Intervention group posttest results. Prior to the posttest, the intervention group (n = 18) participated in a drama pedagogy activity with Act 3, Scene 4 of *Othello*. For the drama pedagogy strategy intervention, students divided themselves into two equal groups and lined up in two parallel lines facing one another. Students then read the scene: one line of students read in unison the part of Othello and the other line of students read in unison the part of Desdemona. Students read the scene in this configuration four

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times. The first time the students read the scene in a regular tone of voice at a typical reading speed. The second time students read the scene they were asked to read the scene as loudly as they could. The third time students read the scene they were asked to whisper all of the lines in the scene. After the third reading, students were asked to gather with their line of co-readers to collaborate and determine which lines or words should be read in a regular tone, stressed in a loud voice, or whispered. Students were required to annotate the text as they worked together in the group. For the annotations, the teacher asked the students to highlight or underline the lines read with a stress or loud volume in a red color and to highlight or underline the lines to be read with a whisper in a blue color as signals to help them read the lines in the manner the group determined. During this time the teacher-researcher was a silent observer and took field notes; she did not contribute to the discussions and only interacted with students to clarify instructions.

After the group discussions students read the text a fourth time, this time reading the lines as they determined in the group, varying volume and stress based upon their decisions of how the lines should be delivered. At the completion of this drama pedagogy strategy intervention to read and re-read the scene, students completed the posttest.

The intervention group posttest results ($M = 95$) indicated the drama pedagogy could have had an effect on the students' ability to comprehend the language of Shakespeare. Five students displayed mastery and selected every correct response to earn a perfect score. The results are described below and are organized in categories based upon the four skills assessed in the pretest and posttest.

Identify conflict. The question regarding the conflict in the scene, "What is the

situation in the excerpt?" required recall of the scene. In the posttest 93.8% of students

correctly responded to this question. The one student who chose the wrong answer chose

response option C, "Othello confronts Desdemona about her interaction with Cassio."

The student may have chosen this response because this is the underlying concern of

Othello's questioning Desdemona about the handkerchief. Possibly the student over

thought the question and thought beyond the simplicity of the situation in the excerpt or

the complexity of the question. The class previously discussed Desdemona's interaction

with Cassio and may have mislead this student in choosing the incorrect answer.

Interpret tone. The questions regarding tone, questions three, six, and seven, had

an increase in score; all of the students answered number seven, the question about the

shift in tone correctly ($M = 100$). This may be due in part to the active and vocal aspects

of drama pedagogy. Students could possibly more easily recognize the shift in the tone

when they read the scene out loud. However, question three was about the effect of tone

on the scene and the lowest scoring question on the posttest ($M = 81.3$). While this was

an increase from 44% on the pretest, three students missed choosing the correct effect.

The three who missed the correct answer all chose the response, "Questions indicate

confusion." Students used their basic understanding of what the punctuation of a

question mark indicates, which is that there is a need for an answer to clarify or elaborate.

This was not the main purpose of the use of questions in this particular scene. Students

were required in this question to think beyond the basic understanding and analyze at a

higher level.

The third question about tone, question six, asked students "The tone of the scene

is all of the following except…"; one student missed the correct response ($M = 93.8$).

The student with the incorrect response chose the distractor "bitter" as an answer rather than "apathetic," which could be due to the student not knowing the meaning of the word choices or overlooking the form of the question which used "except" in its question stem.

While not all of the students correctly answered the questions regarding tone, the increase in correct responses regarding tone from the pretest to the posttest was notable. *Develop interpretations through inference.* All of the students correctly answered question two ($M = 100$), "What feelings do Othello's words evoke in the audience?", an increase from 67% on the pretest. Students displayed an ability to use inference to respond to questions regarding the feelings the words evoked in question two ($M = 100$) as well as the intention of Desdemona in question five ($M = 100$). The ability to infer may have been due to the choral reading of the drama pedagogy; the active movement and reading aloud of the lines may have led students to understand the intention better.

Question four asked students to infer what the description of the handkerchief suggested and only one student missed this question on the posttest ($M = 93.8$). The student who missed the question chose response B, "The importance of the handkerchief to Othello's father." This choice was added as a distractor when the test was created by the teacher-researcher because Othello does discuss the importance of the handkerchief to his family, but earlier in the play and not in this excerpt. Possibly the student's thoughts were on the beginning of the play and not the scene or lines the test question referenced. The performance aspect of drama pedagogy may have helped students identify Othello's words more accurately and answer these questions correctly.

Question eight required students to understand the implication of the stage direction and the use of the word *zounds*; all of the students in the intervention group

answered correctly ($M = 100$). The students needed to first know the meaning of the word zounds and then infer what Othello's use of the word implied. In addition to simply testing students' recall of the word's definition, the question's multivalence required students to understand the word's purpose as well.

The lowest scoring question on the pretest ($M = 30$), question 10, which asked students what "Desdemona's line 'you'll never meet a more sufficient man' illustrates" showed an improvement of 63.8 with all but one student getting the question correct on the posttest ($M = 93.8$). This question required students to understand the character of Desdemona and her intentions in the scene. Student growth from the pretest to the posttest may be due to a deeper understanding of Desdemona through either re-reading the scene or the drama pedagogy intervention of choral reading.

Address the purpose of craft technique. Question nine asked students to identify the purpose of the use of the repetition of the word "handkerchief." All of the students in the intervention group responded to this question correctly ($M = 100$), an increase of 67% on the pretest. The use of the drama pedagogy could have helped students understand why the word was repeated. The act of saying the word aloud engaged students' diaphragms and their vocal parts were more open to expression, which may have improved comprehension.

The drama pedagogy may have affected student ability to choose correct responses that could be interpreted more accurately with an additional performance element to the reading of the scene. All students in the intervention group accurately responded to questions regarding Othello's feelings in the scene, Desdemona's intention in the scene, the shift in tone, the implication of the use of the word "zounds," and the

effect of the repetition of words in the scene. All of these questions were possibly

clarified by the performance of the scene; students had a physical connection with the

scene, which may have clarified the conflict, meaning, tone, and shift of tone in the scene

for the reader. The results of the intervention group for both the pretest and the posttest

are displayed in Table 4.3 to show the improvement of the intervention group from the

pretest to the posttest; all students improved on all questions in the posttest.

Table 4.2

Intervention Group Means of Correct Responses on Pretest and Posttest

Item Number	Questions	Means of Correct Responses on Pretest n=18	Means of Correct Responses on Posttest n=18	Difference of Means from Pre- to Posttest n=18
1	What is the situation in the excerpt?	56	93.8	37.8
2	What feelings do Othello's words evoke in the audience?	67	100	33
3	What effect do lines 93-99 have on the tone of the scene?	44	81.3	37.3
4	The description of the handkerchief in lines 65-79 suggests...	72	93.8	21.2
5	Desdemona's true intent in the scene is revealed most by...	72	100	28
6	The tone of the scene is all of the following EXCEPT:	22	93.8	72
7	The shift in tone from line 90 to line 102 can best be described as...	61	100	39

8	Othello's final line of "zounds!" and the stage direction that follows of "*Othello exits*" implies that he...	67	100	33
9	The repetition of the word "handkerchief" in the scene serves to...	67	100	33
10	Desdemona's line "you'll never meet a more sufficient man" (line 106) illustrates	30	93.8	63.8
	Mean	54.4	95	40.6
	Median	60	100	40

Comparison of intervention group pretest and posttest results. In the intervention group all students increased their scores (pretest $M = 54$; posttest $M = 95$). A paired *t*-test was conducted to determine if a statistical difference from the pretest to posttest scores existed. The statistical significance would determine that the results were not due to chance but rather due to the intervention of drama pedagogy in the instruction. There was a statistically significant difference in scores between students' pretest and posttest levels of reading comprehension; $t(17) = 15.5$, $p = .0039$. These results suggest that the difference in students' pre- and posttest scores was due to the intervention of the drama pedagogy. Table 4.4 displays the difference from the intervention group's pre- and posttest results.

Comparison of control and intervention groups pretest and posttest results. An independent *t*-test was conducted on the results of the control and intervention groups to find if there was a statistically significant difference between the control and intervention group posttest results. While the control groups' pretest scores were higher ($M = 67$)

than the pretest scores of the intervention group ($M = 54$), the increase in posttest scores of the intervention group was 42 ($M=95$) and they exceeded the control group by 12.5. The 20 participants in the control group did not demonstrate a statistically significant increase (p-value = 0.14); however, the 18 participants in the intervention group demonstrated a statistically significant increase in performance on the posttest (p-value = .0039). The difference in proficiency from the posttest of the control group to the posttest of the intervention group was found to be statistically significant ($p<.001688$) and not due to chance.

Table 4.3

Control and Intervention Group Posttest Measures

Group	n	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	*p*-value	Standard Deviation
Control	20	67%	82.5%	0.14	13.3
Intervention	18	53%	95%	.0039	8.57

The drama pedagogy could have contributed to the increase in comprehension for the intervention group for many reasons. In the intervention group students stood and were physically engaged during the delivery of the lines rather than passively receiving the information. Wilhelm (2006) posits that when action strategies are used they activate students' prior knowledge and help students build representations to help with comprehension as well as add purpose to reading. During the intervention students were not restricted to the space of a school desk and were involved in a different strategy than they typically experience in the classroom. While standing and speaking the lines, students' diaphragms and vocal parts were engaged and open to expression; this physical and oral expression may have led to a more sophisticated analysis of the scene (Rasinski,

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2003). Students were social, more active, and more aware of what they were reading

when tasked with how to deliver the lines of the scene; the assignment, when the drama

pedagogy was added, became personal. Students talked to one another about the text,

they were displaying energy through their eyes and bodies, and they were attentive to the

directions and the performance. The performance of the scene became a "dovetail of the

cognitive and emotional needs" (Wilhelm, 2006) of students. There was ownership in the

experience because students were making decisions and physically involved in those

decisions, and the drama pedagogy intervention became a student-centered experience

and a collaboration of exploration, rather than a teacher-led experience. The students

became the decision-makers and experts on the performance of the scene and created

"visible mental models of understanding" (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). This inclusion

of the visual may have encouraged students to be more actively involved in the reading

and think more critically and as a result, increase comprehension.

 Attitude scale*.* Quantitative data was also gathered from an attitude scale in the

form of a Likert scale (Appendix B). The attitude scale was administered prior to the start

of the study and at the end of the study. The attitude scale explored the following

research question:

> *What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the attitude of ninth grade students in*
> *the study of classic literature?*

The teacher-researcher asked all students in both the control group and the

intervention group to complete the attitude scale twice: once at the beginning of the study

prior to any instruction and again at the end of the study after *Othello* had been read in its

entirety. The Likert scale was chosen as an instrument in this study to provide students

with pre-coded responses as a guide, but one in which students could show a variance in attitude or opinion in how they agreed or disagreed with a statement. The students were also provided with a "no opinion" option that allowed them to be neutral in their responses.

There were six Likert questions on the attitude scale and one additional free response question regarding the Shakespearean plays students had read or seen prior to reading *Othello* in order for the teacher-researcher to be aware of prior knowledge or previous experiences that could affect student attitude toward the reading of classic literature. All students had either read or watched a film version of *Romeo and Juliet* in spring of the eighth grade and one student in the control group, Adelina, had read *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the private school she attended in the eighth grade. Adelina was a voracious reader and repeatedly requested more homework, so the teacher was not surprised by this foray into classic literature at a young age; although, she admitted in a casual side conversation after the initial attitude scale was administered that she "didn't really understand those plays when she read them." She had prior experience with the language and subsequently scored a perfect score on the pretest; however, her understanding of the conflict and characters in her independent reading appeared, from her admission, lacking due to the maturity required to understand the dynamics of classic works. Adelina also commented on her attitude scale that she did not enjoy listening to her classmates read a scene aloud (she chose strongly disagree as her response) because they read too slowly for her and could not match her pace.

Overall the attitude scale showed a shift in students' attitudes about reading Shakespeare from the beginning of the study to the end. The results of the posttest

attitude scale indicated a more positive attitude toward Shakespeare than the pretest

results collected prior to the class reading *Othello*. Students were more confident in their

ability to understand Shakespeare's plays, which may be due to their motivation to learn

as honors students enrolled in a gifted magnet program. In addition, students' responses

in regards to acting out scenes and working with others supported the gregarious

community of both the control and intervention groups. Generally, the teacher-researcher

found students' attitudes toward learning and trying new methods or strategies was

consistently positive. These students admittingly enjoyed attending school, found

challenges invigorating, and possessed an innate desire to learn. These were highly

competitive students who strove for perfection in all aspects of their academic career;

therefore, the mention of trying a new method of learning such as drama pedagogy was

exciting to them.

     Control group attitude scale results. The control group's attitude scale results

displayed some hesitation in understanding and connecting to Shakespeare's works, but

an affinity to strategies that involved group work or working with a partner, especially

when the assignment required reading. The pre- and posttest results are displayed in

Table 4.6. Question number one asked students which works of Shakespeare they had

read. The Likert scale begins with question two.

     For the second question on the attitude scale, "When I read Shakespeare's

language I understand what I have read" the students were not sure or overly confident in

their abilities on the pretest survey as only 22% of students were in the agree category;

however, the posttest survey proved an improvement in attitude as 75% of students

agreed or strongly agreed they understood Shakespeare's language. This posttest

response was most likely the result of the general experience reading Shakespeare and that once the students practiced reading Shakespeare's language, their confidence in their ability to comprehend the language increased.

Similarly, the third question, which stated, "When I read Shakespeare I feel a connection to the characters," showed an increase in confidence as 65% of the students chose agree or strongly agree as their answers on the posttest as opposed to only 33% on the pretest. The practice and experience of reading the play during the traditional seat-based instructed helped students find the confidence in their ability to understand the characters.

Student responses to question four, "I enjoy standing in front of the class acting out scenes from a play" showed only an 3% increase from agree to strongly agree on the pretest to the posttest. On the pretest 67% of the students either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement and on the posttest 70% of students agreed or strongly agreed they liked to act out scenes from a play. Students were consistent in their responses on question four from the pretest to the posttest most likely because they did not receive the intervention. These students did not experience drama pedagogy and therefore the teacher-researcher did not anticipate a shift from the pretest to the posttest.

Question five also showed little shift from the pretest to the posttest and nearly the same number of students agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed working with others to read a scene. More students, 50% of them, strongly agreed on the posttest they liked to work with others to read a scene which was an increase from 28% on the pretest. Again, these students were in the control group and there were few opportunities with the

traditional seat-based instruction to work with others to read a scene. The students'

consistency is indicative of the approach to teaching the play.

The two final questions asked students to rank if they preferred to read alone or

listen to their classmates read aloud. The responses on the posttest were consistent with

the responses on the pretest and the majority of students preferred to listen to a scene read

aloud and/or listen to their classmates read the scene aloud. Overall the control group

remained consistent in its responses from the pretest to the posttest and showed little

change in their opinions regarding reading a scene.

Table 4.4

Control Group Pretest and Posttest Attitude Scale

n=20		Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree
2. When I read Shakespeare's language I understand what I have read.	Pre	11%	28%	39%	22%	0%
	Post	0%	5%	20%	70%	5%
3. When I read Shakespeare I feel a connection to the characters.	Pre	22%	11%	28%	33%	0%
	Post	5%	15%	15%	50%	15%
4. I enjoy standing in front of the class acting out scenes from a play.	Pre	11%	17%	5%	50%	17%
	Post	0%	15%	15%	15%	55%
5. I enjoy working with others to read a scene.	Pre	0%	0%	11%	61%	28%
	Post	0%	15%	5%	30%	50%
6. I prefer to read alone (read to myself) when reading a scene.	Pre	28%	45%	11%	11%	5%
	Post	30%	45%	15%	10%	0%
7. I like to listen to	Pre	5%	0%	22%	50%	22%

my classmates read the scene aloud.	Post	0%	5%	10%	65%	20%

The results of the control group pretest and posttest attitude scale showed a shift from the pretest to the posttest in students' attitudes toward the reading and performing of Shakespeare. After reading the play in its entirety students' responses indicated a new sense of confidence, an affinity toward reading with peers, and a preference to participate in the more active option of working with others.

Intervention group attitude scale results. The intervention group's responses on the attitude scale showed a shift to a more positive attitude about their comprehension and performance of Shakespeare's work.

Question two, "When I read Shakespeare's language I understand what I have read" displayed a positive shift in attitude from the pretest to the posttest. On the pretest survey 78% of students either had no opinion or stated they did not understand Shakespeare's language. On the posttest 72% of students agreed or strongly agreed they understood Shakespeare's language when they read. This question referred to an overall experience, not just the reading of this scene, and can most likely be attributed to the practice and experience of reading the entire play.

Similarly, in question three on the posttest 67% of students responded they agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a connection to the characters when they read as seen; on the pretest only 33% stated they felt a connection to the characters. The connection to the characters and understanding of the language could contribute overall to comprehension of the work; however, the drama pedagogy strategy encouraged students to think and act like the characters, which may have helped students feel a connection.

Question four, "I enjoy standing in front of the class acting out scenes from a play" had scattered responses on the pretest and 60% of students responded positively (agree or strongly agree) about the experience of performance prior to the intervention. However, on the posttest survey, after the intervention, 100% of students chose they agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed standing in front of the class acting out a scene from a play. The gregarious community in the classroom was comfortable and those who originally did not agree that acting out was enjoyable changed their minds. The intervention led the entire class to comment that the experience of performance was one that they enjoyed.

In addition, in response to question five, "I enjoy working with others to read a scene," 67% of students strongly agreed on the posttest whereas on the pretest only 28% strongly agreed. The active and social interaction that occurred from the reading and performing of the scene possibly affected students' positive responses to the questions.

The responses to question six, which asked if students would prefer to read alone were consistent from the pretest to the posttest. The majority of the class disagreed or strongly disagreed about reading alone. Similarly, students maintained in question seven from the pretest to the posttest that they liked to listen to classmates read a scene aloud; the 5% outlier on the pretest moved to either the agree or strongly agree selection with the rest of the class. Students preferred to read with their classmates which corroborated the description of the class as being gregarious and having a strong sense of community. These students wanted to work together and enjoyed an experience with a more social approach to learning.

Table 4.5

Intervention Group Pretest and Posttest Attitude Scale

n=18		Strongly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree
2. When I read Shakespeare's language I understand what I have read.	Pre	11%	28%	39%	22%	0%
	Post	0%	11%	17%	50%	22%
3. When I read Shakespeare I feel a connection to the characters.	Pre	28%	11%	28%	33%	0%
	Post	5%	17%	11%	56%	11%
4. I enjoy standing in front of the class acting out scenes from a play.	Pre	11%	17%	5%	50%	17%
	Post	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%
5. I enjoy working with others to read a scene.	Pre	0%	0%	11%	61%	28%
	Post	0%	0%	5%	34%	67%
6. I prefer to read alone (read to myself) when reading a scene.	Pre	28%	45%	11%	11%	5%
	Post	11%	72%	0%	17%	0%
7. I like to listen to my classmates read a scene aloud.	Pre	5%	0%	22%	50%	22%
	Post	0%	0%	0%	56%	44%

The intervention group's pretest to posttest attitude scale results indicated a shift from their pretest opinions about reading and performing Shakespeare to their posttest opinions. On the posttest attitude scale students displayed in their responses a confidence that was not present prior to the intervention and a preference for performing and reading

scenes with an active, social strategy.

Summary of Quantitative Data Results

According to the pretest scores ($M = 54.4$) the intervention group was not as prepared to read Shakespeare as the control group ($M = 67$) when the study began; however, the intervention group's increase in scores on the posttest ($M = 95$) proved they could successfully comprehend Shakespeare after the intervention occurred. Perhaps the amount of time students spent on the scene, the collaboration of the creation of the scene, and the re-reading of the scene aided in the intervention groups' increase in scores on the posttest. However, the close reading strategies of re-reading and collaboration are part of the philosophy of drama pedagogy (Walker, Tabone, & Weltsek, 2011). With the help of drama pedagogy students became the experts in the text and created their own scenarios based upon their interpretations of the scene.

The multiple choice pretest and posttest were not timed and no time constraints were given for completion of the assessment for either the control or the intervention group; therefore, if students in either group had wanted to re-read, reflect at length, or annotate during the pretest and posttest, they had the opportunity. Possibly the use of the drama pedagogy intervention helped students slow down in their reading, read and annotate more thoroughly, and pay attention to all of the aspects of the scene such as punctuation and word length, not simply recall the words on the page in a cursory way (Fisher & Frey, 2013; McDermott, Falk-Ross, & Medow, 2017).

McDermott, Falk-Ross, & Medow (2017) posit that the performing arts might be effective for students who are "uninvolved" and "unfocused" when asked to read a text closely. Claire (pseudonym) stated, "Having to act out the play caused me to read it more

carefully so I could actually act it out properly." Students often equated reading speed

with being a good reader and assumed that slow readers were not as good at reading.

While fluency does affect comprehension (Bidwell, 1990), reading quickly does not

provide students with the appropriate amount of time needed to close read for analysis.

The drama pedagogy forced students to slow down in their reading of the scene and focus

on the details required for in-depth analysis and mastery on the posttest.

Qualitative Data Analysis and Results

Qualitative data was gathered from reflective journals the students completed at

the beginning, middle, and end of the study. The teacher-researcher also gathered field

notes as a silent observer when the students in the intervention group worked to complete

the drama pedagogy intervention strategy.

Reflective journals. The reflective journals (Appendix C), written by both the

control group and the intervention group at the beginning, middle, and end of the two-

week study, explored the following research question:

What are ninth grade students' perceptions of how drama pedagogy affects their

empathy toward peers' racial, gendered, and religious views in the study of

classic literature?

The control group did not participate in the intervention; therefore, their responses did not

include details about the drama pedagogy intervention.

The methodology conducted for the analysis of the three reflective journals for

each student was first to combine all of the responses in a single Google doc. Students

completed the three journals on Google docs that were submitted to Google Classroom,

which provided the teacher with access to their responses. The teacher-researcher copied

and pasted the control group responses and the intervention group responses separately into an online text analyzer that found the most frequent phrases and words mentioned in the document. The teacher-researcher then coded the original documents for the repeated phrases and most commonly used words (Saldana, 2009). While she focused on words and phrases frequently said, she also highlighted those that were disparate and appeared as outliers from the group. Lastly, the teacher-researcher labeled patterns within the intervention group which eventually became the key themes listed in chapter four.

Control group reflective journals responses. The control group's responses to the reflective journals aligned with their results on the pretest and posttest and the Likert scales. The students indicated a growth in their learning and proved they gained knowledge through the traditional seat-based instruction. They readily discussed how they felt when they read Shakespeare the first time: confused, surprised, frustrated. However, half of the students wrote something about being helped with understanding the text. For example, Noah (pseudonym): "The side notes are helpful as well as when Ms. Teacher (pseudonym) stops us reading to better explain what's going on." Noah appreciated being told what the lines meant when the teacher intervened in the traditional instruction. Another student commented, "I believe I would have understood it better the first time had we gone over it as a class with our teacher to tell us what was important and interpret it in a better way." From these responses the teacher-researcher deduced that those involved in the traditional seat-based instruction were not independent readers. Their understanding of the text, according to them, would come from an outside source, not themselves.

Six of the students commented about the tone and its "being monotone" or that

"the scene was monotonous." Baker (pseudonym) said, "I was a bit confused because when I read it in my head because I did not put emotion into it, so I didn't really understand the tone." Another student said, "I didn't understand the emotions in what was going on and I mostly just read the words of the scene, rather than understand the anger with the characters." Students knew they were missing the emotion and tone from the scene; none of them discussed any way they could figure out the tone or discover what the tone could possibly be. According to their earlier responses, the teacher-researcher believed these students were expecting someone to tell them what the tone was in order to determine a correct analysis of the tone.

These students were passive in their learning and not independently engaged in the text. Seemingly, the control group students were dependent upon the teacher's instruction to understand rather than grappling with the text on their own for comprehension and analysis. These students were not reflective enough or not able to reflect deeply about their learning. The teacher-researcher felt the control group did not have much to say about their learning because it was typical of their regular experiences in an English Language Arts classroom. The traditional seat-based instruction group was lacking in deep analysis and their responses did not evoke the same themes present in the intervention group's responses.

Intervention group reflective journals responses. In comparison, six key themes emerged from the analysis of the intervention group's reflective journals. The six themes were confidence in reading Shakespeare, re-reading to clarify plot and characters, analytical skills to interpret tone, connections from the text to social issues, development of empathy, and the performance's effect on the enjoyment of reading.

Confidence in reading Shakespeare. In the first reflective journal many of the students stated in response to questions regarding their thoughts on reading the scene the first time and their ability to analyze that they were "confused", "not sure of what's going on", "mostly intimidated" and that the "language is hard to understand." Their reluctance to read Shakespeare was palpable. Their frustration was heard through written comments such as "my ability to analyze the scene was mediocre", "I didn't feel successful" and that "I was worried that my knowledge of Shakespeare from *Romeo and Juliet* had completely faded." Greg (pseudonym) stated, "Desdemona did not know what was going on, just like me." When asked to predict their scores on the pretest (question three on the reflective journal), 85% of the students claimed they believed they had earned a 70% or below. Most of these students historically earned 90%'s and above on all class assignments. The grade of an *A* on the state's grading scale is for percentages of 90% and above; the majority of these students earn all *A*'s on their report cards. Although some students did well on the pretest, their confidence in their ability was lacking.

However, after the intervention of the drama pedagogy, a positive shift occurred in student confidence. Leigh stated that "the activities we did really helped my understanding and helped me come up with methods to better understand Shakespeare." Students found that after the intervention they had a method to tackle the text whereas prior to the intervention they were unsure of where to begin in how to approach a text they stated was difficult for them to read and comprehend. The re-reading of the drama pedagogy helped students clarify their confusion about the plot and characters. After the intervention there were shifts in student thinking as well as growth in their metacognition and analysis of Shakespeare.

Re-reading to clarify plot and characters. The student reflections of the intervention group demonstrated a growth in comprehension and interpretation from the first reading to subsequent readings. Harry (pseudonym) stated that *"*I feel like reading aloud and stepping into the shoes of the characters helps me better understand what exactly happened in the play." Part of the effectiveness of the drama pedagogy activity was the repetition and re-reading of the scene. The re-reading and repetition aided in the clarification and analysis of the plot as and characters. Harry said that:

> The first time I read it I thought that the speaker (Othello) was just losing his temper in one moment because of Iago's brainwashing. After I performed it, my feelings of Othello were much stronger and I thought of him as an angry and hateful person. This probably resulted from yelling out Othello's lines because it made them seem much more powerful.

Another observation of the in-depth analysis of students after re-reading and performing was when Remus (pseudonym) stated, "I thought Othello was overreacting over a lost handkerchief. After performing it, I understood that the handkerchief not only had intrinsic value to Othello, but was symbolic of Desdemona's supposed betrayal." The use of drama pedagogy provided a clarification of plot elements that were not present when students read in the traditional seat-based manner. Students also commented that the use of performance altered the way they viewed the meaning of the scene and how watching the performances shifted the way they thought about the characters.

Analytical skills to interpret tone. The use of the drama pedagogy added a visual, auditory, and kinesthetic experience to the reading that was not accessible in the traditional seat-based reading and possibly improved students' analytical skills. In particular, the drama pedagogy could have helped students understand the tone of the scene. When students stood to read the lines and added movement to the words while

they spoke them, the tone of the characters became more evident. Students not only had visual and auditory experiences with the concept to reference when taking the posttest, but a physical one as well. With drama pedagogy the concept was taught with several senses, helping students understand the scene in an analytical way as opposed to only a superficial one.

This analysis was primarily seen in the verbal expression of the scene. Grace said that performing the scene "helped me better understand the scene when we met with our groups and assigned words to be whispered/words to be yelled. This helped me to visualize what the conversation between Othello and Desdemona would have actually been like." Bruce stated, "I understood the emotions behind the characters much more when I shouted the lines. For example, I noticed Othello's increasing anger the more that he said 'handkerchief.'" Sandra (pseudonym) supported the use of performance as an aide to understand the text when she shared that "After we performed it adding the needed pauses and change of tone, I could definitely understand it better. I knew the tone well and was able to identify the tension and confusion between the two characters." Moving through the words with varying levels of intensity helped students understand the tone of the scene in a more authentic way than the seat-based instruction and aided students to respond correctly to the tone questions on the posttest.

In addition, students identified a more concise and accurate meaning of word connotation with the drama pedagogy intervention. Thanos (pseudonym) wrote that,

> When we performed the scene the connotation of the word changed. Using a tone of voice and changing the volume of the voice, I discovered that the lines had different meanings. For example, yelling ¨Handkerchief!¨ gave an angry connotation. Whispering handkerchief gave a sad and tired connotation.

The repeated reflections in regards to volume and tone that evolved from the drama

pedagogy activity were also present in Ling's (pseudonym) comment when he stated:

> Reading the handkerchief scene in different voices helped to reinforce the importance of verbal tone on meaning in writing. The characters in the play resemble stereotypical high school interactions in which the conflict could have been easily avoided if the characters had better communication.

Ling's comments stepped beyond the analysis of the literature as he made a text to self

connection about high school student interactions. The drama pedagogy tapped into his

real-life experiences and aided in his understanding of the relationship of the characters

in the play on a different level than he had prior to the drama pedagogy intervention.

Connections from the text to social issues. The reflective journals asked students

to discuss any social issues found in *Othello* and if reading and performing the play

affected their point of view or how they treated others. Most of the students responded

on the point of social issues, not specifically about their own treatment of others, which

the teacher-researcher stated may have been due to the structure of the question or the

lack of specificity in the question. Also, since the students were in ninth grade and 14

years old, they may not have had personal experiences with these social issues.

Developmentally they may not have had encountered gender, religion, or race issues

themselves and only see the issues as those that affect others. Few students replied

regarding their treatment of others, and the majority of those students commented that

they already respected others for their race, religion, and gender and did not need to make

changes in their own lives regarding social issues. For example, Helena stated:

> This play points out things that were problems in classical times that are still issues today, which is rather sad. With how much we have progressed from back then, you'd think that we would have learned how to treat people at least a bit better.

Helena's response placed the social issue outside of herself and she did not comment on her treatment of others in her own life. However, the connection of the classic text to modern day situations aided in her reflection of *Othello*.

Students recognized the connection of *Othello* to modern day, but not to themselves. For example, Sandra wrote, "After seeing the disregard towards women back then, it shines a light on how issues like these are present in our current day. We can relate topics from times back then to see how they connect with modern times." Tyler curtly shared his opinion about the social issues present in the play and wrote, "If there is anything I got out of this, it is how NOT to act." Roberta (pseudonym) was one student who admitted to the reading affecting her treatment of others. She stated,

> *Othello* has definitely changed one thing about the way I treat others, and that is that I need to try and think about things more before I say them. Although I did want to start doing this because of the way Iago behaved, it was not for malicious purposes such as his. It made me start thinking more before I speak in rash or blunt way.

The social issues did not affect most of the students' perceptions of the treatment of others; based on their responses they appeared to believe their treatment of others was already what it should be.

Several students commented about how the character's reactions reminded them of a situation they have encountered in their own lives. For example, Daniel (pseudonym) said, "The acting out really helped me notice a lot of things/add some things myself that I would not have thought of before and it made me further analyze the script since I actually had to act it out myself." Helena (pseudonym) also connected the performed scene to real life: "Although the handkerchief scene in *Othello* was written by

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Shakespeare, it still resembles how people fight today over petty assumptions without ever stating why they are upset."

The students' responses in the reflective journals pointed out the positive aspects of the use of *Othello* for class discussions, especially those that revolved around current social issues. Bob wrote, **"**The acting has helped bridge some gaps in the classroom, to make it more of a collective group instead of a bunch of individuals." Leigh stated, "I think that covering these topics has helped our classroom discussion be more thoughtful." Claire wrote, "I think covering these topics has allowed our classroom discussion to be more open to talking about problems and issues." Dabby wrote:

> Knowing the way the treated African Americans and women in the play, I feel more thankful about the way we are treated now and it makes me grateful. After reading Othello I seem to be making sure everyone is included and I think it has made our classroom discussion more friendly and more in depth.

Harry (pseudonym) wrote,

> Even though everyone is different, they should all have the same standards of life and they should all be held accountable for who they are. Covering these topics has made our classroom discussion more interesting, more mature, and easier to talk in. Students are interested in issues like this, so they will be more willing to talk in discussions.

Warren stated,

> Reading *Othello* has taught me of how racism and discrimination towards women have been present for centuries, but that the act of absolving of these issues has only progressed minimally. *Othello* reminds me to always treat others with kindness and respect. I think covering these topics has raised the intelligence and maturity levels of our classroom discussion.

Although the teacher-researcher noticed students did not generally make personal comments about their own empathy and treatment of others as a result of the drama

pedagogy, the student responses displayed an understanding and appreciation for the classroom discussions that resulted from the inclusion of drama pedagogy.

Development of empathy. Another theme that emerged from the reflective journals of the intervention group was an empathetic development toward the characters. The use of the drama activity provided an opportunity for a new insight into the incentives and emotions of the characters and seemingly a newfound empathy for what the characters experienced. Students attributed that insight to having to say the words as the character would, and as Jacob said, "walk in their shoes." Toby (pseudonym) stated, "The variety of readings helped me understand because I actually felt how angry Othello was about the handkerchief." To respond to question six on the reflective journal, which asked, "What did you think of the speaker of the scene after you performed it?" Grace (pseudonym) stated that:

> When Othello questions Desdemona about the handkerchief, I perceived Othello to be a angry man with a short temper. When I performed it I realized that Othello had lost something important to him and his wife was perceived to be having an affair. Given these circumstances I understood where Othello's rage came from.

The students evoked a passion toward the characters through the writing of the reflective journals after the drama pedagogy intervention that was not present in the classroom discussion or the reflective journals of the control group. Through the journals students shared their personal attachments to characters and passions about their likes or dislikes for them. Wayne (pseudonym) wrote, "I HATE IAGO. He can't just stop. Othello is dumb. Desdemona is dumb. Iago is dumb. Roderigo is dumb. Everyone is dumb." Helena was equally as passionate about the characters in her second reflective journal:

> 90% of everyone in this play is some type of extreme: Roderigo has ZERO common sense, Cassio digs himself a hole by being too nice, Desdemona possibly gets in trouble for being the least perceptive person on the planet, Othello might kill someone over being wayyyyyy [sic] too perceptive.

Isaac (pseudonym) stated:

> To be honest, I hate most of the characters. How could Desdemona and Othello be so gullible to fall into Iago's trap? Seeing things spiral downwards so fast definitely makes me hate Iago and all of his victims. Also, seeing the way Iago treats Emilia makes me hate him even more, but I also hate Emilia for still being loyal to him.

The students' dislike for the characters came from the performance of the acts they deemed gullible or lacking in sense.

Students' dislike of the characters proved an evaluation of standards and values took place with the drama pedagogy intervention that did not take place with the control group. Seemingly, the drama pedagogy helped make the characters more real to the students and therefore they found they could connect the characters to their own values or judge the characters against their own values. This could possibly affect a student's empathy toward others. In addition, from these comments regarding the characters, teachers could potentially learn a lot about their students; student evaluations of characters provided insight into their values, beliefs, and sensitivities which could help the teacher plan more effective ways to engage students in other works of literature or classroom discussions.

Performance's effect on enjoyment of reading. When the reflective journals were coded, the teacher-researcher found an aspect of the drama pedagogy intervention that was not predicted or explored in the research questions: student enjoyment. The word "fun" appeared 31 times in the analysis of the reflective journals. The positivity found in the student responses throughout the study helped the teacher-researcher realize that not only was the method of drama pedagogy likely to increase comprehension, it could also

increase the enjoyment of students in the classroom. Thanos summarized his experience and wrote, "Reading is normally considered boring, but reading Shakespeare now puts a smile on my face."

Overall, the use of drama pedagogy positively affected students' experiences with Shakespeare and *Othello*. Remus' reaction to the activity summarized the overall experience of the students with drama pedagogy when he wrote, "The class activities helped me understand the scene and gave me tools that I can use to help read future works of Shakespeare or other authors of the time." Students expressed an increase in confidence and proved an ability to analyze the plot and characters. The connections students made to *Othello* after the intervention of drama pedagogy were more authentic and transferred to the development of empathy that was not present in the traditional seat-based instruction. The positive results of the drama pedagogy could transfer to other experiences with other classic works of literature in English 2 and subsequent courses that required reading.

While the drama pedagogy focused on comprehension and was included to address serious social issues, the students found the performance element enjoyable. Gorard and See (2011) posited that students who enjoyed school often achieved well, sought further education or training after secondary school, and became confident and responsible citizens. If drama pedagogy increased enjoyment in the classroom and student learning, perhaps it could also improve students' overall attitudes about reading independently and school in general.

Field Notes. The drama pedagogy strategy required students of the intervention group to read either the part of Othello or the part of Desdemona four times. First

students read the scene in a regular speaking voice. For the second reading the students said the lines as loudly as they wished, and for the third reading, students whispered the lines. Prior to the fourth reading students collaborated with their peers to determine which of the performance styles was appropriate for which portion of the reading. Students annotated and coded the reading using colored highlighters: strong intonation/loud words were coded in pink highlighter and soft intonation/whisper words were coded in blue. Students then read the scene a final time with the mixture of volumes and intonations.

As students worked in groups on the drama pedagogy strategy between the third and fourth reading, the teacher-researcher was a silent observer and gathered field notes from the conversations that took place during the collaboration. The teacher-researcher coded the notes to find similarities and themes that emerged and found the discussions revolved around three main topics: punctuation as a performance indicator, the effect of word length on tone, and volume's effect on meaning.

Punctuation as performance indicator. When students began to dissect the passage their first strategy was to look for meaning in exclamation points to determine what should be read loudly; this was as a result of their prior knowledge of the use and purpose of punctuation. When students encountered questions marks however, there were several debates of whether these were true questions or rhetorical and sarcastic questions. One group determined that the "Not?" in line six truly meant "oh, really?" in a suspicious manner and shifted their performance of that line from a simple question to a drawn out vowel to create a tone of accusation in the word. A student commented that this line should not have volume because "You don't shout when only vaguely annoyed."

Students' grasp of knowledge regarding punctuation assisted in their comprehension. When asked to perform the scene they paid close attention to the punctuation marks as a clue on how to deliver a line; eight students admitted in the reflective journal when they read the scene silently to themselves there was little recognition of the punctuation. This use of drama pedagogy in the reading may help students be more mindful of punctuation in future readings.

Effect of word length on tone. Another key element students recognized through the intervention of the drama pedagogy activity was the length of words. When the lines were read aloud during the group collaborations, students realized many words in the scene were monosyllabic. A student commented that when the conflict became heated between Othello and Desdemona that the characters' words became short. With the help of her classmates, the group determined that "monosyllabic words were easier to yell" which explained "why the words suddenly became easier to read." Drew (pseudonym) connected the scene to a personal experience and commented that "when my dad uses short words with me I know he's agitated" and then determined it made sense to show Othello's agitation with Desdemona and shout the lines "Is 't lost? Is 't gone?" because that is what his "dad does when I lose something."

After this conversation students went on a search through the text to find all the words that were monosyllabic and whether it made sense to increase volume on those words. In addition, Jeffrey (pseudonym) mentioned in his reflective journal that "When we performed the scene it did help me understand it, a specific example is that I didn't notice how Othello was speaking in short words and phrases because he was angry when I first read through it by myself." Remus also wrote that, "After we performed the scene,

I understood the meaning better since we changed the way we spoke the lines. We yelled monosyllabic lines with a lot of weight behind them and spoke the calmer, polysyllabic lines with a quieter tone."

Volume's effect on meaning. At first students wanted to shout every line because initially their belief was that volume implied anger (and they also admitted to enjoying yelling in class). After several readings of the passage one group's discussion led to a decision only to shout certain words and to shift their tone to only stress a syllable or word rather than simply shout an entire line. Students also wanted to alternate from whispering to shouting for effect. For example, the last line Desdemona speaks, "I' faith, you are to blame" was a line students initially wanted to shout. After a discussion about how they were going to perform the line they decided at this point in the scene Desdemona has given up and is determined to shift her tone from angry and aggressive to resolved and accepting of Othello's anger (which was a question on the multiple choice test). The students determined the line truly meant that "Desdemona is saying it's not my fault" and decided to whisper her acceptance out of obedience to Othello. At this point a student commented that "a woman during this time period would generally be more accepting of her husband's authority" and would not fight with him too aggressively. This conversation connected the drama pedagogy to a social issue we had previously discussed in class prior to this activity.

Students also discussed at length how loudly to deliver the line "The handkerchief!" because the word is repeated five times in the scene and is followed by an exclamation point. The repetition of the word clued students into it being an important part of the scene and they were enthusiastic speaking the line each time but decided in the

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group they did not want to shout the word each time. One student, Ling (pseudonym), who is enrolled in orchestra class and plays the violin, suggested the word "handkerchief" be spoken in a pattern similar to a crescendo in music and each time the word was delivered, it should get louder. Students agreed and decided to show the "increase in Othello's anger and intensity by saying the line more demanding and louder each time," as Ling suggested. The collaboration and experience of the drama pedagogy led the students to make accurate decisions in how to perform the scene. The connections they made between their experiences in life or in music in how to perform the scene were a result of the drama pedagogy.

Data Triangulation

The quantitative and qualitative data of this convergent mixed methods action research study were triangulated to validate the data. All instruments in the study explored how drama pedagogy affected comprehension, students' attitudes toward classic literature, and their perception of empathy toward their peers.

Quantitative data suggested that drama pedagogy had an impact on the comprehension of students when reading classic literature. Scores on the posttest assessments indicated that the drama pedagogy intervention group performed better than students in the control group. Both the control and intervention groups' mean scores increased; however, only the intervention groups' scores were statistically significant. More students indicated mastery on the posttest in the intervention group and the mean proved students' abilities to comprehend the classic literature with the help of the drama pedagogy intervention.

Performance on the multiple choice pretests and posttests was congruent with the responses on the attitude scale. Both the control and intervention groups showed a more positive attitude toward the study of classic literature after reading *Othello*, although the intervention group showed a greater shift in its perception of ability to comprehend and enjoyment of performing and reading with peers. All of the students in the intervention group agreed or strongly agreed after the intervention of the drama pedagogy that they enjoyed performing a scene. The attitude scale indicated that the students had a more positive attitude toward the study of classic literature after the intervention.

Student responses on the reflective journals also indicated that students were more engaged and enjoyed the drama pedagogy intervention. However, the journals did not indicate if students' perceptions of their empathy changed as a result of the drama pedagogy. The students believed their empathy toward others was as it should be and therefore, there was no change in their perceptions from the beginning of the study to the end. Students did however indicate that classroom discussions regarding social issues were richer and more valued, so while their perception of empathy did not change, their sense of freedom in discussing the social issues with classmates did change.

The analysis of all of the data suggest that drama pedagogy is effective in its inclusion in the teaching of classic literature. It also suggests that the problem of practice could be solved with the active teaching approach of drama pedagogy. According to the data, drama pedagogy encouraged students to be active participants in reading, aided students in close reading practices, and maintained student interest in the reading. Students connected to one another through collaboration while experiencing the text kinesthetically. Their dependence upon online sources to help interpret and analyze

could be minimized with the use of drama pedagogy strategies and cultivate an independence in reading comprehension that could transfer to test-taking experiences such as the end of course examination. In addition, the use of the strategy supported classroom discussions of social issues. The combination of these positive experiences with drama pedagogy increased student enjoyment of reading classic literature, which may transfer to the reading of other texts and promote the reading of more literature.

Summary

Quantitative data was collected in the form of a pretest posttest to answer the first research question. Students' abilities to comprehend Shakespeare were assessed with the multiple-choice pretest posttest and the results were analyzed with descriptive statistics and a paired t-test. Through the analysis of data, the results were found to be statistically significant and had an impact on students' comprehension of Shakespeare.

Quantitative data was also collected with a Likert scale, called an attitude scale in this study, to explore the second research question regarding the impact of drama pedagogy on the attitude of students in the study of classic literature. The scale was completed at the beginning of the intervention and after; the responses on the scale showed that students had a more positive attitude about classic literature after the intervention of the drama pedagogy.

The third research question was explored through qualitative data in the form of reflective journals and field notes. Students' comments provided insight to their perceptions about their empathy toward the social issues of race and gender in *Othello* and with their peers. The majority of the students did not believe they needed to change their outlook on the social issues of race, gender, or religion and felt their views were the

way they needed to be. The students who addressed the social issues showed acceptance

for all races and religions and a belief in equity for all genders.

The teacher-researcher considered the data of value not only for her classroom

instruction, but possibly for the inclusion of drama pedagogy in other classrooms at the

research site. In chapter five the teacher-researcher will discuss recommendations for

future implications of this research.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The reflective process that led the teacher-researcher to this study started with a conversation with colleagues about students exhibiting disengaged behavior in the classroom and the amount of time students were not on task. Students were not connected to the reading of literature and were not comprehending the reading independently or without the aid of online sources. The English department teachers shared strategies to get the students involved, but the reality was no matter how much technology was implemented, which seemingly only disengaged students more, or how many collaborative group projects were assigned, the key was to get students out of their desks and physically, not just mentally, involved in the learning. In conjunction with Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligences theory, an approach that included the affective, not just a cognitive one, was necessary. The teacher-researcher searched for strategies that would help students learn how to be active learners who have a connection to their learner rather than passive students who simply check off the parts of a rubric for an assignment. Students who can bridge between academic and social emotional are more connected to their learning (Rutledge & Cannata, 2015); the teachers at the research site needed students to want and have ownership of their learning. After the teacher-researcher's professional experiences with drama pedagogy, she decided to attempt the performance-based activities of drama pedagogy.

In addition, in the spring of 2019 the end of course examination, a state-mandated standardized test, will be piloted in the English 2 course, the specific course the students in this study are enrolled. The end of course examination is currently given in English 1, but after next year, the test will move to English 2. The test results are examined to determine student ability in reading and writing; the scores are counted as the course's final exam grade. This shifts the onus to the English 2 teachers and increases the urgency to find strategies to help students comprehend and closely read literature as well as teach with strategies to actively engage them in reading and writing for this new level of expectation.

Research Questions

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected for this convergent mixed methods action research study to explore the following research questions:

1. *What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the comprehension of Shakespeare's language by ninth grade students in the study of classic literature?*

2. *What is the impact of drama pedagogy on the attitude of ninth grade students in the study of classic literature?*

3. *What are ninth grade students' perceptions of how drama pedagogy affects their empathy toward peers' racial, gendered, and religious views in the study of classic literature?*

Action Research Study

The teacher-researcher chose action research for this convergent mixed-methods study. According to Lewin, action research includes identifying an idea, reconnaissance

of the idea, and planning action based upon the results of this idea (Koshy, 2010).

Teaching is iterative and teachers repeatedly evaluate strategies and practices based upon

student performance; therefore, action research was an applicable choice. In this study

quantitative data in the form of scores from a pre- and posttest and an attitude scale were

gathered to determine if drama pedagogy affected comprehension and attitude.

Additionally, qualitative data in the form of student reflective journals and field notes

were used to support, elaborate, and explain the quantitative results (Mertler, 2017).

Mixed-methods and action research combine the perspectives of an insider and outsider;

this was appropriate for this study as the teacher frequently shifted between the roles of

teacher and observer.

Review of Methodology

A convergent mixed methods action research study (Creswell, 2007) was

conducted with two separate English 2 classes of ninth grade students. The teacher-

researcher used a 10-question multiple choice pretest and posttest and a Likert scale to

gather quantitative data and a series of three reflective journals to gather qualitative data.

Both the control and intervention groups were asked to complete all of the instruments.

At the beginning of the two-week unit of study, the control group completed the

Likert scale, referred to as an attitude scale in this study, to determine their attitude

toward reading and performing Shakespeare. After they responded to the attitude scale,

during the same class period, the students completed the pretest for the teacher-researcher

to assess their baseline comprehension of Shakespeare. They also completed the first

reflective journal, which was an open response to how they felt when reading

Shakespeare. After the control group students read through act three of *Othello* and were

taught with a traditional seat-based instruction, the control group completed the posttest, which was the same test as the pretest and another reflective journal. At the completion of reading Othello, the control group completed the second Likert scale and the final reflective journal.

The intervention group also took the pretest to assess their baseline comprehension of Shakespeare's language and completed the initial Likert scale to gather information regarding their attitude toward reading and performing with classmates. Pre-intervention thoughts were also gathered in the reflective journals. Students read through *Othello* to act three then participated in the intervention of drama pedagogy. For the intervention students were asked to divide into two groups and read the scene: one group read the lines of Desdemona and one group read the lines of Othello. Students read through the scene four times. The first time they read in a regular tone of voice, the second time they read loudly, the third time they read in a whisper, and the fourth time they read in a combination of tones that they determined based upon group collaboration. During the group collaboration that took place between the third and fourth reading, students paused discussed how they felt the lines of the scene should be read. Students annotated the text and closely read and re-read the scene to determine in which tone, soft, regular, or loud, the line should be read. During the group collaboration the teacher-researcher gathered field notes about the conversations students had regarding their decisions to annotate the text. After this intervention students completed the posttest (a test identical to the pretest) and the second reflective journal about the drama pedagogy experience. Students then finished reading the play *Othello* in its entirety, completed the Likert scale a second time, and responded the final reflective journal, a series of nine

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questions about their experiences reading Shakespeare and their empathy toward the characters and one another.

Review of Findings

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data and suggested that the inclusion of drama pedagogy did have an effect on the comprehension of students when reading classic literature. The students in the control group increased their class average on the pretest from a 67% to an 82.5% on the posttest and the students in the intervention group increased their class average from a 54.4% to a 95%. The results of the paired *t*-test showed that students' growth in comprehension with the drama pedagogy intervention was statistically significant with a *p*-value of .001688.

The attitude scale also suggested that the drama pedagogy improved the attitude of students toward reading and performing Shakespeare. Students in the intervention group reported an increase in understanding what they read when reading Shakespeare's language, they felt a closer connection to characters as they read the scene, and they overwhelmingly stated they enjoyed performing and reading with classmates. The social and active approach to teaching this scene positively affected students' attitudes toward reading Shakespeare.

The qualitative results of this action research corroborated the quantitative findings. The students' reflective journals provided insight into their growth while reading and their shifts in thinking about reading and performing Shakespeare. Their new found confidence in reading Shakespeare was evident in the reflective journals as was their beliefs that they, through the use of drama pedagogy, could clarify plot and characters on a higher level as well as use analytical skills to interpret the tone of a

Shakespeare. One purpose of the reflective journals was to assess students' perceptions of their empathy toward others regarding the social issues of race, gender, and religion. While the journals did not provide clear data to prove their perceptions were improved, the student responses indicated that students were more comfortable in the classroom discussions of these issues. The social issues were seen as issues that did not currently pertain to them or ones in which students held firm beliefs that they were with the majority in their thinking about these issues. The students did, however, indicate a development of empathy as a result of participation in the drama pedagogy. There was a passion toward characters that was not present prior to the intervention.

Lastly, the students in the intervention group admitted to an enjoyment in reading Shakespeare that was not present prior to the intervention. At the start of the study the mere mention of Shakespeare evoked fear, anxiety, and frustration, but by the end of the study students were positive and enthusiastic about reading and studying *Othello*. The enjoyment of the unit with the drama pedagogy intervention evoked an active and curious energy in the students. The teacher-researcher was hopeful the positive attitude toward reading Shakespeare will transfer to the teaching of other classic works of literature. The hope is that students, with the help of drama pedagogy, see the challenge to read a classic text as something enjoyable, not something to dread and as an opportunity to interact and discuss with classmates.

Action Plan

The cyclical nature of action research is iterative. Teachers repeatedly examine their teaching practices and make adjustments immediately adjust to for changing curriculum, students, and social issues that evolve (McMillan, 2004). As students mature

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throughout the school year and their skills develop, teachers are required to find new methods and strategies to engage them. Also, as required reading material in English courses progressively becomes more challenging for students, teachers must find ways to help students tackle the difficult texts students are required to read.

Implications for future practice. The findings of this action research study will greatly change the teacher-researcher's classroom practice as she moves from primarily traditional seat-based instruction to the inclusion of more drama pedagogy strategies in the teaching of literature. This study presented only one strategy of drama pedagogy but there are many more strategies to attempt and create to provide a more active approach to the teaching of literature. The teacher-researcher will attempt to use drama pedagogy with works of literature that are prose and poetry, not just Shakespeare's drama as seen in this study. The teacher will include more strategies in the instruction of literature that make the reading experience active for students and also encourage engagement with the language in an authentic way. In the findings of this study the students remarked how they enjoyed classroom discussions regarding social issues; therefore, the teacher-researcher will also include more prompts to start discussions regarding race, gender, and religion through the context of the literature taught in class. The classic texts serve as a safe springboard for the discussions and can provide students with a context to begin and facilitate difficult conversations. While including the drama pedagogy in more lessons requiring close reading, the teacher-researcher will gather data regarding students' comprehension, attitude, and perceptions of empathy.

Classroom community. The collaborative process the teacher-researcher undertook with student participants began with building community in our classroom on

the first day of class to establish trust and understanding and a style of communication that supported a productive environment. Students are more successful in courses where the community supports their learning through shared experiences and engagement (Beaudoin, 2012). The data collection for the study purposely occurred after several weeks of school; therefore, the classroom environment and routines were established.

As a result of the reflections regarding this research study, the teacher-researcher determined that the sense of community in a classroom is key to the effectiveness of drama pedagogy strategies. The students in this study participated in multiple activities throughout the year (including the first day of school) that required they work with peers in groups and pairs and stand in front of classmates to share information or findings. Students must feel comfortable working with peers and standing in front of the classroom to effectively participate in drama pedagogy strategies; the teacher, from the first day of school, needs to facilitate opportunities for the students in class to create and develop a connection with one another. The teacher must also build relationships in order for the students to trust him/her and be willing to be vulnerable and attempt new ways of learning or reading. The strategy used in this research study required all students to stand and read lines simultaneously; no student at any time was asked to read alone or stand alone in front of the classroom. Some students will experience anxiety if asked to complete any task alone in front of their peers. This element is important to consider when determining which strategies to include in the classroom and the timing of the activities. As the year progresses teachers can ask more of students to complete independently but when first attempting drama pedagogy activities, the teacher-researcher suggests large group practices when all students are completing the same task

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and no one student has the spotlight on him or her. Appropriate scaffolding of the expectations and the creation of a community of learners who feel comfortable with one another and the teacher will help make drama pedagogy a success as it was in the study.

Student-created strategies. The strategy used in this study was teacher-created; while the strategy was student-centered, the teacher-researcher led the students in the strategies. After students have practiced drama pedagogy more frequently in the classroom, the teacher-researcher will transfer ownership and encourage students to create their own activities and close reading practices, most likely in groups that include aspects of drama pedagogy strategies. These activities will be student-led and student-centered. The shift from teacher-created to student-created and student-led would encourage an authentic ownership of the literature, a closer connection to the characters, and possibly increase comprehension.

Facilitating implementation. This section outlines the steps the teacher-researcher will follow to implement the use of drama pedagogy.

Department-wide implementation. While this research and practice continues in the teacher-researcher's classroom, concurrently she first will share her findings regarding drama pedagogy with the other teachers of English 2 and interested colleagues in the research site's English department. This research study was conducted with ninth graders enrolled in English 2 Honors; the teacher would value research that was gathered from other levels and grades and courses to see if the outcomes are similar. After sharing the findings of the study, the teacher-researcher will encourage her colleagues to include drama pedagogy strategies in their classrooms. The teacher-researcher will offer support to scaffold and implement drama pedagogy strategies. Through the use of Google forms

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the teacher-researcher will gather informal feedback regarding strategies that were effective, increased comprehension and engagement, and possibly evoked empathy or discussions about social issues.

Since the inclusion of drama pedagogy will start in the fall of the next school year, the teacher-researcher will also encourage teachers to develop and establish classroom community on the first day of school and possibly implement activities early in the school year. The teacher-researcher found in this study that one reason the drama pedagogy implementation was effective was due to a close-knit classroom community and a gregarious environment. Students were comfortable taking risks and being vulnerable with their peers. Without those elements, it is possible the drama pedagogy could not be effective; therefore, the teacher-researcher will work with colleagues to develop community-building interactions that begin on the first day of school.

Schoolwide implementation. Once the teacher-researcher has gathered more information regarding the use of drama pedagogy in her colleagues' teaching of literature, she will encourage teachers of other disciplines at the school level to find ways to include drama pedagogy strategies in their teaching of non-fiction and informational texts.

District-wide implementation. If the reactions and responses from the colleagues are positive and the findings are in line with those of this research study, the teacher-researcher will approach the district office about offering a professional development session or series of sessions offering active ways to engage students in reading. Active literacy practices such as drama pedagogy would be reviewed, discussed, created, then practiced. A bank of strategies could be created for all district teachers to access in the

form of a Google site or spreadsheet with a link to directions, handouts, and examples. All teachers could access this when they search for close reading strategies to implement in their classrooms.

    State and nationwide implementation. In addition to the school and district levels, the teacher-researcher could share her findings with other teachers in her state at the statewide English teachers conference or nationally at the national English teachers conference. Her belief is that these strategies are not unique to just her classroom, but applicable on multiple levels with all types of students. Primarily, the goal of the teacher-researcher is to share all strategies she finds that engage students in an active way and makes students want to read and participate in their education and as a result gain "additional insight into the study and ultimate findings" (Mertler, 2017, p. 265).
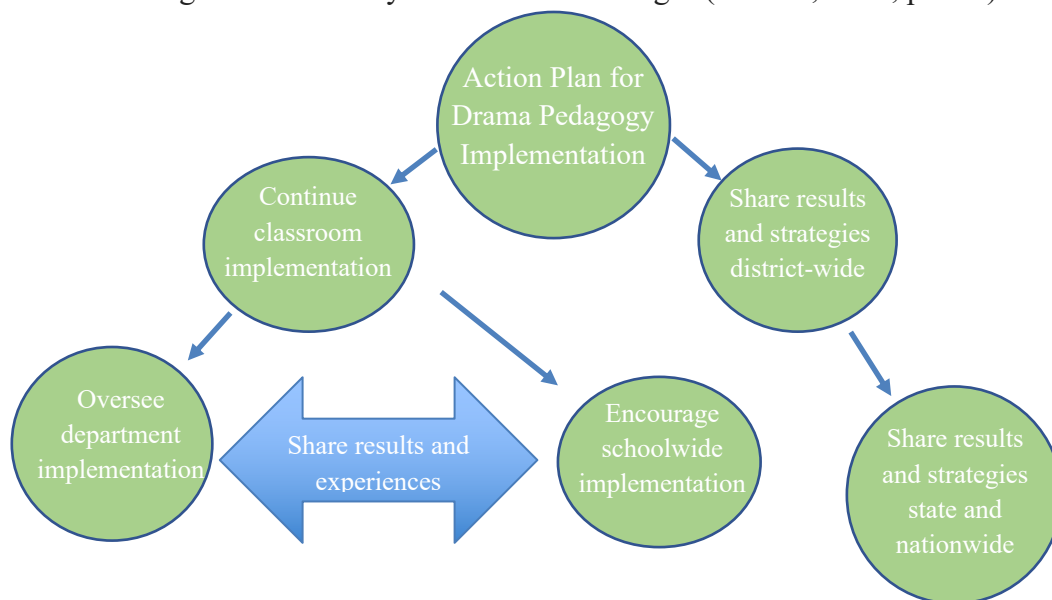

Figure 5.1 *Action plan for implementation of drama pedagogy*

Implications for Further Research

    Teachers of classic literature need to have strategies available to them to make the study of the literature more active and meaningful to students. The use of drama pedagogy is one strategy that could potentially improve student comprehension, their

attitude toward the study of classic literature, and their perception of their empathy toward others.

While drama pedagogy is easily implemented, there are further questions to be answered regarding the use of the strategy in English classrooms. These four questions will guide the teacher-researcher in determining the growth of students through the use of drama pedagogy. The following questions arose from the study:

- Would the inclusion of drama pedagogy in other grades and other levels of English or other disciplines have the same effect as it did in this study?

    This study was conducted with the students who were assigned to the teacher-researcher. The students in the study were identified as gifted and talented by the district and enrolled in honors level English. The teacher-researcher would find value in duplicating the study with students who are not enrolled in honors level courses to determine if the statistical significance found in this study is a result of the teacher-researcher's practice and students or the strategy is universal to all students, at all grades, and all levels.

- Would the use of drama pedagogy improve comprehension with works of literature that are not composed as dramas such as prose, poetry, and nonfiction?

    The teacher-researcher used Shakespeare's *Othello* in this action research study. Since the work of classic literature is a play, it naturally lent itself to performance. There were parts to play and the text was divided accordingly. However, the teaching of other narrative works such as prose and poetry could also be taught and analyzed with drama pedagogy strategies. The works could

also be rewritten or reworked by students to become scenes to perform. The

transition from prose or poetry to a prompt book or screenplay would force

students to use close reading skills to create the change in the delivery of the text.

Additionally, nonfiction works or informational texts that have a narrative slant

could be altered to have a performance element. Or some of the drama pedagogy

strategies that are not reliant upon a narrative element, such as the repetition

activity seen in the strategy used in this study, could be implemented in the study

of nonfiction or informational texts.

- Does drama pedagogy affect fluency and vocabulary skills?

    The use of drama pedagogy could affect more than comprehension skills.

The teacher-researcher was curious if the implementation also affected student

fluency and the understanding and use of vocabulary or other skills assessed in

English 2. The speaking aspects of drama pedagogy were not analyzed in this

study but may contribute to improved fluency or retention of vocabulary words.

- Would frequent inclusion of drama pedagogy aid students in their independent

    reading practices?

    Ultimately the teacher-researcher's goal is for her students to become

independent in their ability to comprehend reading and to develop lifelong

reading habits. The inclusion of drama pedagogy may help students comprehend

not only when in class participating in active reading strategies but also when

working independently on either standardized tests or reading for enjoyment.

This study may help discover if the skills are transferable to all reading

experiences and if the increased enjoyment found in reading with drama

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pedagogy increases student interest in reading more frequently.

Summary

The use of drama pedagogy strategies in the English classroom provides teachers with a way to increase student engagement and make reading an active and visible behavior. Students become more independent in their reading and rely less upon the teacher for the analysis of the literature. The students involved in this action research practiced close reading skills that led them to a comprehension level they had not indicated prior to the intervention. The findings of this study suggest that drama pedagogy was successful in helping students comprehend Shakespeare's language, improved students' attitudes toward the reading of Shakespeare, and increased students' perception of their empathy for others.

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APPENDIX A

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Dear parent or guardian:

I am Deborah Gascon, your child's English 2 teacher, and am currently working toward my doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of South Carolina. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation to determine if drama pedagogy improves student achievement, attitude toward Shakespeare, and empathy toward peers. I plan to collect quantitative data in the form of pre- and post- tests and a survey; I will collect qualitative narrative feedback in the form of reflective journals. Since your child is enrolled in our English 2 class, I am asking for your child's participation in this research. Pseudonym High School and Pseudonym District is neither sponsoring nor conducting this research. As the teacher-researcher I do not anticipate any possible physical, psychological, legal, or other risks connected to this study. I do anticipate many benefits such as a more active and involved approach to the study of Shakespeare.

Your child's participation will involve responding to a brief survey and three reflective journals about his/her feelings toward performance and attitude toward Shakespeare's works. This should take about 10 minutes of class time to complete. I will also give your child a 10-question pretest and posttest about a Shakespearean scene at the beginning of the research and then again at the end of the study. Your child's name will not appear in the data collection. You may inspect the materials and test instruments before consent.

Your child's participation is voluntary. If you or your child chooses not to participate, there will be no penalty. Involvement will not affect your child's grade or treatment. He/she can also withdraw from participation without penalty at any time. The results of the research study may be published, but your child's name will not be used.

All data collected will be kept confidential and your child's name will not be released to anyone. Responses will be anonymous.

I look forward to working with your child as I complete my dissertation. If you have any questions please contact me at (803) 476-3300 or dgascon@lexrich5.org.

Sincerely,

Deborah Gascon

Please choose one:

_____I **DO NOT** give consent for my child to participate in the above-referenced study.

_____By signing below, I **DO** give consent for my child to participate in the above-referenced study.

Parent's name_____

Child's name_____

Parent's signature_____

Form taken from: Mertler, C. A. (2017). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators* (5thed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

APPENDIX B

ATTITUDE SCALE

Age_____   Grade in school_____   Gender_____

Directions: Please respond to these questions regarding your experiences with

Shakespeare.

What Shakespearean plays have you read or seen prior to this reading of *Othello*?

When I read Shakespeare's language I understand what I have read.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree

When I read Shakespeare I feel a connection to the characters.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree

I enjoy standing in front of the class acting out scenes from a play.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree

I enjoy working with others to read a scene.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree

I prefer to read alone (read to myself) when reading a scene.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree

I like to listen to my classmates read the scenes aloud.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree

APPENDIX C

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

Directions: Please answer the following questions honestly and to the best of your ability.

1. When you first glanced through the scene, what were your thoughts? What words can you use to describe your feelings?

2. After reading through the scene the first time, what were your thoughts?

3. After you took the pretest, how did you feel about your ability to analyze the scene? What did you think your grade would be? Did you feel successful?

4. When we performed the scene, did your understanding of the lines and words change? How? Can you provide specific examples?*

5. What strategies do you use to help you understand what you read?

6. What did you think of the speaker of the scene the first time you read it? What about after you performed it? Did your knowledge of the speaker change? How? Can you provide specific examples?*

7. What other thoughts do you have about this scene and your understanding of it?

8. How did you feel after you took the posttest? Was that feeling different from how you felt after the pretest? Compare the two experiences.

9. In the play there are many social issues present. The topic of race and the role of women are two that come to mind. Has reading *Othello* changed your point of view on these and other topics? Have these topics changed how you treat others or how you see others? What do you think covering these topics has done to our classroom discussion?

* The intervention group were the only students to respond to these questions.

APPENDIX D

PRETEST AND POSTTEST

Directions: Read the passage below then answer the multiple choice questions that follow.

Enter Othello.

DESDEMONA
  I will not leave him now till Cassio   35
  Be called to him.—How is 't with you, my lord?
OTHELLO
  Well, my good lady. *Aside.* O, hardness to
    dissemble!—
  How do you, Desdemona?
DESDEMONA Well, my good lord.   40
OTHELLO
  Give me your hand. *He takes her hand.* This hand
    is moist, my lady.
DESDEMONA
  It yet has felt no age nor known no sorrow.
OTHELLO
  This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart.
  Hot, hot, and moist. This hand of yours requires   45
  A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,
  Much castigation, exercise devout;
  For here's a young and sweating devil here
  That commonly rebels. 'Tis a good hand,
  A frank one.   50
DESDEMONA You may indeed say so,
  For 'twas that hand that gave away my heart.
OTHELLO
  A liberal hand! The hearts of old gave hands,
  But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts.
DESDEMONA
  I cannot speak of this. Come now, your promise.   55
OTHELLO What promise, chuck?
DESDEMONA
  I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you.
OTHELLO
  I have a salt and sorry rheum offends me.

Lend me thy handkerchief.
DESDEMONA Here, my lord.   60
OTHELLO
  That which I gave you.
DESDEMONA I have it not about me.
OTHELLO Not?
DESDEMONA No, faith, my lord.
OTHELLO That's a fault. That handkerchief   65
  Did an Egyptian to my mother give.
  She was a charmer, and could almost read
  The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept
    it,
  'Twould make her amiable and subdue my father   70
  Entirely to her love. But if she lost it,
  Or made a gift of it, my father's eye
  Should hold her loathèd, and his spirits should hunt
  After new fancies. She, dying, gave it me,
  And bid me, when my fate would have me wived,   75
  To give it her. I did so; and take heed on 't,
  Make it a darling like your precious eye.
  To lose 't or give 't away were such perdition
  As nothing else could match.
DESDEMONA Is 't possible?   80
OTHELLO
  'Tis true. There's magic in the web of it.
  A sybil that had numbered in the world
  The sun to course two hundred compasses,
  In her prophetic fury sewed the work.
  The worms were hallowed that did breed the silk,   85
  And it was dyed in mummy, which the skillful
  Conserved of maidens' hearts.
DESDEMONA I' faith, is 't true?
OTHELLO
  Most veritable. Therefore, look to 't well.
DESDEMONA
  Then would to God that I had never seen 't!   90
OTHELLO Ha? Wherefore?
DESDEMONA
  Why do you speak so startingly and rash?
OTHELLO
  Is 't lost? Is 't gone? Speak, is 't out o' th' way?
DESDEMONA Heaven bless us!
OTHELLO Say you?   95
DESDEMONA
  It is not lost, but what an if it were?

OTHELLO How?
DESDEMONA I say it is not lost.
OTHELLO Fetch 't. Let me see 't!
DESDEMONA
  Why, so I can. But I will not now.   100
  This is a trick to put me from my suit.
  Pray you, let Cassio be received again.
OTHELLO
  Fetch me the handkerchief! *Aside.* My mind
    misgives.
DESDEMONA Come, come.   105
  You'll never meet a more sufficient man.
OTHELLO
  The handkerchief!
DESDEMONA I pray, talk me of Cassio.
OTHELLO The handkerchief!
DESDEMONA A man that all his time   110
  Hath founded his good fortunes on your love;
  Shared dangers with you—
OTHELLO
  The handkerchief!
DESDEMONA I' faith, you are to blame.
OTHELLO Zounds!   *Othello exits.*   115

1. What is the situation in the excerpt?

    A.   Desdemona calmly discusses her concerns with Othello.

    B.   Othello confronts Desdemona about the missing handkerchief.

    C.   Othello confronts Desdemona about her interaction with Cassio.

    D.   Othello and Desdemona discuss a cure for Othello's rheum.

2. What feelings do Othello's words evoke in the audience?

    A.   Empathy

    B.   Tolerance

    C.   Compassion

    D.   Frustration

3. What effect do lines 93-99 have on the tone of the scene?

    A.   Monosyllabic words indicate escalating tension

    B.   Contractions indicate truncated language

    C.   Questions indicate confusion

    D.   Imperative commands indicate submission

4. The description of the handkerchief in lines 65-79 suggests

    A.   The importance of the handkerchief to Othello

    B.   The importance of the handkerchief to Othello's father

    C.   The importance of the handkerchief to Desdemona

    D.   The importance of the handkerchief to Cassio

5. Desdemona's true intent in the scene is revealed most by

    A.   her expression of true love for Cassio.

    B.   her avoidance of acknowledging the whereabouts of the handkerchief.

C.   her frustration with Emilia.

D.   her empathy toward Othello.

6. The tone of the scene is all of the following EXCEPT:

A.   Accusatory

B.   Apathetic

C.   Bitter

D.   Evasive

7. The shift in tone from line 90 to line 102 can best be described as

A.   Questioning to accusatory

B.   Denial to acceptance

C.   Sadness to apologetic

D.   Compliant to aggressive

8. Othello's final line of "zounds!" and the stage direction that follows of "*Othello
    exits*" implies that he

A.   feels the conflict is resolved.

B.   feels indignant toward Desdemona.

C.   feels defensive about the handkerchief.

D.   feels reverent toward Desdemona.

9. The repetition of the word "handkerchief" in the scene serves to

A.   indicate Othello's mounting frustration with Desdemona.

B.   indicate Othello's confusion about the handkerchief's whereabouts.

C.   indicate Othello's painful rheum.

D.   indicate Othello's concern for Cassio's future.

10. Desdemona's line "you'll never meet a more sufficient man" (line 106) illustrates

    A.   Desdemona's lack of empathy.

    B.   Desdemona's lack of concern.

    C.   Desdemona's lack of understanding.

    D.   Desdemona's lack of patience.