学校教育における演劇的手法を取り入れた表現教育：中学生を対象とした教育実践を事例に

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Drama Approach as an Educational Practice in Secondary Education: A Case Study in a Japanese Middle School

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Abstract

In this study, we aim to investigate the use of the drama approach and its effectiveness within a classroom setting. The drama approach is an educational practice that aims to develop communication, creativity, and critical thinking skills through group interaction and performance. This case study examines the implementation and effectiveness of using the drama approach in a secondary school in Japan. A total of 266 grade 7 students participated in the activities.

To analyze the effectiveness, a post-class survey was provided. The student participants were given a survey containing 23 semantic differential questions and one free-response question. The homeroom teachers of the classes also answered five free-response questions. The student survey had a 99.6% survey recovery rate and a 93.6% effective response rate.

The results of the survey were positive and demonstrated that the drama activities were able to facilitate communication between peers. Specifically, factor analysis of the semantic differential questions found that there were three significant factors: (1) anxiety and opinion on the activities, (2) communication and cooperation, and (3) personal feelings. Furthermore, the free-response questions to the students and homeroom teachers indicated that the activities were enjoyable, encouraged cooperation and discussion, and helped deepen relationships between students. Through this, we found that the drama approach-based activities were beneficial for the students and worth including in Japanese education.

Index terms — drama method; drama education; active learning; secondary education; Japanese education

1 Introduction

Recently, there has been a shift from teacher-centered systems to student-centered systems (Satō, 2006) in educational practice. This shift replaces traditional teacher-based

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instruction to student-based active learning activities. In addition to teaching, the use of these student-centered systems helps address the need for social interactions and commutation skills (Greene and Sawilowsky, 2018; Pui-Wah, 2010).

Drama, for instance, is an educational practice that incorporates interaction and performance into teaching. The use of drama has been shown to be useful in developing creativity skills (Branch, 1975; Cockett, 1999; Lin, 2010; Tam, 2016; Toivanen et al., 2011) and social skills (Freeman et al., 2003; Hughes and Wilson, 2004). There have also been studies assessing critical thinking and problem-solving through drama education (Bailin, 1998; Hartshorn and Brantley, 1973). Furthermore, drama has been used as an educational practice in teacher education (Gray et al., 2019; Morgan, 1975; Zhang et al., 2016).

1.1 Regional Issues

There are many issues that are especially pertinent to Japan and Japanese students. In this section, we will discuss some of the issues, including relationships in school, communication, and self-esteem.

According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan (MEXT), there were 122,902 elementary and middle school students who were absent for more than 30 days continuously or intermittently (MEXT, 2014). The primary causes of the student absences were problems concerning friendships (including bullying), 15.6%, problems with parent-child relationships, 10.9%, and a slump in school, 8.8%. According to the data, it was found that many failures were due to school maladjustment problems or parent-child relationship problems, i.e. problems related to human relations. Therefore, in order to respond to the demands of an interpersonal society and to build better relationships between students, a new method of education needs to be pursued.

In a recent survey (National Institution of Youth Education, 2019), the National Institution of Youth Education of Japan found that Japanese students, in particular, lack communication skills. The survey was a comparative study including 7,640 high school students from Japan, the United States of America (USA), China, and Korea. The results of the survey revealed that Japanese students had the lowest average response when asked, "you can express your opinion clearly even in public" and "I can easily talk to people whom I meet for the first time." This trend of low confidence in communication and need or additional communication skills has also been found by other studies (Nakai, 2002; Thompson et al., 1990; Yoshida et al., 2013). Furthermore, Klopf (1991) found that compared to American students, Japanese students tend to be less assertive and less likely to talk in conversation settings.

Besides communication skills, the survey (National Institution of Youth Education, 2019) also found low self-esteem issues among Japanese students when compared to the

USA, China, and Korea. Notably, Japanese students only responded positively 48.4% of the time when asked, "I like myself now," compared to Americans, Chinese, and Korean students at 80.7%, 70.0%, and 73.5% of the time respectively. Other examples of low self-esteem issues include Japanese students responding almost 20% more often for "sometimes I think I'm a bad person" and about 30% less often for "I am as valuable as others." The negativity among Japanese students was repeated throughout the survey.

1.2 Implementation of Drama Approach in Japan

There is a clear need for an increased focus on social interaction and communication skills. Due to this need, MEXT created the Communication Education Promotion Committee (MEXT, 2010) in 2010. This special committee was designed to promote active learning and the drama method educational styles to Japan in order to foster communication skills. Furthermore, in 2016, MEXT implemented education policies to set interactive learning as one of the core tenets for kindergarten through high school education (MEXT, 2016).

The drama approach method is an innovative educational practice that uses group interaction to facilitate learning (Heathcote and Bolton, 1994). To do this, the lessons usually include activities such as verbal or gesture-based interactions. In addition, drama approach lessons typically incorporate a skit-based presentation. The design of the lessons revolves around providing opportunities for the participants to communicate, share ideas, and problem-solving at the same time as learning. While the drama-based activities, theatre, and performances have been part of youth extracurricular activities throughout modern history, it has not been a part of regular education (Kobayashi, 2004).

There have only been a few studies analyzing the use of drama education in Japan (Zhao and Iwana, 2019). The few studies primarily focus on language education. For example, Shiozawa and Donnery (2017) studied the use of drama camps for English as a second language in Japan. In addition, there are other studies also cover implementations and benefits of learning second language through drama in Japan (Araki-Metcalfe, 2011; Donnery, 2014; Matsuzaki-Carreira, 2005). This paper differs from these studies by targeting communication skills among Japanese students.

2 Method and Materials

The drama activities were modeled on a curriculum for a drama lesson designed by playwright Oriza Hirata in collaboration with the Toyooka City Board of Education (Toyooka City Board of Education Child Education Division, 2017). First, the participants performed drama activities such as interactive games and a drama performance. In this stage, the participants used communication and creativity skills. Next, questionnaires
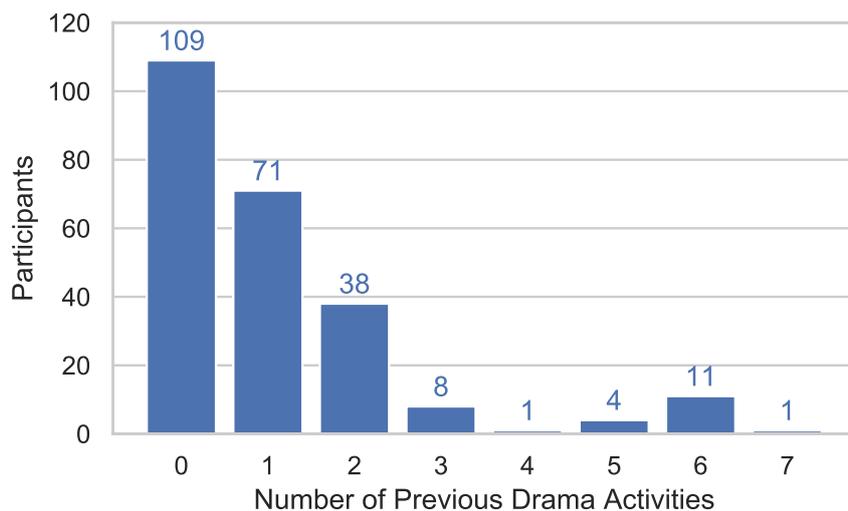
Figure 1: The number of times that the students participated in previous drama activities.

were provided to the participants and the homeroom teachers in order to assess the effectiveness of the drama approach.

The classes were administered by trained theater professionals and volunteers from the Education Hirometai organization (Meeting to Think About Fukuoka Education, 2018). An instructor, assistant, and observer were assigned to each class. The role of the instructor was to administer the drama class. The assistant helped with activities such as demonstrations and answering questions, but was told not to provide instruction. The observer played a passive role and only observed. The native homeroom teacher also played a passive role. In total there were four instructors, four assistants, and four observers. Each class had one of each, chosen at random.

2.1 Participants

The study was performed at a public Japanese middle school which teaches grades 7 to 9. The middle school is located in Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan. The study included seven classes in grade 7 with a total of 266 students between the ages of 12 and 14. Furthermore, the activities took place during the second week of class of a new school year. Since the students were grade 7 students, they all recently graduated primary school and were new to this school. In addition, most of the participants had little previous experience with drama-based activities, as shown in Fig. 1.

2.2 Materials

In order to evaluate the use of the drama method, we used a semantic differential based questionnaire for the students and a short answer based questionnaire for their homeroom teachers. The questionnaires were written in Japanese and provided to each participat-

ing student and homeroom teacher after the conclusion of the drama class. A translated version of the questionnaires for the students and homeroom teachers is shown in Appendices A and B, respectively.

Specifically, the questionnaires for students contained a few basic demographic questions, a set of semantic differential questions, and a supplemental free-response question. The semantic differential questions consisted of 23 rating scales between positive and negative impressions of the drama activities. The purpose of the semantic differential was to determine key aspects and characteristics of the activities. Furthermore, student questionnaires were anonymous and optional.

The questionnaire for the homeroom teachers was constructed from five short answer questions about their thoughts on the drama approach activities. Using this questionnaire, we can analyze the positive and negative points from the point of view of educators using text mining.

2.3   Procedure

The drama class took place over the course of two consecutive class blocks, each consisting of 50 minutes, for a total of 100 minutes. Three of the classes were held from 9:00-9:50 am and 10:00-10:50 am and the other four classes were held from 11:00-11:50 am and 12:00-12:50 pm.

The drama class curriculum and schedule are as follows:

- **Rock-Paper-Scissors Game** (5 minutes). A rock-paper-scissors based game in which students played rock-paper-scissors but instead of the typical rules, the goal was to acquire matching gestures. Upon a match, the students would perform a "high five."

- **Silent Companion Grouping Game** (10 minutes). A game in which students form groups based on birthday and blood types without verbal communication.

- **Step Forward Game** (10 minutes). In this game, the already grouped students stand in a circle and step forward based on a count. Verbal communication is also forbidden in this game.

- **Gesture Game 1** (20 minutes). The students are provided a theme card. In this game, the students must act out the card without verbal communication. The other students must then guess the theme of the card.

- **Gesture Game 2** (35 minutes). Based on the Gesture Game 1, the teacher provides a second theme and one sentence dialog to a representative of each group. Next, the students present the theme and dialog to the class.

- **Presentation** (15 minutes).

This drama lesson was designed to promote communication and creativity skills. Specifically, the Rock-Paper-Scissors Game was used as an ice-breaker, the Silent Companion Grouping Game and Step Forward Game were used to facilitate non-verbal communication skills, and the Gesture Games and Presentation encourage verbal communication, critical thinking, creativity, and presentation skills.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Student Findings

Out of the 266 students, 265 students volunteered to participate and respond to the questionnaire, giving a 99.6% recovery rate. Of the responses, there were 248 complete forms without missing items (133 males and 115 females), providing a 93.6% effective response rate. The findings are drawn from the 248 complete semantic differential questionnaires. Incomplete forms were discarded.

3.1.1 Semantic Differential Questions

As shown in Appendix A, the post-lesson questionnaire was designed to assess the students' opinions and impressions about the drama lesson. The semantic differential questions were rated from -2 to 2 with negative emotions on the low side and positive emotions on the high side. A summary of the average response is shown in Fig. 2. In the figure, the average of each semantic differential question is shown along with the overall average of the questions. From the results, it can be observed that the responses were mostly positive. "Relaxed–Tense" had the lowest average response with 0.76±0.99 and "Cooperative–Individual" had the highest at 1.54±0.71. These ratings were expected since the activities were highly cooperative but also put pressure on the students.

Factor analysis was performed on the 248 complete responses using the semantic differential questions. In the analysis, a combination of SPSS version 25.0 and Python version 3.7.3 with the SciPy 1.3.0 library was used. As shown in Fig. 3, using Principal Axis Factoring (PAF), there were three factors with initial eigenvalues greater than 1. Thus, the three factors were extracted to be used as the basis of factor analysis with Promax and Kaiser normalization. The factor loadings are shown in Table 1. The terms that belong to Factor 1 relate to anxiety and the activities themselves. For example, Factor 1 had terms like "Safety–Anxiety," "Relaxed–Tense," and "Not tiring–Tiring." The next factor has semantic differential terms relating to discussion, cooperation, and getting along with others, such as "Got along well–Didn't get along with others," "Discussions–Thinking alone," and "Cooperative–Individual." Finally, Factor 3 relates to the terms dealing
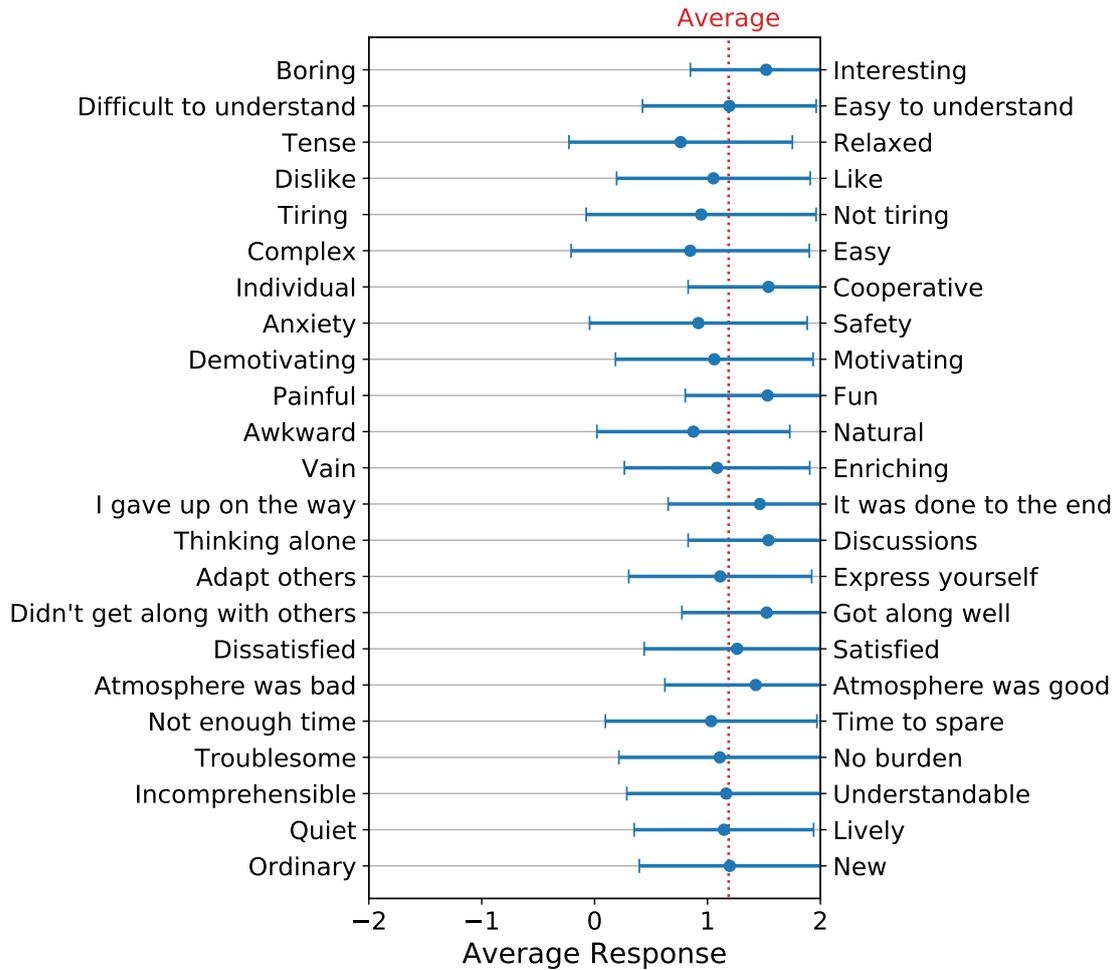
Figure 2: Average response for each semantic differential item. The error bar is plus and minus one standard deviation.

with simple impressions and emotions, such as "Interesting–Boring," "Fun–Painful," and "Like–Dislike."

Factor 1: Anxiety and Opinion on the Activities. While the average response of every question in Factor 1 was positive, in general, Factor 1 had the lowest average response when compared to the other factors, as shown in Table 1. This is evident by the two most representative questions, "Safety–Anxiety" and "Relaxed–Tense," having below-average scores of 0.92±0.96 and 0.76±0.99, respectively. These responses highlight that the participants were felt more nervous on average when compared to the other impressions. It also implies that there is a need for more communication and active learning-based lessons so that the students would be more comfortable in these situations.

The other questions and responses related to Factor 1 also reveal some of the inadequacies of the proposed drama-based lesson plan. For example, "Easy–Complex," "Not tiring–Tiring," and "Time to spare–Not enough time" had below-average responses of
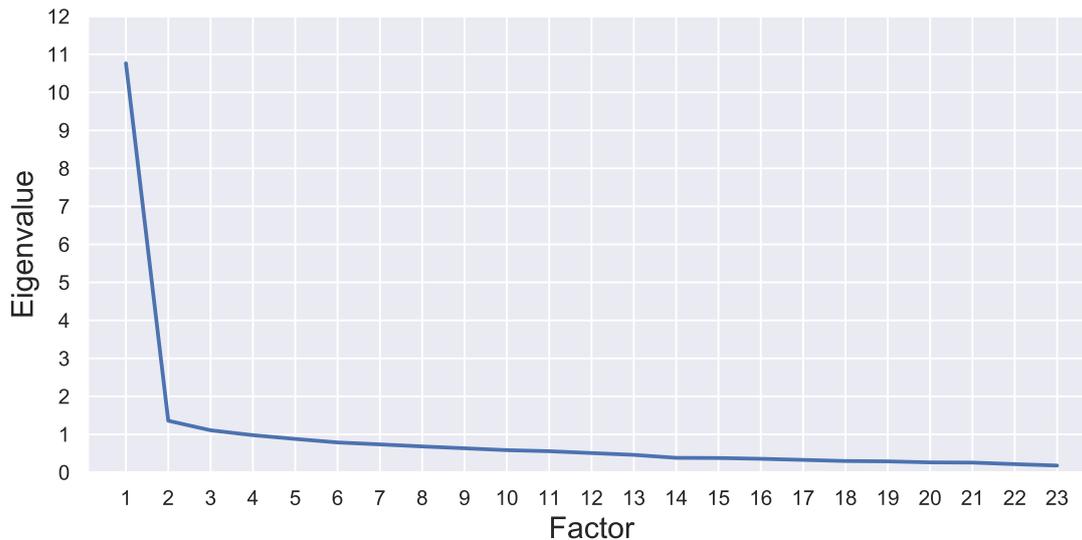
Figure 3: Scree plot of the factors using PAF

0.85±1.06, 0.94±1.02, and 1.03±0.94, respectively. Again, these responses were still positive, but below the overage average response to any question. In order to improve, the activities could be simplified or the participants can be given more time and more breaks.

Factor 2: Communication and Cooperation. Factor 2 had the highest average response out of all of the factors and the "Cooperative–Individual" semantic differential question had the highest average response out of all of the questions. Factor 2 also had semantic differential questions such as "Discussions–Thinking alone," "Got along well–Didn't get along with others," and "Lively–Quiet" with very high average responses. The semantic differential question responses clearly show that the activities encouraged communication between participants. The activities also facilitated cooperation and helped participants get along with each other.

This factor also had other questions such as "Satisfied–Dissatisfied" and "It was done to the end–I gave up on the way." Both of which had above-average responses. Specifically, "It was done to the end–I gave up on the way" was very positive with an average of 1.46±0.81 indicating that the participants had the will to finish the activity even when in a group setting.

Factor 3: Personal Feelings. This factor had the terms generally relate to internal emotions, like "Fun–Painful," "Like–Dislike," and "Interesting–Boring." Notably, the terms in Factor 3 that had the most positive impressions ("Fun–Painful" and "Interesting–Boring") related to the enjoyment of the activities. A beneficial aspect of the activities is that they were generally enjoyable to the participants.

Positive–Negative	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Safety–Anxiety	**0.860**	-0.144	0.006
Relaxed–Tense	**0.820**	-0.303	0.133
Easy–Complex	**0.581**	0.114	-0.097
Express yourself–Adapt others	**0.548**	0.367	-0.224
Natural–Awkward	**0.496**	0.312	-0.039
Enriching–Vain	**0.445**	0.209	0.139
Time to spare–Not enough time	**0.432**	0.278	-0.016
Not tiring–Tiring	**0.415**	0.087	0.209
No burden–Troublesome	**0.380**	0.307	0.156
Got along well–Didn't get along with others	-0.185	**0.837**	0.060
Discussions–Thinking alone	-0.159	**0.785**	0.013
Atmosphere was good–Atmosphere was bad	0.070	**0.658**	0.073
Lively–Quiet	0.378	**0.501**	-0.136
Satisfied–Dissatisfied	0.137	**0.489**	0.245
Cooperative–Individual	0.143	**0.453**	0.056
Understandable–Incomprehensible	0.292	**0.400**	0.056
It was done to the end–I gave up on the way	0.149	**0.346**	0.142
New–Ordinary	0.172	**0.332**	0.213
Interesting–Boring	-0.140	0.021	**0.901**
Fun–Painful	-0.188	0.362	**0.698**
Easy to understand–Difficult to understand	0.336	-0.120	**0.531**
Like–Dislike	0.308	-0.024	**0.516**
Motivating–Demotivating	0.296	0.111	**0.430**

Factor Correlations		Factor 1	Factor 2
	Factor 2	0.716	
	Factor 3	0.671	0.713

Table 1: Factor loadings of the extracted factors. Bold values indicate the factor with the highest relation to the semantic differential item.

3.1.2 Free-Response Question

The free-response question for the student participants was, "about today's drama class, what is your impression? Short sentences is possible" (Q3 in Appendix A). The question was designed to be opened ended and allow the students to write their thoughts and impression. It should be noted that the responses from the students and the text mining was performed in Japanese and the words on the figure are translated to English for visualization purposes. Furthermore, there was a total of 3,870 Japanese words with 364 unique words in the responses.

Using the responses, text mining and analysis were done using KH Coder version 3.a.17h. Figure 4 shows a co-occurrence network built from the responses. The co-occurrence network shows the frequency of each word and their relationships to other words. In addition, there are seven subgraphs identified by Fig. 4. The most common word in each subgraph is "fun," "speak," "oneself," "relationship," "friend," "difficult,"

Factor	Average Response
Factor 1: Atmosphere	0.97±0.94
Factor 2: Communication	**1.36±0.81**
Factor 3: Personal Feeling	1.27±0.81
Overall	1.187±0.880

Table 2: Average of each factor. Bold is the highest result.

and "expression."

Fun. The most common word from the free-response question was "fun" and it was connected to the words, "cooperation," "discussion," "think," "drama," and "group." This means that there is a correlation between the word, "fun," and these other words, which indicates that the students enjoyed the activities and group cooperation. Enjoying the activities was a common theme and most of the participants commented on how fun the activities or lessons were. It was also common for the participants to express a desire to do the activities again, such as one student responded, "it was so **fun**, I want to do it again."

The activities were also able to provide enjoyment to participants who would not normally enjoy such activities, such as "at the beginning, I wasn't interested in this class at all, but it became more **fun** when I did it. So, it was a really great theater class" and in another, "even though I don't like doing drama, it was **fun**." Furthermore, there were no strictly negative responses. Thus, the activities were generally enjoyable for the participants.

Cooperation. The second most common word was "cooperation." Being a member of the same subgraph as "fun," "cooperation" co-occurred with many of the same words. Many replies stated that they cooperated with their group members, such as, "I **cooperated** with my group members and also I was able to make contact with a lot of friends. Using gestures to make a story is a little difficult, but we made it together." In addition, the cooperative nature of the activities showed to benefit the students, such as, "about today's drama class, I did cooperation work with my group to make a drama and I played games with my classmates. After this activity, I felt the class members got along better. I felt happy about that." From this, we can say that the drama activities were successful in encouraging cooperation which is a promising aspect of the drama approach.

Relationship. Another interesting word is "relationship." Specifically, "relationship" is connected to "intensify," "discuss," "class," and "deepen." From the responses, many students mention how the drama lesson helped develop deeper relationships with their group members. In one example, "I was able to talk with others and play together in the gesture game. Also, we did cooperation to do the presentation. At last, I got a deeper

Figure 4: Co-occurrence network of the responses to Q3 of the questionnaire for students. The minimum term frequency is set to 3, the connections have a minimum co-occurrence coefficient of 0.1, and the colors indicate the connected subgroups.

relationship with the group members. And also, it was good to have fun with everyone in the class, not only the group members. So, I think the class was really good." In another example, a student wrote, "I had fun, cooperated, and had discussions. I did a lot of communication and I think I deepened my **relationships**. I want to do it again." These quotations emphasize the benefit of the drama lesson. Namely, that the drama-based activities were able to further develop connections between the participants.

Embarrassment and Nervousness. Since the semantic differential questions revealed that "Safety–Anxiety" and "Relaxed–Tense" had lower than average scores (Fig. 2), one concern is the possibility of the participants feeling embarrassed, nervous, or anxious. However, there were very few actual responses from participants stating this. "Embarrassed" was only used by four participants and "nervous" by only two. Even when the participants used these words, they were qualified with positive remarks or statements of overcoming it. For example, a participant wrote, "doing the drama activities, I felt a little bit **embarrassed**. But, it is so good that I became closer to the others." Another

	First Time (n = 109)		Previous Experience (n = 134)		
Positive–Negative	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t value
Interesting–Boring	1.42	0.71	1.64	0.54	-2.74**
Easy to understand–Difficult to understand	1.06	0.81	1.34	0.66	-3.04**
Relaxed–Tense	0.74	1.03	0.78	0.97	-0.26
Like–Dislike	1.06	0.82	1.07	0.85	-0.10
Not tiring–Tiring	0.82	1.07	1.06	0.94	-1.88
Easy–Complex	0.75	1.04	0.93	1.06	-1.33
Cooperative–Individual	1.50	0.75	1.59	0.66	-0.94
Safety–Anxiety	0.78	1.02	1.04	0.91	-2.07
Motivating–Demotivating	1.00	0.83	1.13	0.87	-1.23
Fun–Painful	1.45	0.78	1.63	0.65	-1.95
Natural–Awkward	0.78	0.81	0.96	0.85	-1.70
Enriching–Vain	1.08	0.83	1.10	0.81	-0.21
It was done to the end–I gave up on the way	1.38	0.91	1.58	0.63	-2.08*
Discussions–Thinking alone	1.48	0.71	1.62	0.65	-1.63
Express yourself–Adapt others	1.00	0.86	1.22	0.76	-2.15*
Got along well–Didn't get along with others	1.47	0.71	1.58	0.78	-1.18
Satisfied–Dissatisfied	1.23	0.83	1.33	0.77	-0.96
Atmosphere was good–Atmosphere was bad	1.48	0.75	1.43	0.79	0.44
Time to spare–Not enough time	1.10	0.98	1.00	0.90	0.83
No burden–Troublesome	1.04	0.89	1.20	0.86	-1.47
Understandable–Incomprehensible	1.16	0.85	1.22	0.87	-0.54
Lively–Quiet	1.06	0.81	1.22	0.78	-1.56
New–Ordinary	1.24	0.77	1.18	0.83	0.57

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$

Table 3: Comparison between first time drama activity participants and participants who performed drama activities before

participant responded, "at the beginning, I thought it would be **embarrassing**, but after I talked with the group members, it improved." Finally, for the word "nervous," one of the participants wrote, "because it is a new class to me, I felt **nervous**. But at last, I solved the nervous feeling and I really enjoyed the class." While the risk of embarrassing or nervous situations is possible, the responses show that it might not be a serious problem.

3.1.3 First Experiences with Drama in Japanese Education

As shown in Fig. 1, most students had either no experience or very little experience with drama-based activities. This is surprising since drama-based activities have shown to be useful in early and middle education (Brown, 2016; Moore, 2004) as well as it being a currently used educational practice in other countries. In Japan, students typically only gain experience with drama through extracurricular activities (Kobayashi, 2004).

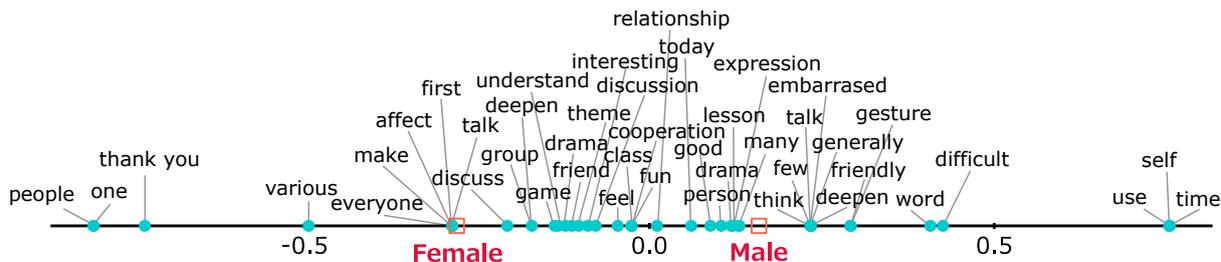Therefore, we performed a t-test analysis comparing the students with no experience

Figure 5: The correspondence between words in the free-response answers and gender of the participant. A minimum term frequency of 4 is used.

($n = 109$) and the students with previous experience ($n = 134$). The results of an unpaired comparison are shown in Table 3. From the results, it can be observed that students with drama experience were significantly more likely to find the drama lesson interesting and easier to understand. They were also more likely to finish the activities to the end, more likely to express themselves, and less likely to be anxious. It can be inferred that with more experience with drama, future activities and situations that require cooperation and communication skills would have less anxious and tense outcomes.

We also found comments in the free-response question that mention the participants' first time with drama activities. These comments also were very positive. For example, "it was my first time to do it, but it was really interesting. We did a lot of things. I enjoyed it a lot." And, "until now, I never did this kind of thing before, so I thought it was a good opportunity." The responses suggest that the activities were enjoyable, even for first time participants. It would be worth exploring additional drama-based lessons for the participants.

3.1.4 Differences in Impression by Gender

A t-test comparison between genders was also performed. There were 133 completed surveys from males and 115 from females. Table 4 shows the results of a comparison of the average semantic differential response between males and females. The most significant difference was the question, "Express yourself–Adapt others," with the average male response of 1.24±0.79 and the average female response of 0.97±0.82. The difference between the genders shows that the females had the impression that they could not express themselves as much as the males.

The other major differences were that the males felt more tired on average than the females and that the females had the impression that it was more tense. Figure 5 shows a correspondence graph between words in the answers of the free-response question and each gender. The figure shows that words such as "talk," "affect," and "everyone" correspond more with females and "expression" corresponds more with males.

| | Male (n = 133) | | Female (n = 115) | | |
Positive–Negative	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t value
Interesting–Boring	1.48	0.72	1.57	0.61	-0.98
Easy to understand–Difficult to understand	1.14	0.81	1.25	0.72	-1.11
Relaxed–Tense	0.86	0.98	0.64	1.00	1.76
Like–Dislike	1.03	0.93	1.08	0.77	-0.44
Not tiring–Tiring	0.82	1.09	1.09	0.92	-2.07*
Easy–Complex	0.85	1.06	0.84	1.07	0.05
Cooperative–Individual	1.54	0.75	1.54	0.67	0.02
Safety–Anxiety	0.97	1.00	0.86	0.93	0.89
Motivating–Demotivating	1.02	0.93	1.11	0.81	-0.88
Fun–Painful	1.51	0.78	1.56	0.68	-0.49
Natural–Awkward	0.86	0.90	0.89	0.80	-0.20
Enriching–Vain	1.05	0.84	1.12	0.81	-0.66
It was done to the end–I gave up on the way	1.42	0.89	1.51	0.72	-0.89
Discussions–Thinking alone	1.50	0.80	1.59	0.59	-1.05
Express yourself–Adapt others	1.24	0.79	0.97	0.82	2.70**
Got along well–Didn't get along with others	1.55	0.69	1.50	0.82	0.56
Satisfied–Dissatisfied	1.27	0.86	1.25	0.78	0.18
Atmosphere was good–Atmosphere was bad	1.44	0.84	1.42	0.77	0.18
Time to spare–Not enough time	1.10	0.94	0.96	0.84	1.18
No burden–Troublesome	1.14	0.90	1.08	0.89	0.50
Understandable–Incomprehensible	1.16	0.93	1.17	0.83	-0.14
Lively–Quiet	1.21	0.75	1.07	0.85	1.39
New–Ordinary	1.23	0.82	1.17	0.78	0.59

$*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$

Table 4: Comparison between genders using the semantic differential scores

3.2 Homeroom Teacher Findings

The questionnaire for the homeroom teachers had five short answer, free-response questions. The questions are shown in Appendix B. All seven homeroom teachers responded to the questionnaire and answered in full for a 100% effective response rate. There were 763 total Japanese words and 224 unique words. A co-occurrence network showing the word relations to the questions is shown in Fig. 6. The following is a summary of the five free-response questions and the observed significance and inadequacies of the drama lessons by the homeroom teachers.

3.2.1 Significance of the Drama Lesson

The common observations from the homeroom teachers were that the students were able to communicate better and build relationships through the activities. Teacher #3 mentioned, "the students were able to communicate with each other and deepen their relationships." Most of the teachers responded similarly. Furthermore, this is consistent
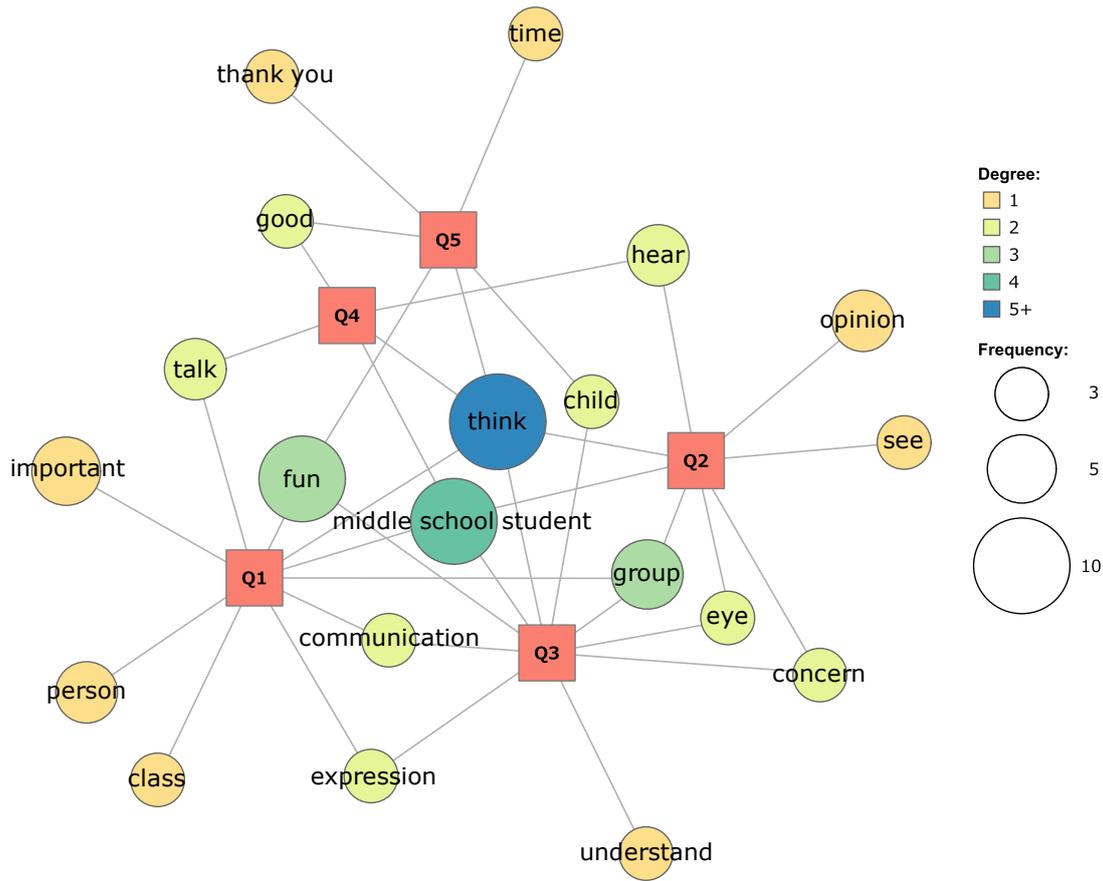
14

Figure 6: Co-occurrence network of the responses to Q1-Q5 of the questionnaire for homeroom teachers. The colors indicate the degree of connections and a minimum term frequency of 3 is used.

with the responses from the students.

The activities also proved to be beneficial to the students as Teacher #3 answered, "I think that the students learned the importance of listening to the opinions of others," and Teacher #6 said, "I think that this drama class let the students' ideas expand and deepen." The drama lesson was beneficial not only to the students but the teachers as well. For example, Teacher #4 answered, "It was meaningful to let me look at each group's discussion. It will help me in making collective activities in the future."

The homeroom teachers also found that the students enjoyed the activities. There were many compliments from the homeroom teachers, both in the responses to the free answer questions and comments in person. Overall, through the drama class, the homeroom teachers gave the impression that the students had a good experience.

3.2.2 Inadequacy of the Drama Lesson

While most of the comments were positive, the homeroom teachers also felt the lessons had some inadequacies. For example, the length of the drama lesson and the timing could be improved. As outlined in Section 2.3, the lesson covered two consecutive 50

minute class periods and was held in the late morning to noontime. Thus, Teacher #1 commented, "since the class was before lunch, I'm sorry that the students were tired at the summary time..." and "...maybe it would be better to make the content shorter." In order to address this, the drama lesson can be adjusted or carried over the course of multiple days.

The other concern from the homeroom teachers involved the attention and participation of the students. For example, Teacher #2 answered, "there were students who could not listen properly when instructions were issued..." and "there were still some students who didn't actively participate..." In another response, Teacher #1 mentioned, "some students didn't listen carefully to the instructors' command." Therefore, for future activities, more attention and consideration needs to be placed on the instructors and the students' understanding.

4 Conclusion

In this paper, we conducted a case study of using the drama approach in Japanese middle school. The case study included seven grade 7 classes with a total of 266 students. A questionnaire provided to the students and the homeroom teachers. The student questionnaire contained 23 semantic differential questions and one free-response question and the teacher questionnaire contained five free-response questions. Through these questionnaires, we were able to demonstrate that the drama approach-based lesson was able to facilitate communication, encourage cooperation, build stronger relationships, and was enjoyable. We were also able to determine some weaknesses in the drama lesson, such as the long length and need for improving the instructions from the instructors.

This analysis was only conducted in seven grade 7 classes. In the future, we will continue to explore the use of the drama approach in more classes and more grades. We plan on demonstrating that the drama method can be beneficial to many different age groups. Furthermore, research can be done which includes the use of other drama-based activities and techniques as well as designing organized and effective lessons to incorporate in the standard curriculum in Japanese school.

Acknowledgment

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A   Questionnaire for Students

- **Basic Information:**

  - Class Number?

  - Gender?

- **Q1:** When you were in primary school, did you attend any drama classes? If yes, how many times?

- **Q2:** How did you feel about today's drama class? Circle a number that appropriately portrays your feeling.

	Strongly Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Strongly Negative	
Interesting	2	1	0	-1	-2	Boring
Easy to understand	2	1	0	-1	-2	Difficult to understand
Relaxed	2	1	0	-1	-2	Tense
Like	2	1	0	-1	-2	Dislike
Not tiring	2	1	0	-1	-2	Tiring
Easy	2	1	0	-1	-2	Complex
Cooperative	2	1	0	-1	-2	Individual
Safety	2	1	0	-1	-2	Anxiety
Motivating	2	1	0	-1	-2	Demotivating
Fun	2	1	0	-1	-2	Painful
Natural	2	1	0	-1	-2	Awkward
Enriching	2	1	0	-1	-2	Vain
It was done to the end	2	1	0	-1	-2	I gave up on the way
Discussions	2	1	0	-1	-2	Thinking alone
Express yourself	2	1	0	-1	-2	Adapt to others
Got along well	2	1	0	-1	-2	Didn't get along with others
Satisfied	2	1	0	-1	-2	Dissatisfied
Atmosphere was good	2	1	0	-1	-2	Atmosphere was bad
Time to spare	2	1	0	-1	-2	Not enough time
No burden	2	1	0	-1	-2	Troublesome
Understandable	2	1	0	-1	-2	Incomprehensible
Lively	2	1	0	-1	-2	Quiet
New	2	1	0	-1	-2	Ordinary

- **Q3:** About today's drama class, what is your impression? Short sentences are possible.

B   Questionnaire for Homeroom Teacher

- **T1:** From your point of view, how did today's drama approach lesson impact the students?

- **T2:** Based on your observations of the students discussing and practicing together, did you notice any differences in the characteristics of each group or how the students changed the opinions of others?

- **T3:** What was good about today's activities?

- **T4:** How can the lesson be improved?

- **T5:** Other comments?