游藝誌社群為本之讀者劇場對國小學生英語學習態度之影響

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摘要

　　游藝誌社群多用於藝術領域，極少人用於其他領域；其組成成員為教師，鮮少由學生所組成。本研究欲探討應用游藝誌社群在英語讀劇上的可行性，以八位參加台南市英語讀者劇場比賽的學生作為研究對象，應用於陽光國小(化名)學生英語讀者劇場。

　　研究者實踐游藝誌社群於學生英語讀劇練習中，採質性研究方式，透過練習時的觀察、問卷及影音記錄作為資料蒐集。在量化研究上，採用英語學習態度問卷前後測，利用描述性統計及t考驗加以分析。本研究結果顯示：以藝術為本之游藝誌可應用於英語學習領域，且其組成之成員可以是學生。由學生組成之英語讀者劇場團隊可以是小型、臨時性的游藝誌社群，以學生為主體建構出之游藝誌社群提升了學生的英語學習態度及英語能力。

　　最後，本研究分析並提出英語教師如何讓學生在英語讀劇中建構與實踐游藝誌社群，及其困境與因應策略。

關鍵詞：英語讀者劇場、游藝誌、游藝誌社群

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Effects of A/r/tography Community-Based Reader's Theater on English Learning Attitudes in the Elementary School

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Abstract

A/r/tography is an art-based research methodology and a creative practice within arts and education; however, there are only a few scholars of note who have mentioned this developing methodology, and teachers rarely apply it to instruction in Taiwan. In addition, a/r/tographic communities are mostly composed of teachers, not of students.

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of applying an a/r/tographic community to students participating in reader's theater, and to find whether this changed their attitudes to learning or enhanced their learning motivation and interest in learning English. An a/r/tographic community of practice is a community of inquirers working as artists, researchers and pedagogues. Eight students in an elementary school in Tainan City, Taiwan were chosen to participate in a reader's theater competition for the city of Tainan. Based on the communities of a/r/tographic practice of Irwin (2008), it was proposed that the students central learning community could be an a/r/tographic community.

During a period of seven weeks, the researcher implemented an a/r/t/ographic community as an instructional tool to aid in the coaching of the eight reader's theater participants. Quantitative data was obtained by administering pre- and post-tests gauging learning attitudes. Data were analyzed using a t-test and descriptive statistics. The study also used qualitative methods, such as observation, interviews, introspective journal entries, and video-taped recordings for data collection and analysis.

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The results indicated that: 1. Applied A/r/tography in the English learning field was possible. 2. A/r/tographic communities could be composed of students. 3. After the reader's theater competition, the participants mentioned that they had changed their attitudes to learning English. 4. The participants' learning experiences in the reader's theater activities enhanced their motivation to learn English by building a temporary a/r/tographic community.

The researcher also provides some suggestions based on this study that may be used as a reference for English teachers who lead students or intend to participate in reader's theater competitions, and for future researchers of reader's theater.

Keywords: A/r/tography, a/r/tographic communities, Reader's theater

Background

The English language is arguably the most important communication tool in the world; English language ability is a symbol of competitiveness. From a child's perspective, learning should be pleasant, happy, and without any purpose, but this is out of tune with the expectations given by the child's social environment, teachers, and parents. Is there a possibility for children to be fully committed, engaged, and meeting expectations, while still having a pleasant rewarding, learning experience?

Reader's theater can provide this experience. A reader's theater is a kind of vocal reading activity based on literature. Readers use spoken language to elaborate stories, communicate with audiences using literature, and it is the simplest type of theater (Zou, 2007). Apart from improving the students' reading and speaking skills, reader's theater can also motivate students to learn. Although readers' theater can bring many benefits to English learning, the reader's theater competition held by the government has caused trouble for English teachers at all levels of schools. English teachers need to spend a lot of extra time to write scripts and train students. They also have to bear the burden of good or poor results. Under such pressure, can the participating students enjoy the reader's theater? Or is it only to tie in with the English teacher's instruction to win good grades and glory for the school?

1.1 Reader's Theater

The reader's theater is different from other performances. Participants are reading rather than memorizing lines, using minimal props and body movements, and focusing on how participants understand the meaning of the

text through their speech and movements. (Worthy & Prater, 2002). By allowing students to read aloud stories, jokes, scripts, or appropriate texts, students can express themselves to the audience in a fluid and emotional way.

Walker (2005) pointed out that readers' theater is a kind of reading, which uses spoken language to tell stories instead of playing. The reader reads the story according to the script. Each character is played by different readers. Unless you want to have a rich content, you don't need to remember the lines, do not have to prepare costumes, do not need to design a walk, and do not need to prepare lights. The only requirements are the script and the students' involvement.

In addition, reader's theater is a very active teaching method. It can be widely and easily applied in various fields of teaching. In terms of the implementation of the audience theatre in teaching, most studies have pointed out that students hold a positive attitudes towards them (Yang, 2014; Liu, 2015).

The researchers defined the reader's theater as "playing vivid and vigorous" scripts with two or more readers' voices, expressions, and simple physical movements without any special clothing, props, or backgrounds. To take a position, students only need to read through the script and use voice and expression to convey the content of the script for interpretation. Students can also learn to interact with others through collaborative discussions.

1.2 A/r/tography

A/r/tography is a newly-created word, and the word itself has its own meanings. A/r/t is an abbreviation for artist/researcher/ teacher, and the slashes are metaphors for the existence of an "in-between space" between

artists, researchers, and teachers. In this space, there are various possibilities, variability, and exploratoriness, so that those who are in it can construct and create new forms more positively. These different kinds of identity can be interdependent with each other through deep dialogue (Irwin, 2004; Zhou, 2014). In more traditional concepts, artists, teachers, and researchers are considered to be three separate types of work: researchers discover or create knowledge and engage in "knowing," teachers deliver what humans have discovered and are involved in "doing," and artists create artworks and participate in "making" (Irwin, 2004).

In a/r/tography, the meanings of three core roles need not be so narrow. The term "artist" refers to all people engaged in art work; "researcher" refers to people who explore issues and pursue meanings; "teacher" refers to anyone who can communicate with others, learn concepts and knowledge from each other, and not necessarily engaged in teaching staff. Irwin (2004) pointed out that we "live" with art, teaching, and research but not "do" with them. Therefore, A/r/tography is intended to combine the practice of these three roles and explore educational issues.

1.3 A/r/tographic Communities

Irwin (2008) and her colleagues continued to work on the construction and application of a/r/tography, encouraging art teachers to in-between the three roles of artists, researchers, and teachers. While continuing to create, teach, and research, they can learn from each other and promote professional awareness and knowledge. Such communities are called an "a/r/tographic community". In this type of community, every a/r/tographer must start from his or her own being and continue to become new. An a/r/tographic community is a community that asks, imagines, attempts, creates, and

discovers meanings from the experience of art and aesthetics. Each individual is an integral part of the whole. It must allow itself to indulge in problem exploration all the time. During the journey, you learn how to see and be seen, and how to talk to yourself, others, and the world.

For a long time, the training of English readers' theater competitions witnessed by the researcher has mostly been completed under the guidance of teacher-based instruction. Its only focus is the final competition results, thereby ignoring students' wishes and creative thinking, and rigidifying the learning process. The purpose of this research is to use the practice of the a/r/tographic community to establish student-centered competition training, thus empowering students to be their own masters in training, inspiring their creativity and enthusiasm, and expecting students to become the main body of learning during practice.

The research questions are:

1. Was it possible to apply a/r/tographic community in an English learning field?

2. Could the a/r/tographic communities be composed of students?

3. After the reader's theater competition, did the participants change their learning attitudes in learning English?

Method

2.1 Research Field

Tainan city, where the researcher works, holds reader's theater competition in November each year. All elementary schools in Tainan city must attend the competition and are placed into six groups according to the

number of classes in the school. These groups are labeled A1 to A6. In addition, there is a group B for students who have lived in English-speaking countries for more than six months. In the researcher's school, there are twenty-one classes in total. Therefore, the researcher's school participated in Group A3. Only 5-8 students are allowed to participate and this competition is mainly for senior students. The researcher chose eight students with the highest English levels from fifth and sixth grade.

In reader's theater competition, there is no limitations to which script can be used. Scripts can be edited, adapted, or reused from the previous year's competition. In order to allow the reading of the script content to be consistent with the student's level and to make it easy for students to familiarize themselves with it, the researcher discussed with students and wrote the reader's theater script, "Nature, our friends." using the natural phenomenon as protagonists in the story. The story characters, setting and plot were all familiar concepts to the students so they were able to assimilate into the play easily.

2.2 Participants

Due to the abundance of senior students wanting to participate in the reader's theater competition, 17 students were chosen to audition for the roles to participate in the competition for the city of Tainan. There are 3 classes in the fifth grade and 4 classes in the sixth grade. First, the researcher chose 5 fifth graders and 12 sixth graders to audition. After practicing for three weeks, the researcher selected 8 finalist students to attend the competition according to their performance. Among those chosen were 4 sixth grade students and 4 fifth grade students. These students were chosen due to their excellent English ability as well as their pronunciation, tone, facial expressions, voice

projection, and comfort performing on stage.

2.3 Adoption of Research Methods

The researcher focused on the effect of applied a/r/tographic community-based reader's theater on learning attitudes, quantitative data was obtained by administering pre- and post-test gauging learning attitudes. Data was analyzed using related samples t-test and descriptive statistics. In order to make the questionnaire have good reliability and validity, the researcher did the pilot study. The Cronbach α was .8476.

Considering the purpose of this research, it was a pluralistic and complex phenomenon, which will vary according to context. Therefore, the researcher adopted qualitative research; which included observation and interview methods.

2.4 Procedure and Data Collection

Students were selected in the first stage according to their speaking oral presentation and pronunciation, and through the recommendation of class students, at first 5 fifth and 12 sixth grade students were selected.

For the first three weeks of training, the researcher led students to read and comprehend the scripts. Students were asked to highlight the unfamiliar words and look up these new vocabularies by themselves. At the same time, the researcher discussed the tone and pronunciation of the script content with students and created the a/r/tographic environment for the students.

After one month, eight students were selected for the second stage according to their speaking fluency, tone, facial expression and body movements. The characters in the script have their own personalities, so the

researcher preliminarily focused on the characteristics of the participating students, assigned the roles, and then adjusted the roles through the results of the content presentation.

The researcher asked students to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the performance after each practice. The feedback was directed at themselves, others, or the performance as a whole, and the students discussed and corrected their shortcomings one by one. Finally, students received feedback from the researcher and other related teachers.

On November 20, 2018 the students performed in front of an elementary school in Tainan. After the competition, students were all happy and told the researcher that they enjoyed the practices and performance. On November 26, 2018, the researcher invited the students to answer the questionnaire reviewing their experience for research purposes. Additionally, two students were chosen to interview.

Results

3.1 A Student-oriented A/r/tographic Community

In the training process, the researchers created an auditory, visual, and kinesthetic perception situation and a field of communication among students, teachers and reader's theater. Through questions and answers, co-creation and construction, the pursuit of transcendence, and challenges were possible. This a/r/tographic community led and encouraged students to find their own images, heard their own voices, learned to perform and developed ideas, learned to appreciate and comment, learned continuously, and continued to strive for excellence.

Ou (2010) mentioned that the aesthetic community should share the

"dream of a common language", but the common language is not only in one language. It is not just the language of the arts, but also the partnership, mutual understanding and respect. The constructing of a community needs to abandon differences. Solidarity and community does not mean that individuals are to be concealed. Instead, the community derives from the autonomous decisions of individuals and organizes individuals. In this temporary aesthetic a/r/tographic community, students and teachers share the same dream—they expect a perfect, unrepentant performance. Each student can play his role to the fullest while maintaining his own personal qualities.

3.2 The Exploration of Students in A/r/tographic Community

The researcher invited students to reflect on this journey after the readers' theater competition. An open-ended questionnaire with thirteen questions was given to eight students to answer. There were nine questions about the perceptions of artists, researchers, and teachers. The other four questions were about the students' feelings about participating in the readers' theater and the feelings of learning during the process of training. All students enjoyed the process of becoming artists, researchers, and teachers. They were willing to join the reader's theater next year. Meanwhile, all the students thought that their English ability was advanced by the training.   In addition, a semi-structured interview was used. The researcher selected two students randomly from the fifth and sixth graders, and numbered them S1 and S2 respectively as a qualitative analysis. The research content was to help explain whether or not the students became a(artist), r(research), and t(teacher) through the reader's theater process. By this questionnaire, the researcher could also collect thoughts and opinions of building an a/r/tographic

community from students and find whether the English language ability and interest have increased during this period. The questionnaire responses and interview contents were integrated according to the study objectives:

(For the 8 students letters A-H are used in place of student names.)

Table 1
Students' perceptions of artists in the a/r/tographic community

Students	Question one: What do you think is an artist?
A	A person who can create and find beauty.
B	Artists can paint, dance, or perform easily.
C	A person who has many special skills.
D	A person shows his/her talents bravely.
E	A person who likes art and everyone can be the artist. Because everyone is unique.
F	A person who has talent and potential.
G	Everyone can be the artist.
H	A person who does anything at any time is art.
Students	Question two: What are the qualities of an artist?
A	A person can make people feel touched.
B	A person who says something and makes people feel moved.
C	A person who has many special skills.
D	Everyone is an artist.
E	A person who likes art and will create something.
F	A person who can show their own characteristics in many places.
G	A person who is Very sensitive to beauty.
H	A person who can go to various places to perform.
Students	Question three: Do you think you are an artist in the course of practicing or discussing about the reader's theater?
A	Not all the time. Because not everyone feels touched.
B	Yes! There are so many people in the competition hall!
C	Yes, I try many things I never done before. E.g. I create the special character's personality that I play.
D	Yes, although we are not professional, I still think that I am an artist. E.g. My action, pronunciation, tone are very special
E	Yes, because each of us is the most unique.
F	Yes, we performed on stage and make a performance for everyone to see.
G	Yes, because everyone can be an artist.
H	Yes, because when I am on stage, I'm an artist.

From table 1, we can find that the students perceived artists as people who are full of artistic sense, pluralism, creation, and the courage to express themselves. Most students can also agree that they are a kind of artist in reader's theater practice because they are unique and have the courage to try everything. The relevant interviews are as follows:

T: In practice, did you often think about how to express your character's actions? And how to make the show better than the last time?

S1: Yes, I often showed my homeroom teacher my actions, and then she gave me some advice. When I went home, I tried to make my actions perfect.

S2: I thought about my movements all the time, because the teacher said that I was too shy to express myself. I knew it's my weakness, but I was trying my best to become more confident.

Pinar (2004) indicated that the artist is a person who engages in artistic creation, but is not necessarily a well-trained, creative skilled artist. Although students in the reader's theater are not professional, they try to present the play with the most appropriate gestures and in the most confident way. Because of this, these students can be called small artists as they meet the criterion of artists in the a/r/tography.

Table2
Students' perceptions of researchers in the a/r/tographic community

Students	Question four: What do you think is a researcher?
A	A person who discovers the pros and cons of something.
B	A person who studies a lot of things.
C	A person who studies a lot of new things and discovers many things.
D	A person who concentrates on doing something and is usually very clever.
E	A group of people who tries their best to do the research.
F	A person who studies a lot of things.
G	A person who specializes in one thing.
H	A person who tries to understand what he/she doesn't know.

Table 2 (Cont'd)

Students' perceptions of researchers in the a/r/tographic community

Students	Question four: What do you think is a researcher?
A	A person who discovers the pros and cons of something.
B	A person who studies a lot of things.
C	A person who studies a lot of new things and discovers many things.
D	A person who concentrates on doing something and is usually very clever.
E	A group of people who tries their best to do the research.
F	A person who studies a lot of things.
G	A person who specializes in one thing.
H	A person who tries to understand what he/she doesn't know.
Students	**Question five: What are the characteristics of the researchers?**
A	A person who is careful, observable, and able to find tiny things.
B	A person who knows a lot about how to study, discuss and think.
C	A person who can think about new ideas.
D	A person who helps people understands a lot of things.
E	A person who won't give up even if he can't find an answer.
F	A person who knows a lot of knowledge.
G	A person who is curious about everything.
H	A person who likes to study things.
Students	**Question six: Do you think you were a researcher in the course of practicing or discussing the reader's theater?**
A	Just a little bit. Because I am not very careful, and I have no observation.
B	Sure! We try our best to come up with how to make the tone, action, volume better than before.
C	Yes. Because there are some performances that I came up with.
D	Yes, because we have a research altogether and discuss how to do next. E.g. We try to sing in the same speed.
E	Of course!! I want to do my best to study how I can perform well.
F	Yes, I research my own action.
G	Yes. During practice, I put myself into the character and try to do the action perfect.
H	Yes, because we study a lot of actions.

For students, the "researcher" means a person who always will explore, solve, and study. Pinar (2004) mentioned the "researcher" is the person who explores the problems and pursues meanings. In addition, all students agree that they try to understand and solve problems in the course of practice, and

they meet the criterion of researchers in the a/r/tography. The relevant interviews are as follows:

T: Since that you all know there are some problems with your voice, expression and movements; do you try to solve these problems during practice?

S1: Of course, I spent my break time to discuss about the action with S3. We're very serious about the reader's theater competition.

S2: Yes, teacher always told me that my intonation is not suitable for the play and I try to figure it out with my English teacher.

Table 3
Students' perceptions of teachers in the a/r/tographic community

Students	Question seven: What do you think is a teacher?
A	A person who can teach others and guide others.
B	A person who teaches patiently.
C	A person who passes on the knowledge he/she knows to others.
D	A person who teaches students to read and learn.
E	A person who is willing to guide others.
F	A person who has leadership skills.
G	A person who teaches students the wrong place
H	A person who is very knowledgeable and experienced.
Students	Question eight: What are the qualities of a teacher?
A	A person who is a leaderful person.
B	Some of the teachers are very funny.
C	A person who guides the students and let everyone step on the right track.
D	A person who teaches others patiently.
E	A person who studies things and discusses with each other.
F	Teachers don't discriminate against students but teach them everything.
G	Teachers have a great passion for teaching.
H	A person who is powerful.

Table 3 (Cont'd)
Students' perceptions of teachers in the a/r/tographic community

Students	Question nine: Do you think you are a teacher in the course of practicing or discussing about the reader's theater?
A	No, because I don't lead anyone.
B	Yes! When my partners encounter some problems, I teach them.
C	Yes! I teach myself and teach others how to act.
D	Yes, because we help and teach each other We all want to be better.
E	Probably. I agree that we are all young teachers. We find the shortcomings of each other and give advice to classmates.
F	No, the sixth graders always told me what to do.
G	Of course. When my partners do not know how to perform, I will remind them how they can do.
H	No, because I didn't teach anyone and I'm not experienced.

For students, the teacher is imparting knowledge, teaching, correcting, being patient, and making people better. Pinar (2004) indicated that "teacher" is not necessarily the actual author of the faculty, but refers to all people who can communicate ideas and knowledge with others and learn from each other. Therefore, the researchers think that with the concept of "people who can communicate ideas and knowledge with others and learn from one another," the eight students are actually teachers and they meet the criterion of teachers in the a/r/tography. Although there are three students who do not agree that they are teachers because they do not teach others. The relevant interviews are as follows:

T: In practice, had you ever tried to help others or made suggestions to all people and let everyone's performance better?

S1: Yes, of course. For example, S4 always spoke too fast and we got a metronome to help her to slow down the speed.

S2: Well, I did not teach others. Because I didn't know what I can do and most of the time the sixth graders told me what to do.

To sum up, all the students who participated in the reader's theater competition are supposed to be artists, researchers and teachers during these two months of practice, in which these roles occur at the same time, there is no separate existence, and everyone is part of the whole. At the same time, students are aware of what they want to pursue, constantly explore problems, solve problems, and share experiences. Everyone also tries to challenge himself, to advance standards, and to pursuit excellence. There is no compulsion, everyone can choose freely.

Irwin (2008) mentions that there are four commitments that must be assumed in a/r/tographic community: a commitment to a way of being in the world, a commitment to inquiry, a commitment to negotiating personal engagement within a community of belonging, and a commitment to creating practices that trouble and address difference. Students have practiced and undertaken these four commitments and strive to do the best during two months. The researchers therefore think that students can be a/r/tographers, and they can form a small, temporary a/r/tographic community.

3.3 Effects of a/r/tography community-based reader's theater on English learning attitudes

Table 3.3.1
Number(N), Means (M), and Standard Deviations (SD) of the English Learning Attitudes Questionnaire for the Formal Study (N=8)

Item	Number(N)	Mean(M)	Std. Deviation(SD)
Pre-test	8	63.38	5.902
Post-test	8	69	6.118

Table 3.3.1 displayed the means and standard deviations of English

learning attitudes. The results showed that the mean of the post-test (M=69) is higher than the post-test (M=63.38). It appears that students' English learning attitudes were better than before.

Table 3.3.2
Summary of Related Samples t-test of English Learning Attitudes

Item	Number(N)	Mean(M)	Std. Deviation(SD)	t value	Sig.
Pre-test	8	63.38	5.902	9.00	.000***
Post-test	8	69	6.118		

Note. *p <.05 **p <.01 ***P <.001

Table 3.3.2 showed that the t value of pre-test and post-test (t=9.00), p=.000. It reaches a significant level (p<.001). There was a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test, pre-test (M = 63.38, SD = 5.902) and post-test (M = 69, SD = 6.118), p ≤ .01. Further, Cohen's effect size value (d = 1.16) suggested a moderate to high practical significance. It appeared that implementing a/r/tographic community on reader's theater can enhance students' learning attitudes on learning English.

3.4 Conclusion

English is an important international language and an important second language in Taiwanese education. To learn English is not a burden, not imprisonment, not a stress. It should be fun and interesting. Students should learn with enthusiasm, and then learning English becomes a competitive advantage.

Although in the beginning of the implementation of the a/r/tographic community, the students were passive and needed the researcher to issue

orders directly. However, with continuous guidance and patient support, the students could gradually form an a/r/tographic community. The researchers have found that if teachers give students the space, time, self-confidence, security and subjectivity, then they can inspire and expand students' unlimited possibilities. Through repeated discussions and the movement of artists, researchers, and teachers, students can discover creativity and diversity beyond their imagination. Since the researchers studied students with a higher English level and the a/r/tographic community is small and temporary, it is proposed to study different perspectives which lead to the class and long-term observation. By long-term research and observing a bigger class, teachers can create a rethinking, recreating, and re-researching a/r/tographic community.

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