

Integrating drama in teaching English as a foreign language in China: A South African perspective

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my family and friends.

A special feeling of gratitude towards my mother for her unconditional love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study lies close to my heart as I have been teaching performing arts in China for the last couple of years. I have always been passionate about drama and languages—my favourite subjects during high school—they inspired me to become a Drama and English teacher. I have developed a deep interest in using drama skills to teach languages during my teaching career. As an English and Drama teacher in South Africa and currently in Mainland China, I apply many drama techniques in my language classes. While teaching in China, I have advised many EFL teachers how to incorporate drama activities into their classes, and this experience has inspired me to choose this research topic. Also, by completing my Masters in Curriculum Design, I wish to develop the necessary skills to realise one of my most ambitious dreams, to publish a drama textbook.

I would not have achieved this significant milestone in my life without the support of the following people who guided me in this venture. My most sincere gratitude and appreciation to:

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- The participants in my study, for their willingness to participate and for offering their valuable time to share their opinions and experiences with me.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates drama as a pedagogical tool for teaching English as a foreign language in China from a South African perspective. The research evaluates the effectiveness of using drama in the English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching approaches in practice in China and as an additional tool to traditional instructional methods of language teaching and learning. The purpose is to build on empirical knowledge and bridge the gap for South African teachers to use drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL in China. Therefore, this investigation seeks to fulfil the following objectives:

1. Assess the benefits of using drama in the EFL classroom
2. Suggest practical procedural strategies to use in the EFL classroom with relevant examples
3. Determine how to integrate drama into the foreign language lesson
4. Research the best applicable ways to incorporate drama into the traditional instructional methods of teaching EFL in China
5. Promote using drama as a teaching method in EFL and, if possible, in other foreign language learning

A methodical qualitative approach was adopted to explore this topic, guided by interpretivism as the most suitable theoretical paradigm for the investigation. The epistemological stance of this study is the sociocultural theory based on constructivism. The sociocultural theory approach linked well with the theoretical framework of the study based on learning through social interaction and assisted me in understanding how drama skills can assist foreign language teaching and learning to create a suitable contextual environment. The sociocultural theory as a theoretical guideline has assisted me in moving from theory to data and from data to theory. The study's sample comprises the purposive selection of three school types in Mainland China: public schools, international schools, and training centres. The participants are ten South African teachers currently teaching EFL in Tier-1 cities in Mainland China. The data collection comprises interviews, questionnaires, and observations.

Key terms

Drama-based pedagogy, Teaching tools, Drama integration, English as a foreign language, Language acquisition, English language teaching

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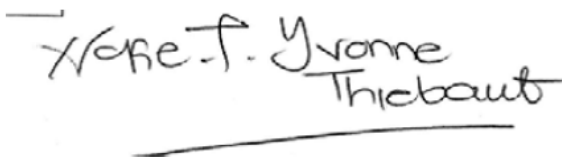
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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

A Chinese proverb promoting a well-balanced interaction between efficient instruction and practical learning states, “Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I will remember. Involve me, and I will understand.” Regarding pedagogy, learners must be engaged in a classroom to learn and understand better. Therefore, they should be active participants in their learning process. For these learners’ involvement, drama can be used as a pedagogical tool, especially in acquiring a second or a foreign language beyond formal learning (Uysal, Nuriye, & Fatih, 2018).

There is a fundamental difference between acquisition and learning. While the former, referring to language, applies to the unconscious step-by-step development of aptitude in a language to communicate, the latter refers to a conscious process of receiving and assimilating knowledge by a formal and faster process with equal attention to the language’s structure, its morphology, phonetics, semantics, grammar, and syntax (Yule, 1985, p. 151). Drama is crucial in developing the unconscious use of a foreign language because it is contextualised in the learning process. The production of new knowledge is more effective when changing progressively from the exterior perspective (language learning) to the internal perspective will help language learners (language acquisition through foreign language for professional peer learning) (Zaščerinska, 2010). For a learner, using foreign sounds and uncommon forms of expression in a specific situation and context can be beneficial for brainstorming and creative thinking.

Furthermore, South African teachers of English in China could be professionally better equipped if they were introduced to the pedagogical role of drama and the Chinese cultural context relevant to drama and language teaching through a valid scholarly study. Since I am currently teaching in Mainland China, I will examine my research phenomenon in this sociocultural framework through direct observation and empirical evidence regarding *why* and *how* drama can be an effective pedagogical tool in teaching and learning EFL in the Chinese cultural context. Such a study could become a beneficial asset to concerned South Africans and, hopefully, international teachers planning to teach English in China.

1.2 Definitions and contextualisation

English as a foreign language (EFL) is “the practice and theory of learning and teaching

English for use in countries where it is not an official medium” (Collins English Dictionary, 2002), and according to Si (2019), EFL is learning English in non-English-speaking countries. *English as a second language* (ESL) is traditionally defined as “the use or study of the English language by non-native speakers in an English-speaking environment” (Nordquist, 2019). The two descriptions, ESL and EFL, are closely correlated but different regarding teaching and learning. In ESL classrooms, foreign learners, such as students, economic immigrants, and others, target their new settlement’s native, standard language. However, in EFL classrooms, native learners aim at a foreign language, in this case, Chinese learners to whom I am presently teaching EFL because they do not have exposure to English outside the classroom. Regardless of the learning motives, foreign languages influence a country’s development in terms of science, technology, economy, and, for some countries, improving the quality of political-economic reforms. In this context, the Chinese government considers acquiring the English language as paramount to the nation’s economic compatibility in the global market (Sung & Pederson, 2012).

1.2.1 Teacher migration out of South Africa (SA)

Globalisation significantly affected the rapid global migration of skilled workers, especially teachers. Teacher retention is a problem in developing nations, including SA. Since the 1990s, skilled workers have increasingly emigrated from underdeveloped nations to industrialised ones (SACE, 2011). According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2004, as cited in SACE, 2011), three industries—health, education, and new technologies—have seen a significant rise in the international movement of highly trained professionals since the 1990s. The global migration of teachers is a growing concern. Further studies on the migration of South African teachers are necessary because failing to address the issue could have detrimental consequences on the development of South African education (Manik, Maharaj, & Sookrajh, 2006).

1.2.2 Reasons for migration of South African teachers

South African teachers leave for economic, social, and career reasons (SACE, 2011). The state of the global labour market and SA’s diminishing economic standing of teaching as a profession affect the exodus of South African educators to other countries (Manik et al., 2006). According to Vester (2018), teachers leave their jobs because of inadequate pay, high crime rate, prejudice toward different religions, and racial laws limiting prospects for them and their

families. A significant factor in job dissatisfaction is the ongoing revision of educational policy, poor management, excessive workloads, inadequate pay, eliminating teacher leave days, implementing outcomes-based education and the uncertainty faced by temporary teachers (Manik et al., 2006, as cited in SACE, 2011).

Due to large wage differentials abroad, many South African educators migrate internationally for economic reasons. Statistics indicate that “South Africans working in Britain earn 46% more income than they made at home” (Appleton et al., 2006a, as cited in SACE, 2011). Teachers are frustrated with large class sizes, heavy workloads, a lack of career advancement, an inadequate curriculum, student discipline, and subpar school leadership and management (Verster, 2018). Furthermore, the choice to migrate is fundamentally influenced by personal connections. Spousal influence, strained marriages, and international friendships influence migrant teachers’ decision-making (Verster, 2018). Other reasons South Africans choose to teach abroad include cultural experience, work experience, and travel.

1.2.3 The impact of teacher migration on SA

Asia, the Middle East, the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and America (US) are popular teaching destinations for South African educators, which led to a substantial loss of educators in the South African education system (SACE, 2011). Developed countries have proactively sought to address their critical teacher shortages by developing innovative strategies to attract, recruit and retain teachers from abroad (Manik, 2005; Mulvaney, 2005; De Villiers & Book, 2009; American Federation of Teachers, 2009, as cited in SACE, 2011). Since the data supplied does not give disaggregated figures on inflows and outflows of skilled labour at specific professional levels, it is challenging to identify the exact statistics. The push and pull variables contributing to teacher movement in and out of SA are valuable insights that can be gained through published research and conference presentations on the topic (SACE, 2011). “A study of emigration to the UK, US, New Zealand, Canada and Australia suggested that close to a quarter of a million South Africans have settled in these countries between 1989 and 1997” (Louw, 2001 cited in George & Rhodes, 2015, p. 114)

According to Statistics SA, an estimate average of 1000 skilled people leave SA every month (Harichunder, 2001, as cited in Manik et al., 2006 and in George & Rhodes 2015). “A study of emigration to the UK, US, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia by the University of Cape Town suggested that close to a quarter of a million South Africans have settled in these countries between 1989 and 1997” (George & Rhodes, 2015, p. 114). The migration of teachers negatively affected SA’s socioeconomic development. Mlambo and Adetiba (2020, p. 156) state that South Africans are migrating overseas and within South Africa itself, and many teachers are leaving the rural areas for urban areas with far-reaching implications for schools and learners in rural areas. According to Mlambo and Adetiba (2020, p. 161), there has been “no clear-cut plan” by the South African government to retain teachers. It is suggested that the government prioritise teacher retention by offering incentives, such as promotions, higher salaries, and infrastructural improvements.

1.2.4 South African teachers in China

China’s staggering international economic growth has led to a surge in the popularity of English language learning, causing a radical reform of the Chinese curriculum, i.e., teaching methods, teacher education, and assessment systems (Zheng & Davison, 2008). Teaching EFL in China is a popular teaching destination. The British Council estimated that two billion people were learning English in 2020, with 300 million residing in China (Stones, 2020). English teachers are in high demand, and high incentives have lured skilled South Africans to its shores.

The literature review shows limited academic data about South Africans choosing to teach in China. Native English speakers have various reasons for teaching in China, such as attractive financial incentives, airfare reimbursements, furnished homes, paid holidays, and health insurance (Hill, 2014, as cited in Mlambo & Adetiba, 2020). South Africans can earn double to triple more than what they would have earned in SA because the teaching profession is greatly respected (Chinaplus, 2019). South Africans are also considered native English speakers. Since one does not necessarily need a teaching degree to be allowed to teach English in China, as a prerequisite, a bachelor’s degree is sufficient to teach in China. Consequently, many foreigners who teach the subject hold various bachelor’s degrees. Therefore, many teachers who are not professionally trained might encounter difficulties when they practice abroad. In line with the high demand for the English language, many professionally skilled South Africans choose to teach English in China.

Moving to China requires taking a giant leap, as most teachers receive no special training before moving abroad, which leads to a huge cultural and administrative shock, as there have been several incidents of South African teachers being detained and deported for visa violations (Govender, 2019). China has strict visa policies, and foreigners must meet specific requirements to teach English in China, including being under 60 years old (55 for women), possessing a Z-class work visa, being native English speakers from one of the seven recognised English-speaking nations, having two years of classroom experience, possessing a bachelor's degree, being TESOL certified, and passing a physical examination. The teacher might be required to pass a drug test and must pass a criminal background check from their native country (Chiesi, 2021).

Also, China is cracking down on the private education industry to improve education equality. China has become concerned about the exorbitant educational costs, exacerbating wealth disparities, and wants to encourage families to have more children. Chinese authorities established regulations in July 2021 prohibiting for-profit after-school tutoring, imposed capital-raising restrictions on tutoring businesses, and outlawed teaching on weekends and public holidays (Zhai, 2021). Private tutors and training centres are among those who are the most affected. Many of my friends and acquaintances working for training centres have urgently had to move to kindergartens or public schools. However, this has not lessened the demand for English classes.

1.2.5 Drama as a proposed pedagogy to teach EFL in China

China has transformed their pedagogical beliefs in recent years and modernised its teaching approach by updating textbook covers, including modern English language journals and books. Current popular practices in Chinese classrooms include content-, topic-, and task-based class models and integrated Web technology (Zhou, 2008). Despite introducing English as a compulsory subject in primary schools, the teaching hours in the curriculum are incomparable to Chinese and mathematics. Also, due to insufficient teaching resources, introducing English might need to be delayed for those living in isolated and rural areas (Qi, 2016). However, despite the efforts, the current teaching style follows the traditional teacher-centred approach (Lin, 2006). Furthermore, language teaching has a cultural component that might lead to cross-cultural discourses.

Based on my professional experience, the difference between Eastern and Western teaching

methods and techniques has created severe obstacles in facilitating the language learning process for teachers and learners. These methodological issues easily lead to cross-cultural discourses, frequently causing miscommunication and antagonism (Muehl & Muehl, 1993). The Chinese modernisation process “is inevitably associated with confrontations and competitions ...” as “... education systems have to undergo a process of modification, adaptation and transformation in a particular sociocultural context, creating hybrid kinds of pedagogy” (Deng, 2011, p. 561). Language teachers in China, as mentioned, still cling to traditional teaching methods and techniques (Rao, 2013). However, many theories investigating the learning processes deviate from the traditional and focus on the importance of how learning is delivered and received.

Traditional language teaching involves the written structural aspect of a language, i.e., grammar, syntax, and vocabulary teaching, which, by definition, form a language’s static aspect. Notwithstanding the importance of these aspects of any language’s teaching and learning, the role of transmitting meaning by the sender (teacher) to receivers (learners) through dynamic, interactive participation is equally worthy of attention. Language teaching must involve emotions, thoughts, and cultural experiences. Using communicative strategies in language teaching, beyond practising linguistic skills, develops social skills by demonstrating behaviour in cross-cultural communication (Ali, Kazemian, & Mahar, 2015).

Therefore, drama as a human-centred activity offers a more sympathetic and emotional information exchange, emphasising the importance and uniqueness of the individual’s character (Fulford, Hutchings, Ross, & Schmitz, 1990). In this context, drama is an innovative approach opposed to the formal, static transfer of instruction by supporting linguistic interaction directly and dynamically. This study investigates a drama-based pedagogy focusing on how best it can be used in foreign and second-language classrooms (Gerd, 2002).

1.3 My researcher position and role

1.3.1 Focus and purpose

This study evaluates the effectiveness of using drama in the teaching approaches of EFL in practice in China and as an additional tool to traditional instructional methods of language teaching and learning to provide a holistic picture of the topic. The macro purpose is my study endeavour to enhance creativity in the existing traditional approaches according to the fourth industrial revolution and technological advancements in creative arts. The process will involve

selected South African EFL educators teaching in different types of schools in Mainland China. The participants will be South African teachers in China and Chinese EFL learners. These schools include but are not limited to training centres, public schools, and international schools.

1.3.2 Aims

This study aims to enhance the EFL practical training in a class by integrating drama into the teaching and learning curriculum. Therefore, I will examine the role of drama as a pedagogical tool in the EFL classroom and how it can narrow the distance between the formal learning of the English language and the natural acquisition of foreign language skills as much as possible. For the success of my aim, I will include teachers' experiences gathered through interviews and learners' performances through observations.

1.3.3 Objectives

Based on the case study and for the benefit of South African teachers of the English language in China, this investigation seeks to fulfil the following objectives:

- Assess the benefits of using drama in the EFL classroom.
- Suggest practical procedural strategies to use in the EFL classroom with relevant examples.
- Determine how drama can be integrated into the foreign language lesson.
- Research the best applicable ways to incorporate drama into the traditional instructional methods of teaching EFL in China.
- Promote using drama as a teaching method in EFL and, if possible, in other foreign language learning.

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 Primary research question

- How can a drama-based pedagogy be integrated into traditional teaching and learning to activate natural, spontaneous sources of learning among learners?

1.4.2 *Subsidiary question*

- What are South African teachers' perceptions of drama as a pedagogical tool for EFL in China, and why?

1.5 Theoretical framework: The sociocultural theory

For this research, I will collect data relevant to the subject matter and analyse it using an inductive approach. I will look for patterns in the collected data, which I will interpret according to the theoretical framework built on Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory about language acquisition, combined with Jean Piaget's constructivism stressing the role of cognitive development during knowledge acquisition. Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory investigates the context of behaviour or the social situation where the action occurs (Cole et al., 1978).

The central theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that "psychological structures do not exist in" (Behroozizad et al, 2014) the individual's mind but are created through interaction within the social context. Learning is a social process, and "meaning is derived through language use within the social context" (Behroozizad et al, 2014). Jean Piaget's theories regarding cognitive development stages are also crucial to consider. Both these theories and three of Vygotsky's most significant constructs of his theory (mediation, the zone of proximal development, and scaffolding) will be elaborated on in Chapter 2 of this research paper. A drama-based pedagogy in the foreign language classroom closely correlates with the sociocultural theory; therefore, the chosen approach will assist me in understanding how drama skills can assist in foreign language teaching and learning to create a suitable contextual environment. The study will also analyse connecting traditional pedagogy with a drama-based pedagogical approach.

1.6 Organisation and outline of the chapters

- Chapter One: Introduction and overview of the study

Chapter One provides an introduction and overview of the study. It outlines the study's historical background context, rationale, and motivation, and the aims and objectives are discussed. The research problem is introduced, and a short overview of the theoretical

framework is provided. The contribution of this study is also discussed.

- Chapter Two: Literature review and theoretical framework

Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature review. This paper draws literature from international and local online resources, including textbooks, journal articles, theses, dissertations, and websites. This chapter elaborates on the literature review's purpose in the study and how it was conducted. For this study, the literature review was presented according to themes. The primary themes are

- the differences between language learning and acquisition and approaches in teaching and learning EFL,
- linguistic and cultural problems of Chinese learners because of fundamental differences between Eastern and Western language teaching and learning approaches,
- exploring the role of drama-based pedagogy in the EFL classroom and discussing the benefits of using drama as a teaching interacting tool in China, and
- practical procedural drama strategies to use in an EFL classroom and suggested activities to narrow the distance between learning and acquiring a foreign language.

Additionally, the highlighted themes were explored from a global perspective with a specific focus on China and South Africa. The second chapter explicates the theoretical framework from which I approach this study.

- Chapter Three: Research design and methodology

Chapter Three provides the research design and methodology of this study. In developing the research design, the research purpose is discussed, and I elaborate on the paradigm informing the research. I discuss the context within which the research was conducted and the techniques used to collect the data. The third chapter describes how the research was conducted and when, from whom, and under what conditions the data were collected. The methodology, which was addressed from a qualitative perspective, is also discussed. The methodology describes the data-gathering and analysis techniques used to investigate and respond to the research issues. The chapter concludes by discussing this study's trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and limitations.

- Chapter Four: Data analysis

Chapter Four discusses the findings derived from the data generated from the observation. I identify nine themes and various sub-themes. All the themes relate to this study's research questions and theoretical framework. This chapter answers the two research questions guiding the study, namely "How can a drama-based pedagogy be integrated into traditional teaching and learning to activate natural, spontaneous sources of learning among learners?" and "What are South African teachers' perceptions of drama as a pedagogical tool for EFL in China, and why?"

- Chapter Five: Evaluation of findings

Chapter Five contains a discussion of the findings from the fourth chapter. The results are presented under the different themes from the data analysis. This chapter contextualises the findings by incorporating Chapter Two's literature review and theoretical framework.

- Chapter Six: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter Six summarises the study. Chapter Six serves as the study's conclusion. The primary discussion topics are emphasised, the findings of the research chapter are expanded upon, and recommendations for future research are made.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

According to Maree (2016), a literature review provides integrated insight into the literature on the topic and an integrated overview of existing trends and leading opinions in the field. Such a review is crucial because it can provide a better understanding of the relevant field, a clearer identification of the research problems, and a most useful comparative viewpoint.

The review will draw literature from international and South African resources to better understand the subject matter, including textbooks, journal articles, theses, dissertations, and available online websites. Furthermore, it will critically discuss using drama and its value as a facilitator in the EFL teaching and learning process. A comparative literature review of current theories and research findings will assess the pedagogical role of drama as an unconscious, natural, informal learning process and a strong enough factor to complement the formal, conscious learning of EFL. Therefore, the literature review is thematically structured in the following order.

- Differences between language learning and language acquisition and approaches in teaching and learning EFL
- Linguistic and cultural problems of Chinese learners caused by fundamental differences between Eastern and Western language teaching and learning approaches
- Exploring the role of drama-based pedagogy in the EFL classroom and discussing the benefits of using drama as a teaching interacting tool in China
- Practical procedural drama strategies to use in an EFL classroom and suggested activities to narrow the distance between learning and acquiring a foreign language

In this study on using drama as a teaching tool, the following relevant queries will be presented and analysed: a. Regarding South African teachers, how can drama be used to narrow the gap between acquisition and learning EFL in China? b. Is the drama-based approach more beneficial than other learning methods, and why? c. How can a drama-based approach be integrated with traditional EFL teaching methods in China? d. Which practical procedural strategies can be used in an EFL classroom (with examples)?

2.1.1 Difference between language learning and acquisition: approaches in teaching and learning EFL in China

First language acquisition refers to a learner learning their native language. Foreign language acquisition is learning a foreign language after establishing a first language. Language acquisition refers to the gradual, informal development of someone's ability to use a language naturally in communicative circumstances and is related to the early stages of a child's life. However, learning a language at school refers to formal, professionally structured and controlled stages of instruction and response. The conjunction between two realities is the wish to establish language proficiency as close as possible to the first language acquisition through the best approach (Yule, 1985, pp. 150–155). Similarly, Kramsch stated,

...” until the 1970s, culture was seen as the literacy or humanities component of language study and was associated with the grammar-translation method of teaching foreign languages ... In the 70s and 80s, following the communicative turn in language pedagogy, culture became synonymous with the way of life and everyday behaviours of members of speech communities, bound together by common experiences, memories, and aspirations.” (2013, pp. 64–67)

- Grammar-based traditional approach

In 1997, foreign language became compulsory in Chinese education (Zhou, 2008). The classroom teaching was monotone and delivered in Mandarin Chinese (Richards & Rodgers, 2003). Despite being a popular foreign language, most English learners were beginners. Based on a grammar-translation method, teaching focused on the formal, static aspect of the language by memorising new words and explaining grammar. Defined by Cook (2001, p. 201) as: “a traditional academic style, this approach develops grammatical competence in the learners' minds. It sees language acquisition as memorising traditional grammatical rules and vocabulary lists.” This method requires learners to translate entire texts word for word and memorise the grammatical rules of the relevant text. Little attention is placed on pronunciation and context (Wang, 2009).

The translation process in foreign language acquisition is not limited to conveying meaning from the source language (Mandarin) to the target language (English). It is a pedagogical method assisting learners in their first learning levels and understanding complicated expressions and phrases. The grammar-translation method is most effective for reading and

translating sentences demonstrating grammatical rules to acquire EFL (Aqel, 2013). However, this method does not develop learners' speaking abilities. When Chinese English teachers use grammar-translation methods, they require learners to memorise English vocabulary words and grammar rules and rarely require learners to read aloud and speak. Consequently, the learners' abilities to practice speaking English cannot develop sufficiently (Lai, 2020). This method has been the most applied in schools as it does not require the teacher to be fluent, and the learner's and teacher's language does not hamper a communication gap. As it was highly ineffective, several factors contributed to the questioning and rejecting the grammar-translation method. Learners either grow tired of monotone grammar study or, after leaving school, find themselves at a loss when confronted by the different way English is used to how they have been taught (Richards & Rodgers, 2003).

- From audiolingual to audio-visual approaches

A sharp increase in learners wanting to go abroad occurred due to globalisation. In the 1980s, the audiolingual and audio-visual methods rose in popularity as there was a surge in demand for oral-aural English skills (Zhou, 2008). The audiolingual method refers to teachers presenting correct models of sentences to learners and the learners repeating them. This method relies heavily on dialogues and audio. New words are shown in structures and memorised in their form. Students practice specific constructs until they can use them spontaneously (Wang, 2009). It is assumed that imitation and repetition lead to language learning. However, learners have no control over their output using this method, and the lessons can be static. The audio-visual teaching method refers to working with sound and visual components. For example, movies and television shows are used for lessons. Teachers provide audio to the classroom and supplement it with images projected onto a screen (Wang, 2009).

- The direct approach

China's economy and technology boomed during the 1990s, and the country adopted a more open foreign policy. Increased attention was placed on using English as the primary language for international communication (Zhou, 2008). In the direct approach, teaching was done entirely in the target language, and the learner was not allowed to use their mother tongue in class. Lessons were taught in English mixed with native Mandarin Chinese. This method defines direct exposure to a foreign language with minimal structural guidance (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). The direct approach's prerequisites are inaccessible to most Chinese English

teachers due to their inadequate English competence. Additionally, it is challenging for teachers to teach English because English instruction in China emphasises reading and writing for exams (Lai, 2020). The direct approach is teacher-centred, and the teacher directly instructs the learners. Teachers from the West favour a collaborative form of learning. The need for native English teachers became noticeable as learners failed to effectively apply English to real-world communication (Zhou, 2008). Foreign language teachers became a novelty. Today, foreign language instructors teach language and culture (Scheutz & Maio, 2011). Since the 1950s, Chinese EFL teaching has focused on the target language's inter-structure (Wang, 2009). Since then, Chinese and foreign teachers have experienced enormous difficulties, including a significant change in their pedagogical practices and philosophies.

- The communicative approach

In 1992, the Chinese State Education Development Commission responsible for setting educational policies required that secondary school teachers teach English for communication (Liao, 2004). More attention was placed on communicative proficiency in cross-cultural exchanges, and communicative language teaching (CLT) was popularised. The communicative approach prioritises creating meaning rather than precise grammatical development and native-like pronunciation. How well learners have developed their communicative competence serves as a measure of learning success., and focus is placed on the authentic context. The majority of class activities involve pair and group projects that call for negotiation and cooperation between learners (Wang, 2009).

Research has shown that cooperative learning in language education improves language competence and fosters intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, caring relationships, and a decrease in anxiety and prejudice (Oxford, 1997). According to Cook,

... there are at least three communicative styles that have emerged, namely, the social communicative, information communicative and task-based learning styles. Social communicative teaching focuses on the combined interaction of two people in a situation. Information communicative teaching focuses on the exchange of information and ideas, rather than the relationship between people. (2001, p. 212)

Task-based learning concentrates on “the collective solution of problems through classroom tasks with definite outcomes”. China feels that using the communicative approach will be advantageous, allowing teachers to keep up with developments in English teaching methods

(Liao, 2004). Many educators, researchers, and policymakers have committed to improving English language teaching effectiveness in Mainland China, increasing language learning and acquisition research and developing relevant pedagogical initiatives (Gao, Liao, & Liu, 2014).

In the CLT framework, a drama-based pedagogy offers active and dramatic approaches to engage learners in learning through meaning-making dialogues in all curriculum areas. A drama-based pedagogy uses techniques that engage learners and help create an environment for focused inquiry and cross-curricular learning opportunities (Dawson & Lee, 2018). Communicational context, social language, and active participation influence the effectiveness of drama presentation and language learning efficiency (Yuanyuan, 2019).

2.1.2 Eastern versus Western language teaching and learning approaches: Linguistic and cultural teaching and learning problems

- Linguistic challenges of learning EFL in China

In this research context, I identified Chinese learners' linguistic and cultural problems caused by fundamental differences between Eastern and Western language teaching and learning approaches. Such communication issues can arise when there is a problem in the sender's/speaker's intention, willingness, and ability to cognise and encode their message or in the receiver's/listener's perception and decoding involving unsuccessful mappings of intention and linguistic form (Dua, 1990). In his study on identifying low proficiency in EFL in China, Lai (2007) states that Chinese teachers still teach most English teaching. Since they have never left China or interacted with an English speaker previously, some Chinese teachers find it challenging to teach English effectively. Most EFL learners also have few opportunities to interact with native English speakers—they are mostly exposed to English media, but this does not qualify as meaningful exposure. There is a lack of qualified teachers with expertise in English and the ability to teach it in China, where there is a demand for practical, accessible approaches to teaching English. Currently, English is taught in outdated, traditional ways (Zhen, 2012). Moreover, learners' English-speaking levels vary, making it even harder for teachers.

A need for appropriate and effective teaching materials is also evident. The availability of textbooks is limited and does not satisfy the demands of different-level learners (Zhen, 2012). Publishing companies in China publish most English reading materials. Thus, the lack of original books for teachers and learners makes it difficult for them to learn English effectively

(Lai, 2007). Chinese learners have a heavier study curriculum than learners in Western countries. They have eight to nine classes a day, and despite it being against the law, most learners are required to attend evening and weekend classes after school. Furthermore, the examination content contributes to poor English standards. EFL examination emphasises reading and writing with no oral test (Lai, 2007).

- Differences between Eastern and Western language teaching and learning approaches

Meaning in the globalised world is constructed from multiple perspectives and philosophies, as science explores the meaning of these multiple perspectives to establish common understandings (Sefotho, 2018, p. 2). Education systems in the East and West differ due to their cultural differences, indirectly showing the strength and weaknesses of both cultures (Kim, 2005). These disagreements arise when different educational perspectives collide in a setting with high expectations and low mutual awareness (Simpson, 2008). Communication difficulties arise in language teaching and learning when Eastern and Western cultures meet. The two systems' approaches to class organisation, curriculum, administration, resources, teaching methods, and student expectations vary (Lin, 2006). Muehl and Muehl (1993) summarise that Chinese educators who had attempted Western approaches found that they departed too radically from their traditional approaches. Also, Chinese learners showed constraints on introducing new methods, concerned about the absence of written materials for memorisation. However, Alonso (2011) states a need for pragmatics in language teaching in China. Linguists must realise the importance of pragmatics in language use. Language learning aims to obtain practical skills by narrowing the distance between learning and acquiring. Language teaching primarily uses the learnt language correctly, spontaneously, and naturally.

To this end, a foreign language learner must be motivated in the classroom to develop the drive to succeed. Gardner and Lambert (1959) indicated that the successful learning of an additional language is related to language aptitude and motivation for other achievements in life. Furthermore, learners' non-cognitive factors must not be ignored, and their enthusiasm must be stimulated, as their self-consciousness and creativity are crucial in foreign language teaching (Wang, 2009). Thus, internal and external factors should stimulate a learner's motivation for successful outcomes, such as direct participation in classroom activities through feeling and expressing, speaking and listening, and moving and watching in line with the drama instructions.

It has been noted that Chinese learners withdraw from the language course due to an over-emphasis on academic and form-oriented content—in Eastern education, frequent tests and examinations measure the success of learning in the EFL classroom. This system has been in place for generations in China and appears to contain merits relating to diligence and logical outcomes (Degen, Absalom, & Australia, 1998). In Western education, learning success is based on tests and understanding (Lin, 2006). However, one is not better than the other. Modern pedagogy should not disregard traditional pedagogy, and traditional teaching methods should not be completely disregarded when adopting new theories and methodologies. Old methods are still useful, especially in the context of postmodernism. No education system can be holistically adequate to address all social needs (Sefotho, 2018, p. 55). A philosophy of comparative education can be taken from Western and Eastern philosophy, and comparing Eastern and Western education systems could enrich these systems.

Language is better learnt within its context. Language teachers must create scenarios, assign specific input and output tasks, and assist students in achieving language acquisition by having them complete a series of tasks. Moreover, language has significant social functions, regulates people's thoughts to a certain extent, and is a vital medium for promoting human development (Goodman, 1986). Cultural differences influence language acquisition, as Chinese learners tend to be self-conscious. Chinese learners are shy and embarrassed to express themselves as they fear peer exposure when using foreign language features. Teachers realise their roles include more than adhering to a teacher-centred class model (Zhou, 2008). An ideal classroom should be student-centred, allowing students to demonstrate their highest linguistic proficiency and communicative abilities. Teaching and learning interactions are based on mutual understanding.

- Cultural problems of learning and teaching EFL

Language teachers play a crucial role in promoting intercultural understanding and cultural awareness in their learners. According to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong 'o (1986), language is not just a means of communication but also a method for carrying culture. "Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature; the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong 'o, 1986, p 16). Both Ngũgĩ wa Thiong 'o (1986) and Soyinka (1998) emphasise the importance of performance and storytelling in African cultural contexts to promote language acquisition and cultural understanding. Similarly, incorporating drama in the foreign language classroom in

China provides learners with an interactive and engaging learning experience. By participating in drama activities, learners can practice and perform the target language in a supportive environment, building confidence and fluency.

Furthermore, drama can also promote intercultural competence, as students are exposed to the target language culture's customs, traditions, and perspectives. The integration of drama pedagogy in the foreign language classroom in China aligns with the practices of African cultures. It provides students with a comprehensive language education experience beyond mere language acquisition.

From my viewpoint, language and culture are interrelated; therefore, one cannot thoroughly learn a foreign language without learning its cultural context. Culture is ingrained in language, and language reflects and transmits culture from one generation to the next (Emmitt & Pollock, 1997). Culture is a set of shared values, beliefs, rules, attitudes, and behaviours by which people view things (Gudykunst, 2003). Ndebele (1992) and Mphahlele (1959) argue that language is a fundamental aspect of culture and serves as a repository of cultural values, beliefs, and practices. As a result, foreign language teachers can be seen as "teachers of culture" as they are responsible for teaching the linguistic skills necessary for communication and imparting an understanding of the cultural context in which the language is used. Through the study of language and culture, learners can gain insight into other communities' customs, attitudes, and beliefs and develop a more nuanced understanding of cultural diversity. This, in turn, can promote respect for cultural differences and contribute to the creation of a more harmonious, inclusive society.

Cultural differences affect learners' attitudes towards learning (Hannon & D'Netto, 2007). Learners learn better through social interactions in cultural contexts, and from this emerges intellectual activities, dialogue, and informal teaching. A learner's foundations in literacy acquisition are shaped by the nature of the exchange between a learner and a teacher, a print-rich environment, and the encouragement of literacy practices in the learner's cultural values (Gupta, 2008). According to Chang and Lim (2002), learners learn better in a collectivist culture because they are more supportive and group-oriented. While completing tasks, collectivistic learners rely on nonverbal communication patterns, such as gestures and facial expressions (Francesco and Gold, 1998).

Learners of foreign or second languages cannot appropriate the culture of the language's native

speakers for themselves. Lantolf describes culture as “an historically transmitted semiotic network constructed by humans and which allows them to develop, communicate, and perpetuate their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about the world”. Therefore, non-native speakers, by definition, cannot have this semiotic network transmitted to them historically because it is a “system of inherited conceptions” (Geertz, 1973, p. 89). Although language learners can adopt the native speakers’ conceptual metaphors, they might have different views on the content. Second-language learners can gain secondary access to language and make it theirs, which is different from native speakers (Kramersch, 2013).

Teaching EFL in the Chinese cultural context implies that EFL teachers should develop learners’ cultural capacity. Due to their authentic relationship to the target language and culture, many Chinese schools choose to recruit native speakers as language teachers. However, native speakers do not necessarily know their learners’ home culture or the school system’s intellectual tradition (Kramersch, 2013). Foreign language teachers must help learners learn about foreign cultures and cultivate learners’ competence in the interactions between foreign and home cultures (Degen, Absalom, & Australia, 1998). Foreign language classes often offer practical, tourist-type lessons with instructions on how to get things done in the target country. When foreign language learners visit another country, they attempt to integrate into or temporarily adopt it as theirs and learn about the culture as an exotic curiosity (Kramersch, 2013). According to Rao (2008), foreign language teaching and learning in China are deeply rooted in Chinese culture and education, and when using new teaching strategies in the English classroom, English teachers should refrain from taking things too far. Chinese EFL learners should diversify their learning methods to select the most effective method for each task.

Philosophy is instrumental in education and guides curricular decision-making. Education systems guided by philosophy are focused, culture-bound, and well-grounded in addressing societal needs (Sefotho, 2018, p. 4). Confucius’ philosophy heavily influences Chinese culture. The Chinese Confucian culture enables learners to “learn through cooperation, by working for the common good, by supporting each other and by not elevating themselves above others” (Nelson, 1995, as cited in Lin). According to Kramersch (2013, p. 62) to learn culture in foreign language teaching is to “perceive the world through the metaphors, idioms, and grammatical patterns used by the other, filtered through subjectivity and historicity developed in one’s mother tongue.” Dramatisation is a vital tool for understanding and appreciating cultural diversity. It enhances learners’ learning abilities, fosters creativity, and creates an exciting and

engaging learning environment. Drama pedagogy encourages understanding and appreciation of culture and foreign literature (Kuimova, Uzunboylu, Startseva, & Devyatova, 2016).

2.1.3 A drama-based pedagogy

- A drama-based pedagogy in China and the EFL teacher's role

Drama-based pedagogy has become a popular teaching alternative for EFL teachers. However, through this research, I have noticed a need for more resources indicating how EFL teachers can successfully implement a drama-based pedagogical approach. Many studies indicate the benefits of using drama to teach a foreign language, but the implementation lacks research.

According to Zhou and Chen (2020), educators in China do not realise the importance of promoting learners' cognition and personality development through drama because of the lack of professional training and unified teaching materials. Some teachers add drama elements to English language teaching during practice and exploration. Drama provides learners with the opportunity to learn English in the context of everyday situations, with an emphasis on communicational skills. Using drama in an EFL classroom encompasses multiple learning styles. Drama activities facilitate learners to develop their learning abilities in different ways through visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic approaches. When performed in the classroom, these activities can include dialogues, role-play, games, and improvisation that applies direct participation to all ability levels and age groups.

Drama is increasingly recognised as a valuable pedagogy for language learning because it harnesses learners' imaginations and stimulates their desire to communicate (Winston, 2012). New opportunities have been provided for developing educational drama in China in recent years. In 2011, drama was added to China's Art Curriculum Standards of Compulsory Education. At the 2018 National Education Conference, President Xi emphasised the need to strengthen schools' aesthetic education and build an education system that comprehensively cultivates morality, intelligence, physique, art, and labouring capabilities. However, many teachers are unfamiliar with the dramatic teaching method in China because educational drama has only been introduced in Mainland China in the last twenty years. Furthermore, most teachers implementing drama in their classrooms are not professional drama majors because China faces a shortage of teachers and funds (Zhou & Chen, 2020). Research on drama teaching in China is not abundant enough, and the schools offering drama classes are exploring and trying to find a suitable approach for China's social and educational context. In many schools,

EFL teachers urgently need of professional training on pedagogical approaches, theoretical basis, and drama selection (Yuanyuan, 2019).

When using a drama-based pedagogy in the foreign language classroom, a teacher should be a facilitator or guide and not give learners detailed instructions (Gaudar, 1990). The teacher should be clear about their role and provides minimum instructions. Learners should be free to choose characters, situations, and body language, facilitating spontaneity and creativity. Teaching English through a drama lense boosts students' communication skills and gives them the chance to practise, discuss, plan, and evaluate their English abilities (Namsa, 2016). Furthermore, EFL teachers should pay attention to unnecessary corrections and interruptions and discuss learners' mistakes later without interrupting the activity in the course. Learners must feel free to participate and should react and interact spontaneously without fear of making mistakes, which could interfere with creativity (Torrico, 2015). Using drama as a pedagogical approach focuses on the skills learnt and not the academic outcome. Drama is mostly used to encourage students to participate in communicative activities and to develop communication skills.

- The benefits of a drama-based pedagogy in the foreign language classroom

Language learning is a creative process, and learners can only respond after they have understood the language's system. A drama-based pedagogy can be used in foreign and second-language classrooms because, by definition, drama is a powerful means of communication between people. It can convey meaning in various forms of expression, i.e., speech, facial expression, and body movements (Via, 1987). Incorporating drama in lessons can teach culture by allowing students to explore and understand cultural norms, values, beliefs, and practices through role-play and storytelling. Through dramatic performances, students can gain a deeper understanding of different cultures attitudes, customs, and traditions, as well as the historical and social context in which they exist. This can foster cultural empathy and appreciation, promoting greater intercultural understanding and respect. Additionally, incorporating cultural themes and perspectives into drama can encourage students to reflect on their cultural experiences and beliefs, promoting self-awareness and cultural literacy.

Drama incorporates both physical and emotional engagement, which can lead to improved retention of language structures and vocabulary (Giebert, 2014). Drama is any activity where learners portray themselves or someone else in an imaginary situation (Gaudart, 1990).

Emphasis is placed on fluency rather than accuracy, correlating with CLT. CLT “places more emphasis on the comprehension and production of messages rather than the instruction or correction of a language construction” (Spada, 2007, p. 272). Drama enhances learners’ communicative competence and oral skills and is a practical teaching approach in response to the constructivist method of teaching language (Di Peitro, 1987). A drama pedagogy moves away from standardised testing and the culture of performativity. Ball (2003, p. 215) defines performativity as “a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons, and displays as a means of incentive, control, attrition, and change”. Drama pedagogy improves interpersonal interaction, fosters intellectual growth, increases emotions and expressiveness in communication, fosters critical and intuitive reasoning, and fosters social awareness (Kuimova et al., 2016).

The components of drama (actions, dialogues, and nonverbal languages) facilitate learners to actively participate in language learning (Gaudart, 1990). The composition and dramatisation of stories provide a powerful medium for promoting language development. Dramatic play triggers discussions and arguments calling upon explanatory and reasoning skills (Gupta, 2008). Learners are placed at the centre of learning and develop communicative competence in drama-based courses because they can use language spontaneously and communicatively (Scheutz & Maio, 2011). Drama advances learners’ creative skills and promotes problem-solving, communication, socialisation, and empathy skills (Dawson & Lee, 2018). A drama pedagogy is more successful if a teacher promotes a positive environment, emotionally involves the learners and creates a collaborative atmosphere (Kuimova et al., 2016).

Drama is beneficial for learners’ language learning because it involves practising it in a specific context (Phillips, 2003). Drama is beneficial to reading, listening, and speaking skills. Learners are provided with opportunities to learn new words and structures and practice them in context, and topics are relevant to learners’ life needs and interests (Zhang, Tseng, & Chen, 2019). Learners respond better to texts if they find them relevant and relatable. Wessels defines the benefits of drama in language teaching as “the acquisition of meaningful and fluent interaction in the target language, the assimilation of a whole range of pronunciation and prosodic features in a fully contextualized and interactional manner and the fully contextualized acquisition of new vocabulary and structure” (1987, p. 10). Drama benefits language learning and requires the reaction and response of the learners’ intellects, emotions, and instincts (Almond, 2005). It is an alternative way to investigate the world. Furthermore, incorporating elements of South

African culture into dramatic activities can broaden students' perspectives and help to foster intercultural understanding. Through drama, students in China can also develop important 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, which are crucial for success in today's globalised world. In this way, drama can play an important role in supporting English language development and cultural education in China.

Drama provides learners with a better-quality feeling of confidence as they gain the ability to learn the target language. Drama provides a platform for students to expand their imaginative and creative abilities beyond the confines of the traditional learning environment. Using authentic scenarios, learners can tap into their innate creative abilities and overcome any fears about self-expression in front of others. This helps to bring out their full potential and promotes universal understanding (Bessadet, 2022). Drama also motivates learners, and active participation creates a learner-centred methodology. Drama activities foster learners' interest in the subject. Learners use language and do not merely learn it through study (Scheutz & Maio, 2011). Drama activities are largely collaborative, improving learners' social competencies (Giebert, 2014). Through drama, learners can interact and engage with others.

In the initial literature review, I found a lack of studies exploring how different drama techniques and methods can be successfully introduced and incorporated in the foreign language classroom. More studies should be conducted to explore practical procedural drama strategies to use in the EFL classroom for effective, motivating, and interesting teaching and learning, especially in a Chinese EFL context. Consequently, this study contributes towards this lack and draws attention to the problems and issues about EFL abroad. The adequate training of South African English language teachers can contribute economically, culturally, and professionally when employed locally and abroad.

2.1.4 Practical procedural drama strategies to use in an EFL classroom and suggested activities

- Drama and language games

Drama and language games can be a natural introduction and can prepare learners for role-playing, improvisation, and other drama experiences. Drama games include icebreakers, energisers and brainteasers. Warm-up activities create immediate motivation drawing learners into active learning. However, games must be structured and observed; otherwise, learners easily switch to their mother tongue (Sehriban, 2013). Drama techniques build confidence in

shy learners. In my EFL classroom, I always display the instructions in English and their home language to ensure they understand the activity's instructions. However, during the participation in the activity, they can only speak English.

- Role-play

Role-playing is selecting dialogue and having the learners read the dialogue aloud with the teacher's assistance. Role play is any speaking activity where learners place themselves in somebody else's shoes or an imaginary situation (Buddon, n.d.). Role play comprises the two words role and play. In this case, role refers to taking on a role, and play defines a role that should contain a measure of play (Ladousse & Malay, 2004, p. 5). It is a process where one adopts a role's actions, attitudes, and demeanour to gain insight into how another (or oneself in a different role) thinks and feels. Role play "invites modification, adjustment, reshaping, and realignment of concepts already held". Detaching from an experience allows the session's participants to look at their experiences from a new perspective (Bolton, 1984, p. 156).

Role-playing assists in practising the language and allows for controlled spontaneity (Scheutz & Maio, 2011) and is a powerful teaching tool because it contextualises language and enhances learners' emotional development (Kuimova et al., 2016). Learners have more opportunities to interact with their peers and improve their speaking, listening, and understanding of the English language (Huang, 2008). An objection in Angelianawati's study (2019) is that role play demands learners to perform in front of others; however, the entire class could perform role-play scenes simultaneously. Role play as a practical procedural drama strategy in the EFL classroom allows learners to act, collect information regarding social issues, learn to take on the roles of others and improve their social skills (Nanda, 2016). Role plays include dramatic plays, story dramatisation, socio-drama, seminar-style presentations, debates, and interviews (Angelianawati, 2019). Learners can act out dialogues and scenes from textbooks, videos, or movies.

- Improvisation

Improvisation is expressing one's thoughts and words in unrehearsed speech (Reed & Seong, 2013). Improvisation demands that learners generate the scenes, stories, and situations they are performing (Scheutz & Maio, 2011) and allows learners to improve their language communication skills, confidence, and positive self-concept (Maples, cited in Sehriban, 2013). Improvisational language activities foster communication and build community in an EFL

classroom. Learners use grammar and vocabulary they know and express themselves at a level they can manage. Improvisation assists learners with vocabulary acquisition, and spontaneous expression enhances their confidence (Scheutz & Maio, 2011). Improvisation should not entertain but provide participants with a medium of self-expression (Athiemoolam, cited in Sehriban, 2013).

- Mime

According to The Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary (2012), a mime is a form of entertainment where a performer plays a character or tells a story without words using body movements and facial expressions. Dougill (1987) defines mime as “a non-verbal representation of an idea or story through gesture, bodily movement and expression” (Dougill, cited in Sehriban, 2013). Even though miming does not necessarily build language skills, it helps foster confidence and creativity in learners and makes them comfortable performing in front of others.

- Simulation

A simulation is where learners become participants in an event and shape the event’s course (Jones, cited in Sehriban, 2013). Simulation places learners within a structured situation to develop problem-solving. Learners have roles, functions, duties, and responsibilities within a structured set of circumstances mirroring real-life. Simulation encourages oral skills and requires learners to assess and respond to a specified task (Namsa, 2016). A simulation activity provides a specific situation within which learners can practice various communication skills, such as asserting themselves, expressing opinions, convincing others, arguing, eliciting opinions, group-problem-solving, and analysing situations (Smith, cited in Sehriban, 2013). Learners are taught how to interact in a social situation. For example, they could practice greeting, requesting a date, and coping with shopping. Simulations provide a realistic setting for more extensive interaction where learners can receive extensive practice (Nanda, 2016).

- Scripts, scriptwriting, and reader’s theatre

Scriptwriting is an activity in which learners write their words to dramatise (Sehriban, 2013). Scripts include monologues, dialogues, or full-length plays and can be performed individually or in groups. Scripts can be used for reading comprehension, fluency practice, pronunciation, style and language analysis, and vocabulary. Performing the script helps learners develop self-

confidence, self-discipline, and collaborative work. Learners are directly and physically involved in the activity with the verbal language contained in the script and with the paralinguistic features the text suggests (Dougill, 1985). Scriptwriting allows EFL classrooms to integrate writing and speaking. Writing and performing scripts as a practical drama activity needs constant guidance from the teacher, and the script's dramatic demand and length must be reasonable. The success of this activity depends on how they are planned, introduced, explained, and exemplified before learners perform them (Torrico, 2015).

Reader's theatre is an oral presentation of drama, prose, or poetry by two or more readers (Sloyer, cited in Sehriban, 2013). Readers first read a story before turning it into a multi-character script. After that, the play is performed for an intended audience (Sehriban, 2013). Reader's theatre improves reading fluency and comprehension (Henry, cited in Sehriban, 2013). However, reader's theatre has some limitations—it can be challenging if learners are unfamiliar with theatre and producing scripts. Teachers must ensure that all learners are actively involved and have equal lines.

- Frozen image building (tableaus)

Frozen image building (tableau) is best described as a frozen moment. It involves learners creating a frozen image with their bodies, specifically facial expressions, gestures, and body positions, to portray a dramatic moment (Hertzberg, as cited in Reed & Seong, 2013). Creating tableaus encourages learners' linguistic output to be free from anxiety and compels their peers to provide informed guesses and multiple-meaning interpretations. Frozen image building enables group participation and participation from learners with different English levels (Liu, 2002). Tableaus increase the actor's awareness of all elements contributing to building a role. Interacting in collaboration means actors are attentive to one another's efforts (Scheutz & Maio, 2011).

- Skits

Skits can be of any length, serve any purpose, and range from presenting a full theatrical play to acting out a scene from a book. Skits promote cooperation, communication, and creativity and motivate learners in an EFL classroom. Motivation and involvement are essential for language learning. As play production can foster cultural proximity, allowing learners to participate in the new culture and helping them build sensitivity to speakers of the target language, skits can be a powerful motivator for language learning (Sehriban, 2013).

Drama activities support the EFL teacher in teaching language skills. According to Gaudart (1990), drama activities promote pronunciation and gestures, which are often ignored in language studies. Drama techniques encourage learners to use their minds and entire bodies; they appeal to different learning techniques and focus on doing and not presenting (Angelianawati, 2019). Practical procedural drama strategies apply to all ability levels and age groups. Drama is an art form comprising multicultural factors, and all learners can use it, irrespective of age, race, gender, and ethnicity (Nanda, 2016). Drama is contextual and creates a social world within the target language in authentic interactions (Yuanyuan, 2019). Stinton (2007) proposes three approaches to teaching drama: text interpretation and performance, improvisation and role plays, and drama presentation. Although there is a lack of research, the most overlapping suggested activities found in the literature review are drama and language games, role play, improvisation, simulation, mime, skits, frozen image building, scriptwriting, and readers' theatre (Sehriban, 2013).

2.1.5 Conclusions

In conclusion, using drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL has increasingly become an alternative to traditional approaches. Through drama, foreign language learners can interact with others, improve their language skills, and produce a discourse that mirrors real language. Learners will eventually be able to use the language communicatively and spontaneously. Such a process will ultimately lead learners to acquire the target language by using it rather than learning it through study. Many native speakers, including South Africans, teach EFL in China. Skilled South African teachers choose to teach EFL in China but are not professionally equipped. A better understanding of the realities facing teaching another language to learners of different sociocultural identities can enhance their professional ability in China to serve the culturally and linguistically diverse learners in their classrooms. Eastern and Western learning and teaching approaches vary, and EFL classes still follow traditional language teaching methods. EFL classes and learners are presented with traditional pedagogic practices. Integrated with the traditional approaches, a drama-based approach will develop the unconscious use of different language learning, an essential factor in turning learning into an acquiring process. Furthermore, “a shift in classroom culture from a teacher-directed process” to an “interaction-based pedagogy” is needed ((Behroozizad et al, 2014). South African English teachers in China could be professionally better equipped if they were introduced to the pedagogical role of drama and the Chinese cultural context relevant to drama and language

teaching through a valid scholarly study.

2.2 Theoretical framework

In the 1990s, the sociocultural theory for second-language learning emerged based on Vygotsky's theories. Lantolf (1994; 2000), Donato (2004), Swain (2000) and others were dissatisfied with approaches where isolated chunks of interaction were examined without considering the context in which they occurred. However, context and dialogue are crucial from a sociocultural perspective to generate language learning (Davis, 2015).

2.2.1 *The sociocultural theory*

Coined by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, the sociocultural theory of human mental development has been productively extended to include investigating second-language development. The sociocultural theory is a theory of developing higher mental practices regarding social interaction as the core of communication and the learning process (Behroozizad et al, 2014). Vygotsky's theory examines the context of the behaviour or the social situation in which the action takes place (Cole et al., 1978 cited in (Behroozizad et al, 2014). According to Vygotsky's theory, psychological structures do not exist in an individual's mind; rather, they are formed through social interaction, and meaning is derived through language use within the social context.

The sociocultural theory is a psychological theory explaining how biologically endowed mental capacities, such as memory and involuntary attention, develop into uniquely human higher-order cognitive capacities, such as intentional memory, voluntary attention, and planning (Storch, 2017). Interacting with others is a critical component of children's learning and development, and children are not independent entities but intimately connected to their environment. From a Vygotskian perspective, cognitive development is sociocultural and involves developing skills supported by cultural tools, such as language, and occurs through communication and active interaction (Gupta, 2008). Social interactions assist in language acquisition and some challenges EFL learners face.

The sociocultural theory assumes that learning arises not *through* interaction but *in* interaction. After successfully completing a new task with the assistance of another person, learners internalise it so they can perform it on their own. Thus, learning is mediated through social interaction (Ellis, 2000). A community's culture and an individual's mind are in an inherently

dialectical relationship as semiotically organised functional systems. Vygotsky describes a semiotic system as a linguistic sign and a cognitive tool. Children learn to think by learning to communicate with others, internalise the words and thoughts of others on the social plane, and then make it theirs on the psychological plane (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). Kramsch (2014) theorises that if Vygotsky had lived in our hyper-semioticised world of social networks and media, he might have developed a different view of cognitive development. Vygotsky states that “the mechanism of individual developmental change is rooted in society and culture” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 7), but Kramsch theorises that individual development emerges non-linearly from much less stable and less predictable connections (Larsen-Freeman, cited in Kramsch, 2014) in a complex “network society”.

Understanding consciousness in the teaching field is embodied in metacognition, which, according to Lantolf (1994), incorporates functions such as planning, voluntary attention, logical memory, problem-solving, and evaluation. According to Williams and Burden (1997), education should be concerned “not just with theories of instruction, but with learning to learn, developing skills and strategies to continue to learn, with making learning experiences meaningful and relevant to the individual, with developing and growing as a whole person”. Teachers’ beliefs should manifest in how they interact with learners. The foundation of education must be a set of beliefs about the society being constructed and the implicit and explicit messages that best show those beliefs (Turuk, 2008). According to Williams and Burden (1997), the sociocultural theory opposes the idea of discrete skills teaching and argues that meaning should constitute the central aspects of any study unit, which should be presented in all its complexity rather than skills and knowledge presented in isolation.

2.2.2 Piaget and the theory of constructivism

Constructivism is a theory in education that considers learners active agents in knowledge acquisition. It can be defined as “an approach to learning that holds that people actively construct or make their own knowledge and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner” (Elliott et al., 2000, p. 256). For Jean Piaget, constructivism emerged out of profound dissatisfaction with knowledge theories in the tradition of Western philosophy. In this tradition, the basic epistemological concepts have not changed throughout the 2 500 years of history, and these concepts’ paradox has never been resolved (Steffe & Gale, 1995). Constructivism is a method of teaching and learning that is founded on the idea that cognition (learning) results from mental construction. The theory suggests that humans construct knowledge and meaning

from their experiences (Bada & Olusegun, 2015).

Swiss psychologist and philosopher Jean Piaget's theories regarding cognitive development stages are crucial to consider. Piaget and Vygotsky have significantly influenced teaching methods and approaches. Piaget's theory explains cognitive development stages and proposes the four universal and sequential stages of cognitive development—sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operations, and formal operations—occur from infancy through young adulthood (Woolfolk, 2004). Piaget's theory states that children act on their environment to learn, whereas Vygotsky's theory states that learners learn through social interactions and their culture. However, I use the sociocultural theory primarily as the theoretical framework for this study because Vygotsky incorporates the importance of social interactions and a co-constructed knowledge base into the theory of cognitive development (Woolfolk, 2004).

2.2.3 Mediation

One of Vygotsky's (Cherry, 2019) most significant constructs of his theory is mediation. This theory argues that human learning is a social process and stresses the interaction between developing people and their cultures. According to Vygotsky (Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner, & Soubelman, 1978), humans can use physical tools to make indirect connections and mediate their relationships. Mediators are categorised into human and symbolic. Human mediation typically tries to answer questions concerning which adult involvement effectively enhances a child's performance. Symbolic mediation deals with what changes in a child's performance can be brought about by introducing the child to symbolic tool mediators (Kozulin, 2002). They can regulate and control their behaviour via psychological approaches and technical tools or artefacts, such as drama. Human cultures generate the physical tools mediating these relationships and are gradually transferred to the next generation (Behroozizad et al., 2014). Depending on how learning is mediated, unfocused learning actions become focused in the foreign language classroom. Symbolic mediation (through objects, systems or persons) converts spontaneous impulses into higher-order functions (i.e., voluntary attention, voluntary memory, and second-language learning strategies) (Davis, 2015).

Society, culture, and communities influence individual development. Vygotsky considers the learning process not as a child's solitary exploration of the environment but as a process of the child's appropriation of the methods of actions in a culture (Kozulin, 1995). Each culture has specific tools for intellectual adaptation, allowing children to use their abilities to adapt to their

cultures (Cherry, 2019). Consequently, cultural beliefs and attitudes affect learning, which applies to my study because Eastern and Western cultures have different learning methods, approaches, and contexts. A drama-based pedagogy in the foreign language classroom closely correlates with this sociocultural theory because drama can touch learners psychologically and train them to express their feelings in another language and cultural context through social interaction with their classmates. Therefore, I incorporate group or peer learning to use Vygotskian methods.

2.2.4 *The proximal development zone*

A vital concept is the proximal development zone (PDZ), defined as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Cole et al., 1978, p. 86). Vygotsky describes the PDZ as “how collaboration with, or support from, a more capable peer can produce learning that an individual would not be able to achieve alone. It is a process where learning leads development – what a [learner] can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87). Interacting and collaborating with peers and more capable peers intellectually challenges learners. Free and reciprocal exchange of ideas with equals or adults is a form of guided participation and social interaction (Rogoff, 1991; Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984). Appropriate and adequate levels of assistance must be contingently responsive to the learner’s need for assistance, and the teacher must hand over responsibility to the learner (Storch, 2017). Like Vygotsky, Piaget believed that some issues were beyond a child’s capacity of understanding. However, Vygotsky believed that given proper guidance, children could perform a problem that Piaget would deem beyond the child’s mental capabilities (Woolfolk, 2004).

Vygotsky asserted that play creates opportunities for PDZ (Davis, 2015). Play is a source of development and creates the PDZ in the child. In an imaginary situation, action in the imaginative sphere, creating voluntary intentions and “forming real-life plans and volitional motives appear in play” (Vygotsky, 1976, p. 552). The Chinese cultural context of learning welcomes a collaborative environment. According to Rao (2007, p. 116) “the Chinese collectivist cultural orientation resulted in a ‘dependence-emphasizing society’, indicating a close-knit social framework where learners are always part of a group.” The PDZ can be constructed in the EFL classroom through drama activities. I use Vygotskian methods for

teaching by being an active member in the participant's education. Effective assistance is dynamic because it focuses on the learner's current performance and the objectives that must be achieved. Teachers can expand their learners' PDZ using a drama-based pedagogy.

2.2.5 Scaffolding

Through social interaction, a knowledgeable participant can create, use speech, and support conditions where the learner (novice) can engage in and extend knowledge and skills to a high level of competence (Donato, 1994). Scaffolding can be described as assistance given by an expert to a novice. It is temporary support individuals receive from more knowledgeable others during their development. A novice can learn from an expert through scaffolding interaction to achieve tasks. Teachers are typically considered experts who provide scaffolded assistance to their learners (novices) (Samana, 2013). Scaffolding involves providing learners with hints or clues for problem-solving to allow them to better approach the problem in the future (Woolfolk, 2004). Scaffolding can be summarised as a metaphor; it is a temporary structure that, as the construction progresses, the scaffold is gradually dismantled and removed when the building can stand by itself.

In a learning environment, scaffolding is a type of instructional framework where a teacher demonstrates the intended learning technique or activity before gradually shifting responsibility over to the learners (Turuk, 2008). Learners' peers can also be considered experts, and learners can learn from their peers through staged actions. The learner's developing abilities must be constantly revised by the teacher, and a learner's error or limited capabilities can prompt the teacher to upgrade the scaffolding. The adult takes down the scaffold as the learner takes on greater responsibility for the work, showing that the learner has profited from the helped performance and internalised the problem-solving techniques provided by the prior scaffolded episode (Donato, 1994). Scaffolded performance is a dialogically constituted inter-psychological mechanism promoting the learner's internalisation of knowledge co-constructed in shared activities (Wertsch, 1979). Learners can internalise new information and better understand material using scaffolding and active interaction through drama. Scaffolding could be tentative and open-ended questions asked by learners in the drama or EFL classroom. In the EFL classroom, collaborative work among language learners provides the same opportunity for scaffolded help as in everyday expert–novice relationships.

In conclusion, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is best suited as the theoretical underpinning

for this study, as it emphasises the importance of social and collaborative aspects of learning. According to the sociocultural paradigm, engagement in socially mediated activities is crucial to the learning and acquisition of language as semiotic processes. Vygotsky's (1978) theory promotes a learning context where the teacher acts as a facilitator of meaning construction during the instruction process to strengthen the reciprocal relationship between learners and teachers. Using the principles of sociocultural theory in the EFL classroom helps learners achieve specific communicative targets.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN: METHODS AND STRATEGIES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design in terms of the methods used to collect information, data analysis and interpret evidence through which the research questions listed in Chapter One can be answered satisfactorily. Therefore, this chapter interrogates how drama as a pedagogical tool can be integrated into traditional teaching and learning in China to activate natural, spontaneous sources of learning among learners. A solid methodological approach is needed to guide this study's observation process centred on which practical procedural strategies are being used in their EFL classroom to identify how South African EFL teachers in China can be professionally better equipped if they are introduced to the pedagogical role of drama. In line with this, my research design comprises the epistemological paradigm, the methodology of data collection, sampling, and documentation in the context of the pedagogical purpose of the case study. My methodology and evaluation criteria are based on interpretive and qualitative approaches to reach well-substantiated conclusions as objectively as possible.

3.2 Research design

To best serve this research's features and requirements, I use the epistemological paradigm, analysed through interpretivism. According to Maree (2012, p. 73), in interpretivism, an epistemological paradigm can be explained as how individuals interpret their experiences and build significance in their conceptualised worldviews and empirical knowledge. Maree (2012) states that interpretivism is the philosophical underpinning for qualitative research. Interpretivism emerged in the 19th century as a counter to the positivism paradigm. It can be defined as a paradigm emphasising the inseparable connection between the researcher and what is being researched and that it recognises and accepts the various meanings and truths of phenomena. It asserts that humans socially construct reality, which can be altered and comprehended subjectively (Rahman, 2020).

Interpretivists adopt a relativist ontology where reality is multi-layered and complex in terms of what is real because a single phenomenon could have multiple interpretations of the truth rather than one determinable by a certain measurement process. Researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the observed phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context rather than trying to generalise the base of understanding for the entire population (Creswell, 2007). This

approach will help the researcher understand how people interpret situations and events and interact within their social environment. However, interpretative research “is guided by the interpretivist’s set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied” (SAGE Open October–December 2013, pp. 1–6). Interpretive research is more subjective than objective, and its goal is to value subjectivity. Willis (2007, p. 110) argues, “interpretivists eschew the idea that objective research on human behaviour is possible”. Understanding the interpretivism paradigm allows me to know that the process and views are subjective when I am analysing relevant questions or feedback from my research. Maree (2012) describes that interpretivism can also be referred to as constructivism because it highlights the researcher’s ability to build their meaning or significance. I can assess the advantages of a drama educational approach integrated with the instruction method currently applied in EFL based on empirical knowledge.

3.2.1 Advantages of the interpretivist paradigm

Within this dissertation’s scope, I discuss interpretivism’s advantages and shortcomings as the primary theoretical perspective of this research. An advantage of interpretivism is that interpretivist researchers can deeply understand objects, humans, or events in their real social contexts because the objects under observation or phenomena might be diverse. The interpretivist approach is more interactive and allows the researcher to investigate the interviewee’s beliefs, moral standards, biases, perceptions, viewpoints, and emotions, providing the researcher with valuable data and better insights for further action later (Pham, 2018). Additionally, research can be conducted in a natural setting using methodologies such as grounded theory, ethnography, case studies, or life history.

3.2.2 Disadvantages of the interpretivist paradigm

Despite the above strengths, this paradigm also retains disadvantages. The interpretive research paradigm has been criticised for the lack of generalisability of its findings. According to critics, interpretivists generalise their results by implication to other people and contexts, leaving a gap in the validity and usefulness of the relevant research outcomes in verification through scientific procedures. Another limitation is that interpretivism’s ontological view is subjective rather than objective. The researcher’s interpretations influence the research outcomes (Pham, 2018). To summarise, the interpretivist paradigm provides researchers with a comprehensive framework and various perspectives to address crucial societal challenges, particularly in

education. Using an interpretivist approach, I aim to study how the diverse opinions and different levels of empirical knowledge in teaching and learning a second language can help obtain a clearer picture of the research problem and propose suitable solutions.

3.3 Why the qualitative approach?

In my research, I discuss the conventionally applied strategies and assess the role of drama in levelling the intimidating learning factors in the EFL learning process. Therefore, a qualitative approach is best suited because it focuses on the participants' viewpoints, concepts, feelings, observations, and behaviours. Qualitative research is not statistical, incorporates multiple realities and viewpoints, and refers to research on people's lives, experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings (Rahman, 2020). Qualitative approaches are used in studies on the experiences of teachers and learners defined in the primary research design and applied in case studies. In this study, I rely on qualitative research to investigate, comprehend, interpret, and clarify the relevant phenomena because it can substantiate subjective meanings. Thus, for the case study on the benefits of linguistic performance, instead of relying on numerical values, numbers, and statistics or the social impact of issues, events, and practices (quantitative approach), I rely on non-standardised data and accordingly analyse texts, images (Rahman, 2020), and linguistically, the integration of written formal structures with spontaneous oral practice. I investigate the content of my data by asking open-ended questions in the interviews. This research is versatile, and with the development of the study, I reveal biases and value systems and interpret the participants' teaching and learning experiences as close as possible to the perceived reality (Cirt.gcu.edu, 2019).

3.3.1 Benefits of a qualitative approach

The primary benefit of using a qualitative methodology in this study is that it provides a detailed description of the selected participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences. Furthermore, it facilitates understanding their actions (Rahman, 2020) in terms of meaning, cause, and consequence. Kumar (2011, p. 103) also observed this attribute and stated that "the main focus in qualitative research is to explore, discover, understand, and above all, explain with clarity situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and experiences of a group of people". Another strength is that by employing a qualitative strategy, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of challenges regarding creating, implementing, and interpreting language assessments (Chalhoub-Deville & Deville, 2008). A qualitative research approach

within an interpretivist paradigm holistically understands the human experience in specific settings. Similarly, Mcnamara (2001) argues that any language assessment cannot be set apart from the context, culture, and values of where it was used, subject to the perspective of the observer's epistemological position. Corbin and Strauss (2008) agree, stating that this research approach assists researchers in discovering how meanings are shaped through tradition and culture. Due to the research procedure's informality and the data collection context, the power gap between the research and the participating population is small (Kumar, 2011). The researcher plays a vital role in the information-gathering process. Data collection might be subjective, yet it is detailed and meticulous because researchers can interact directly and face-to-face with the participants. Thus, these personal discourses assist researchers in understanding complex issues (Rahman, 2020).

3.3.2 Limitations of a qualitative research approach

The limitations of qualitative research are subjectivity and consequent bias outcomes. Relating them directly to interpretivism, especially if the collected data are purely based on open-ended discussions, the qualitative approach focuses on meanings and experiences while it ignores contextual sensitivities. Many qualitative designs are not structured and sequential, resulting in too much flexibility and a lack of quality control (Kumar, 2011). Another criticism is that the focus is placed on the participants' experiences rather than any other imperative issues in the context (Cumming, 2001, as cited in Rahman, 2020). Furthermore, sampling cannot aim to represent a population because it is selective and purposive, raising the issue of generalisability to the research population (Rahman, 2020) Moreover, researchers must be experienced and have subject-specific knowledge to attain accurate data. Therefore, to ensure that this study is more generalisable, I use more than one method to collect the data: open-response questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

3.4 The role of case study in teaching EFL

Creswell and Poth (2018) define a case study as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection that involves multiple sources of information” and reports a case description and case themes. Mesec (1998, p. 45, as cited in Starman, 2013) defines a case study as “a description and analysis of an individual matter or case [...] with the purpose to identify variables, structures, forms and orders of

interaction between the participants in the situation (theoretical purpose), or, in order to assess the performance of work or progress in development (practical purpose)”. According to Maree (2016, p. 60; 2012, p. 83), a case study can be described as “an in-depth study of the complexity and uniqueness of a specific project, policy, institution, program, or system in a real-life context from different points of view”.

In this study, teaching EFL in a non-English-speaking country, I use a descriptive case study to analyse in-depth the current instructional strategies and approaches within the confines of the classroom. I have chosen a descriptive case study because it allows for multiple data-gathering methods, such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, and learning aids, for instance, schoolbooks and homework notebooks. Descriptive case studies are developmental because cases are generated and evolve.

3.4.1 Importance of a case study design

Using a case study within a qualitative research approach has its advantages. According to Okeke and van Wyk (2015), case studies are intensive descriptions facilitating the analysis of individual behaviour and actions, an event, group, or community. Starman (2013) argues that case studies can achieve high conceptual validity to measure variables that social scientists are interested in and provide strong procedures for fostering new hypotheses. Qualitatively complex events can be analysed since numerous variables can be considered because not many cases are required, and variables need not be limited. Moreover, case studies are helpful for closely examining the hypothesised role of causal mechanisms in the context of individual cases (Starman, 2013). In line with these views, research problems regarding integrating drama in EFL can be analysed in depth and detail through a process leading to practical solutions.

3.4.2 Shortcomings of a case study design

A case study research design has disadvantages that must be noted. One shortcoming is that it lacks scientific rigour and provides little basis for generalising the results to the broader population. Researchers might be biased as their subjective feelings might influence the relevant case study’s design and interpretation. Moreover, conducting case studies might be too expensive and time-consuming (McLeod, 2019). In the sociocultural framework of this study, the research purpose is not to build a theory but understand and enhance the established teaching-learning approaches using drama-based linguistic practices.

3.5 Demographics of the research

3.5.1 *Research site*

The selection of the sites where the research questions would be best answered was pivotal, which led to purposively selecting public schools, international schools, and training centres in Tier 1 cities in Mainland China (excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan).

- Mainland China's education system

China is the most populated country globally, with a population index of approximately 1.4 billion people. According to UNESCO statistics (as cited in Trines, Gu, Michael, & Zheng, 2019), China is the largest sending country of international students worldwide. Three times more Chinese students enrolled internationally in Western countries' universities than any other country, and in 2017, 30% of all international students were Chinese nationals. Consequently, this has led to enormous expenditures and tuition fees paid by Chinese parents on education and foreign language learning and has become an increasingly crucial economic factor for universities and local economies in countries such as the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK. The unprecedented expansion and modernisation of Mainland China's education system (excluding Hong Kong and Macau) are summarised by Trines et al. (2019).

Administratively, Mainland China's education system is split into 23 provinces (excluding Hong Kong and Macau), four municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing), five autonomous regions (including Tibet and Xinjiang), and two separately governed regions (Hong Kong and Macau). Thousands of counties, cities, and townships are further grouped into these provincial-level entities. The national, provincial, and municipal levels comprise the three governing bodies of Mainland China's educational system. The Ministry of Education (MOE) establishes overall education policies and guides educational reforms at the national level. The MOE sets the school system's curricula, exam topics, and ideological instructions at all educational levels. The education departments approve the establishment of higher educational institutes and monitor their performances at the provincial level. The counties and municipal governments manage elementary and secondary education at the local level.

Figure 3.1. is an administrative map of China and surrounding countries, with the international borders drawn on district lines and illustrating the national capital Beijing, provinces, province-level autonomous regions, province capitals, special administrative regions, and direct-

administered municipalities, with names in English and Chinese.

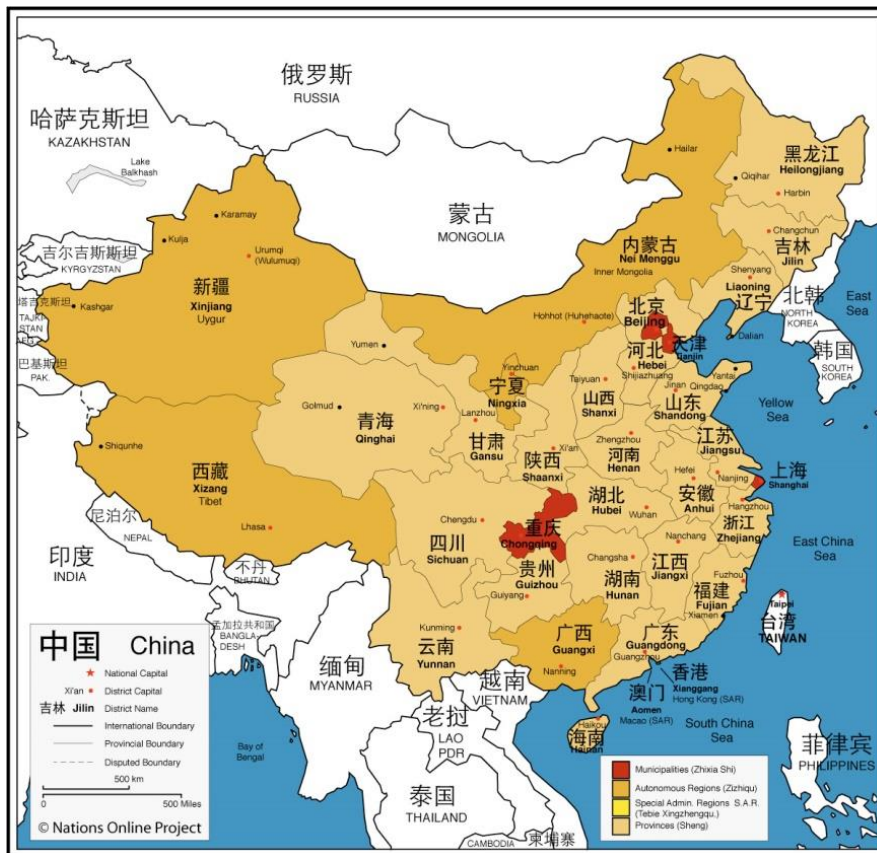


Figure 3.1: Map of Mainland China with Administrative Regions
Source: Nations Online (2022)

Mainland China's schools are classified under various categories: public, vocational, government-sponsored, private-owned, international, and training centres. Schools and participants in first-Tier cities, such as Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, were requested to participate in this study. English-taught programmes and courses are the highest in first-tier cities to internationalise China's higher education system. In China, Tier 1 cities are typically the biggest and richest, frequently referred to as megapolises. Three macroeconomic categories (GDP, population, and politics) identify city tiers. The cities are assigned a tier based on the average of these three variables (Wang, 2019). Three research sites are purposively selected to provide better holistic insights and precise research results. Public schools, training centres, and international schools in first-Tier cities have been purposively selected as sites where the research questions would be answered.

- Public schools in China

Most schools in China are public schools and mostly free. Basic education is required for all learners and typically lasts six years in elementary school and three years in lower-secondary school. In China, 60% of all upper-secondary students attend public high schools. To be accepted into high school, students must pass the *zhongkao*, a national entrance exam given in the final year of junior secondary school. Educational officials use the *zhongkao* test results to place learners in schools with high academic needs for admittance to prestigious institutions. Learners with low scores are admitted into vocational schools. Due to the size of China’s population and the number of students, the *zhongkao* and *huikao* exams are very competitive, with only the top academic grades receiving admittance into top schools. Public schools adhere to the national standards and curriculum established by the MOE in Beijing and implemented across the country by provincial and municipal governments. To receive a high school diploma, students must complete a minimum of 144 credits and pass the national graduation exam (*huikao*) (Trines et al., 2019). Figure 3.2. describes the mandatory and elective subjects of China’s Senior Secondary Curriculum.

China’s Senior Secondary Curriculum					
MANDATORY SUBJECTS			ELECTIVES		
FIELD	SUBJECT	CREDIT	CATEGORY	CONTENT	CREDIT
Language and Literature	Chinese	10	Core Electives	Advanced Academic Courses (3)	Minimum 48
	Foreign Language	10			
Math	Math	10			
Liberal Arts	Politics	8			
	History	6			
Science	Geography	6			
	Physics	6			
	Chemistry	6			
	Biology	6			
Technology	Information Technology	4	-	Physical education, fine arts, health education, etc.	
	Technology Application	4			
Fine Arts	Music or Painting	6	Practicum	Internship, Practicum	
Physical Education	-	12			
Special Subject Education		2	Subjects mandated by the MOE (party ideology, etc.)		

Source: Ministry of Education of China

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Figure 3.2: China’s Senior Secondary Curriculum
Source: Ministry of Education of China

As evident in Figure 3.2, the subject of Foreign Language is one of the highest-ranking credits in the mandatory subjects of the Senior Secondary Curriculum. Thus, learning EFL is essential

in China. Through purposive sampling and interviewing participants specifically from public schools, I target niche demographics to obtain specific data for this research. Purposive sampling lowers the error margin in the data because the data sources closely fit with this study's research context.

- International schools in China

The market for international education is surging in China, and according to recent statistics (as cited in Trines et al., 2019), China has more than 800 international schools. Between 2010 and 2018, the number of international schools doubled, with most in developed, tier-1 cities. China has the second most international schools globally, after the United Arab Emirates.

China has two types of international schools. The first type is international schools that traditionally cater solely to expatriates and children of foreign workers. Chinese nationals are still barred from enrolling in these institutions; however, wealthy Chinese families have been able to obtain passports from African or Caribbean nations so that their children can attend. The second type is Chinese-owned schools authorised to offer international curricula for Chinese nationals. Currently, Chinese nationals make up 58% of students enrolled in international schools in China. Many middle-class Chinese households prefer enrolling their children in international schools because they offer smaller class sizes, bilingual curricula, and more opportunities for international university education. After graduation, most learners who attended international schools further their education abroad.

China's international schools offer various international curricula, with British and American curricula being the most popular. Most international schools are privately managed and provide internationally recognised curricula and programmes: the International Baccalaureate (IB), the US Advanced Placement (AP) programme, the British GCE A Level, and others. With a 40% market share, the A Level is the most used curriculum, followed by AP (26%) and IB (14%). Additionally, Sino-foreign cooperative schools offer Chinese and international curricula. Sino-foreign cooperative schools offer a dual-track venture, require the *zhongkao* for admission, and enable students to sit for the AP exams and, subsequently, the *gaokao*. Students can simultaneously acquire a foreign qualification, such as the British International General Certificate of Secondary Education if the relevant overseas authorities acknowledge these institutions (Trines et al., 2019).

In recent years, the Chinese government has scrutinised international schools. These schools received a backlash from Chinese authorities because they were concerned about ideological control. The Chinese government is concerned about Western values being taught at international schools. Consequently, private and public schools must teach the national curriculum and prepare students for the *zhongkao* exams. International schools are still exempt from these regulations, but current requirements pushed for implementing these policies. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic significantly affected China's international school sector, specifically Chinese students' plans to study abroad. Another factor is that foreign teachers in Mainland China face strict visa policies, and international schools must consider recruitment strategies for foreign teachers (The Market of International Schools in China: A Booming Sector, 2020). The information collected from international schools will be relevant to this research context through purposive sampling.

Training centres in China

In the globalisation context, the internationalisation of education in China brings numerous opportunities for foreign educators and for-profit language schools. The education training market and for-profit tutoring have grown into a multibillion-dollar industry in China. The growth of training centres in China is caused by the country's emphasis on exam performance, resulting in an immense demand for after-school tutoring (Training centres in China, 2022).

The terms training school, training centre, and language schools are interchangeable and refer to privately owned companies offering after-school classes that help students improve their performance in academic subjects, such as Maths, Chinese, and English. According to TopTutorJob, a training centre can be referred to as "an institution or company who has acquired a more-than-3-years lease on an educational facility, and obtained the 'school permit' from a local education department, with the legal rights to deliver 'non-academic' teaching" (i.e., a training centre cannot issue any official diploma certificate) (Training centres in China, 2022). Training centres specialise in offering extra classes to students learning a foreign language, predominantly English, and assist students in achieving higher scores. Training schools have fewer classrooms, and most classes are conducted in the evenings and over weekends (Smith, 2018). Overall, classroom sizes range between 10 and 15 students per class. Additionally, these centres are not limited to elementary and secondary students, as adult language centres are popular institutions across China.

Training institutions’ teaching styles, approaches, and curricula differ from those offered at traditional Chinese public schools. Language schools require teachers to use games, dancing, music, and interactive teaching as the focal points of students’ learning (Fairchild, 2019). EFL classes focus on conversations, grammar lessons, exam preparation, and assisting students in preparing for TOEFL and IELTS exams (James, 2022). Moreover, training schools employ native English speakers and offer higher-quality English classes than Chinese public schools. As training centres are for-profit, classrooms are newly renovated, brightly coloured, and equipped with top-of-the-line technology (Fairchild, 2019). The most popular language centres are English First, New Oriental, Wall Street English, Meten English, TAL (xueersi), and First Leap (Training centres in China, 2022). However, tuition fees are steep, ranging between 40\$ and 80\$ per hour. Furthermore, Chinese parents are willing to pay twice the tuition cost for classes taught by foreign nationals (James, 2022). Consumers strongly choose foreign instructors from native and non-native English-speaking countries at rates of 59.4% and 7.2%, respectively (Training centres in China, 2022). Figure 3.3 shows the growth in revenue of China’s after-school tutoring market.

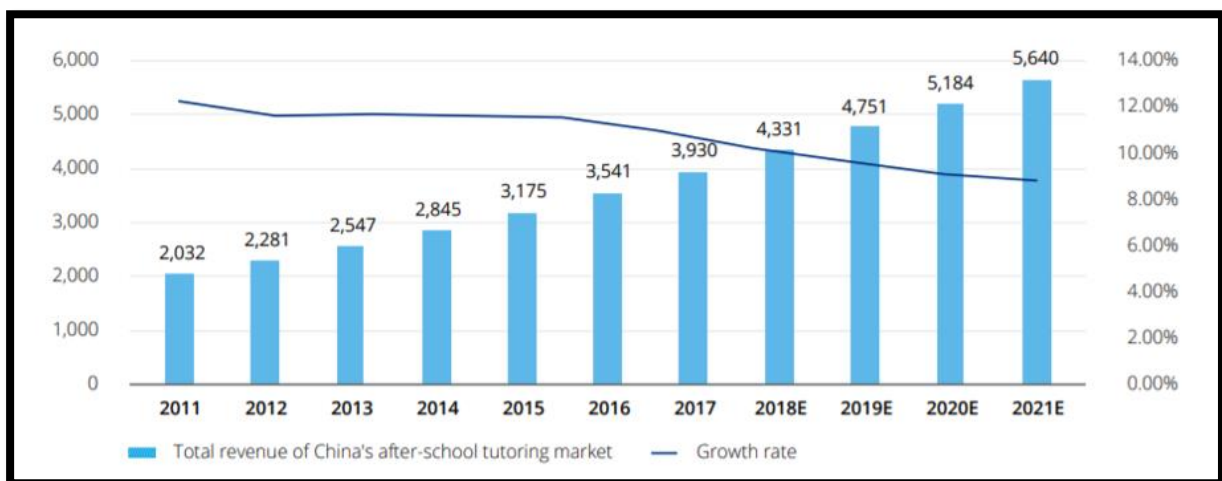


Figure 3.3: Total revenue of China’s after-school tutoring market
Source: China Statistics Press

Due to the rapid development of training centres and the increasing demand for foreign educators, hundreds of language centres operated without the correct licensing. From 2016 to 2020, the MOE assessed approximately 400 000 off-campus training institutions. These inspections focused on unlicensed instruction, excessive training, illegal fees, and deceptive advertising. The Chinese government unveiled the first draught of its off-campus tutoring industry growth policy in 2018 (Xia, 2021).

In 2021 and 2022, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and new policies by the Chinese government led to the downfall of training schools in China. In 2021, the Chinese government released the double reduction policy, also referred to as the “Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and After-school Training for Students in Compulsory Education” policy, which required suspending online and offline tutoring classes. The policy states that Chinese learners are under too immense academic pressure and are not afforded equal opportunities due to wealth discrepancies. The guidelines call for academic tutoring businesses to restructure as non-profits. Furthermore, the policy prohibits businesses from offering classes on weekends and during holidays, resulting in an approximate 30%–70% cut in the educational labour force and many language centres shut down (Ye, 2021). The few training facilities still operating have changed their curricula to comply with the new regulations. English is taught in language schools through various creative subjects, such as debate, journalism, acting, public speaking, storytelling, reading, science, craftwork, music, cuisine, sports, and brain development (Althans, 2021). The recent development in language centres’ curriculum will be closely examined through the purposive selection of participants currently working at training centres. The research site and participants will broaden the field of knowledge on how drama can be used as a pedagogical tool in acquiring a foreign language beyond its formal learning.

To conclude, as a South African currently teaching in China, I use purposive sampling by relying on my judgement when choosing members of the population to participate in this study. The research participants are placed in the same socio-political environment, and by sampling a small population of interest, I can arrive at valuable research outcomes.

3.6 Research methods: Data collection instruments and procedures

A qualitative study on teachers’ and learners’ performance through pre-recorded video and audio observation is complemented with open-response questionnaires and semi-structured interviews according to the data collection methods.

3.6.1 *Semi-structured interviews*

The primary data collection method is using semi-structured interviews to interview teachers, which will be more conventional in structure, yet allow enough flexibility to the interviewee’s teaching experiences. Therefore, in my general questioning plan, I integrate a casual conversational style with a professional, contextual plan and follow the narration’s flow. According to McLeod (2014), researchers in unstructured or semi-structured interviews ask

open-ended questions based on the specific research topic and try to have the interview flow like a natural conversation. The open-ended questions generate qualitative narrative data. The study will have increased validity through semi-structured interviews, and the selected participants will feel more comfortable in a casual setting.

3.6.2 Non-participant video and audio observation

Due to Covid-19 and the dependence on digital technologies for communication, distant video recording research has become a promising method in educational research. Thus, for the data collection and documentation, I use video and audio recordings and apply a non-participant observation of the learners. As a distant observer, I remain uninvolved in the process (Maree, 2012). Distance is achieved by viewing classes on pre-recorded videos without being physically present. For comparative analysis, I document the learning aids, such as schoolbooks and homework notebooks, after receiving the necessary consent from teaching institutions and parents for data collection and conducting a non-participant observation. The interview process occurs from April to July 2022, comprises more than one phase and is multifaceted.

3.6.3 Open-response questionnaire

I enrich the data collection process using open-response questionnaires to elicit more in-depth responses. The research participants' answers in qualitative questionnaires comprise memories, opinions, and experiences (Eckerdal & Hagström, 2017). Open-response questionnaires are unstructured to determine what participants think about a specific topic or issue (Brown, 2009). Additionally, research participants are more willing to participate in a study with a questionnaire as the data collection technique, as it is less time-consuming. According to Sheridan (2003, pp. 49–50), “A desire to share thoughts and recollections is an incentive for some informants while others are motivated by the contribution to the documentation of everyday life”. Qualitative questionnaires can be multifaceted because informants can formulate themselves over time and return to their answers and modify them. Moreover, the lack of the researcher's physical presence compels the participants to include detailed answers (Eckerdal & Hagström, 2017). Open-response questionnaires are primarily exploratory and complement mixed-method data collections such as observation and interviews (Brown, 2009).

3.7 Sampling

3.7.1 Purposive sampling

Sampling is a crucial part of research and is representative of the population. Gathering data contributes to a better understanding of the phenomenon and theoretical framework. I use non-probability sampling as it best suits a qualitative research approach. Teddlie and Yu (2007, p. 77) define purposive sampling as “selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study’s questions”. Participants are chosen due to their qualities and knowledge of the phenomenon. It is a non-random technique and does not rely on underlying theories or a set number of participants (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Non-probability sampling creates an in-depth description and does not generalise findings (Maree, 2012). This study uses a homogeneous form of sampling, focusing on persons sharing similar traits or specific common characteristics. The focus is on the precise similarity and how it relates to the research topic (Etikan et al., 2016). For this study, the selected participants, as South Africans teaching EFL in Mainland China, have similar cultures, job practices, life experiences, and shared empirical knowledge in education related to the subject matter.

3.7.2 Participants

In line with the qualitative research method, this study’s participant teachers are selected from three types of schools in China by pre-set criteria for purposive sampling. As Niewenhuis (2007) explains, purposive sampling is employed in qualitative research because participant selection is led by specific defining characteristics fulfilling the study’s requirements. Accordingly, my purposive sampling has been guided by pre-set criteria defined as follows: a) South African nationals, b) currently residing and working in China, c) currently teaching EFL, d) working at a training centre, public school, or international school, and e) teaching learners in primary, middle, or high schools. The demographic data was based on the participants’ professional locations, from which ten teachers were selected to participate.

Furthermore, another selection criterion focused on the participants’ learners considering their background knowledge of English. Learners were grouped into a collective set of mixed-age levels, representing primary, middle, and high school standards. For completing the project, the most valuable were the interviews with ten South African teachers currently working and living in tier-1 cities in Mainland China (excluding Taiwan and Hong Kong). Therefore, five

teachers were engaged in individual semi-structured interviews, while five completed an open-response questionnaire.

Table 3.1: Teachers' biographical details

Participant Code	Gender	Age	Location	Subject	Type of School	Age of Students
Participant 1	Female	47	Beijing, China	English	Public School	15–18 years
Participant 2	Male	31	Beijing, China	EFL	Training Centre	7–12 years
Participant 3	Male	48	Beijing, China	English and Business Studies	Public School	15–18 years
Participant 4	Female	29	Beijing, China	EFL	Training Centre	7–12 years
Participant 5	Male	36	Beijing, China	EFL	Training Centre	7–12 years
Participant 6	Male	30	Beijing, China	EFL	Public School	13–15 years
Participant 7	Female	30	Beijing, China	EFL	Training Centre	0–6 years
Participant 8	Female	29	Beijing and Shenzhen, China	English	International School	15–18 years
Participant 9	Male	31	Beijing, China	EFL and Mathematics	International School	7–12 years
Participant 10	Female	29	Beijing, China	EFL	Training Centre	7–12 years

3.7.3 Interviews and questionnaires

Due to the current socio-political climate in China and the impact of Covid-19 on international teachers in Shanghai, Beijing, and other tier-1 cities, I could not interview the participants in person. Five semi-structured interviews were conducted through two online meeting platforms (*Zoom* and *Tencent*). These interviews were recorded using the record function on both meeting platforms. After that, the videos were transcribed using *Sonix* transcription software. Another five participants were selected to participate using open-response questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed via email, and participants completed them in their time.

3.8 Data analysis and interpretation

Qualitative data are subjective and comprise detailed information typically expressed in words. Analysing data requires video audio to be transcribed into text using transcription software. For qualitative data analysis, automatic transcription services are best suited. This method allows the researcher to upload data to a programme that swiftly interprets audio through automatic speech recognition, turning the text into a Word document (Moore & Key, 2021). For this study's needs, I relied on the *Sonix* software as a fully automated transcription programme enabling users to transcribe, organise, and search video and audio files. Furthermore, *Sonix* includes a built-in editor combining playback controls with a text editor, enabling the researcher to check the transcription's accuracy and edit mistakes (Moore & Key, 2021).

Qualitative data analysis involves reading numerous transcripts to find similarities and differences and then identifying themes and creating categories. Data analysis is systematically searching and organising the interview transcripts, questionnaire answers, observation notes, or other non-textual data the researcher acquired to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon. Analysing data requires collected data to be grouped into themes or categories using qualitative research data analysis software. It entails lowering the volume of raw data, discovering significant patterns, extracting meaning from data, and constructing a logical chain of evidence to make sense of massive amounts of data. Recently, software designed specifically for managing qualitative data decreased the technical complexity and eased the laborious task, simplifying the process (Wong, 2008).

Dedoose is a web application for mixed-method research developed by sociocultural research consultants and academics from UCLA. *Dedoose* is a qualitative software that analyses and

sorts text data. It assists in coding sections of data and compares themes across many sources. It helps the researcher analyse data from interview transcripts, text, audio, images, and video (Lieber, 2022). To analyse and interpret my data, I use the *Dedoose* software because it approaches the subject matter from a comparative viewpoint and allows sentiment awareness through textual analysis.

3.9 Quality assurance measures

In the post-positivism context, the interpretivist paradigm is “conceptualized as having a relativist ontology with a subjectivist epistemology and is aligned with Postmodern¹ thought” (SAGE Open October–December 2013, pp. 1–6). In terms of personal, biased views and opinions, my viewpoint is based on empirical knowledge to control subjectivity. Therefore, the validity and trustworthiness of the data are ensured by justifying the importance of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability on which the qualitative research method relies.

3.9.1 Credibility

In qualitative research, credibility refers to believability and whether the research is reasonable (Nayab, 2019). Credibility is the congruency of findings with the participant’s reality (Niewenhuis, 2016). In this case, the data must resonate with real-life situations; therefore, I use external verification or audit, in line with Maree’s (2012) view that an external investigator should examine the data collection method, the data analysis process, and the research outcomes. Furthermore, an internal investigator audited the research to verify the findings’ accuracy and ensure they were supported by the data collected reasonably and rationally. All interpretations and conclusions must be verified to determine whether the data support them. Investigation audits are useful because they allow an internal specialist to investigate, explore, and question how the information was analysed and interpreted (Statistics Solutions, 2019).

¹ Postmodernism is indefinable and can only be loosely summarised. Postmodern thought can be described as “a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyper reality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning” (Aylesworth, 2015).

3.9.2 *Transferability*

In qualitative research, transferability refers to the relevant paradigm's capacity to generalise and the extent to which study findings apply to other environments or contexts (Nayab, 2019). According to Nieuwenhuis (2016), researchers can use two strategies to increase transferability. First, the researcher must provide a thick description entailing a full purposeful account of the context, participants, and research design. Since I am generalising, the research's transferability is primarily my responsibility. To enhance the study's transferability, I thoroughly described its central points in terms of context, assumptions, purpose, and aims to the participants, allowing the reader to form their opinions about transferability led by purposeful sampling. As mentioned above, I use purposeful sampling for this research because it considers the selected participants as essential representatives of the phenomenon in terms of empirical knowledge and professional interest (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

3.9.3 *Dependability*

In qualitative research, dependability refers to modifications that might happen throughout the study and awareness of how these modifications might impact the research in terms of its diachronic value (Nayab, 2019). Bitsch (2005, p. 86) defines dependability as "the stability of findings over time". According to Guba and Lincoln (1982, as cited in Anney, 2014), there are various proposed strategies to ensure a study's dependability. In the context of this study's aims, I selected the following three approaches.

- a. The audit trail approach (my emphasis) comprises an external auditor cross-checking all documents, including raw data, interview and observational notes, documents, records collected from the field, test scores, and others.
- b. The code-recode strategy allows the researcher to code the same data twice with a one to two-week gestation period between each coding. The results can then be reached, analysed, and accordingly assessed.
- c. Peer examination or debriefing proposes the researcher to discuss their research process and findings with a peer.

I incorporate all three dependability strategies to ensure this study's dependability. Moreover, for the research aims, I factored in changes that might occur and monitored the recording quality and data transcription (Maree, 2012).

3.9.4 Conformability

In qualitative research, conformability refers to data objectivity and a lack of study mistakes (Maree, 2012). In line with this statement, I examined this study's conformability by documenting the procedures for rechecking data; therefore, I can clarify and justify any negative or contradicting instances. As for trustworthiness, I had set moments where I temporarily suspended examining the data. To safeguard that the research is trustworthy and valid, I used the process of crystallisation, which is a way of achieving quality assurance and refers to the researcher considering other perspectives and words in data interpretation (Maree, 2012). Furthermore, I discussed the data with two experts: one specialising in research and the other in drama education. I consulted with them and considered their feedback. Crystallisation helps generate a more complex data interpretation.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Due to the personal contact with participants through observation, interviews, and professional discretion, researchers must fulfil specific ethical obligations in the context of a qualitative inquiry. Ethics pertains to doing good to avoid harm and provide guidelines for the responsible conduct of the engaged researcher. Pring (2000, p. 141) differentiates between ethics and morals, stating, "Ethics are the philosophical enquiry into the basis of morals or moral judgements whereas morals are concerned with what is the right or wrong thing to do". The researcher must adhere to ethical principles that protect their autonomy, confidentiality, respect for others, beneficence, absence of malice, and justice (Mauthner & Birch, 2002, as cited in Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). Therefore, ethics is essential in research and aims to prevent conflicts of interest between the researcher and the researched. Additionally, it ensures the data collected is trustworthy, provides trust, ensures research integrity, satisfies organisational and professional requirements, and addresses novel and challenging issues from concern to conduct (Denzin & Giardina, 2007, as cited in Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). Ethical problems arise in qualitative research because researchers are humanly involved with the participants and their data collection process.

In this research, I include an ethics declaration stating that I seek informed consent, respect my study respondents' confidentiality and anonymity, guarantee that all involvement is voluntary, prevent damage to my participants, and demonstrate that my study is autonomous and impartial. Therefore, I am aware of my responsibilities towards the study's participants in respect and

recognising all individuals' dignity, privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination rights (Maree, 2012). In this context, I use the following ethical principles to ensure that my data and data collection methods are ethical.

3.10.1 Harm or risk and mitigation

Research ethics is concerned with issues of risk, harm, and consequences. Minimising the danger of psychological (distress) and social (discriminatory judgement) harm is critical (Stahlke, 2018). The researcher has an ethical obligation to minimise participants' hazards and guarantee that these hazards are explained in the informed consent documents (Maree, 2012). These dangers can be physical and psychological. The researcher must consider prospective risks that could be implemented throughout their research and how they will be addressed. The researcher must minimise all potential hazards and be fully conscious of their level and nature (Le.ac.uk, 2019). In this context, ethics protect the participant and the researcher.

3.10.2 Informed consent or assent

One of the primary ethical principles of qualitative research is informed consent, which refers to an individual's voluntary agreement, whereas assent refers to their willingness to participate (Maree, 2012). This principle relates to a bigger problem of respect for participants, ensuring they are not forced to participate and have access to necessary information before consent. Consent is typically collected by written consent forms, with review committees identifying the necessary parts of consent. Prior information on essential aspects of the research, such as the objectivity, procedures, time duration, risks, and benefits, is frequently included, as well as a clause stating that participation is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw from the study (Halai, 2006). I ensured the informed consent and assent of the research subjects by explaining the content of the research study beforehand and highlighting and discussing all relevant information before the interviews. I gave each participant a consent letter and had a trusted adult present when observing minors. My letter includes the nine required elements of an informed consent letter. I also included a separate consent letter requesting permission to record the interview.

Participants are adequately informed of potential risks that might arise from their participation. Obtaining consent should not be done once. According to Ciuk and Latusek (2018), compelling arguments have been made that consent should be viewed as the result of ongoing negotiations between the researcher(s) and the research participants and revisited as the research evolves.

All participants participated voluntarily and could withdraw at any stage.

3.10.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Subjects' confidentiality and anonymity are vital in research ethics. If subjects think, for some reason, that their confidentiality will be compromised, it will influence their willingness to participate and their feedback. I ensured confidentiality by removing participants' names and their places of work from the data. I did keep data such as their gender, ages, and roles in the school for research purposes. However, this information will never be shared with anyone. I also made my subjects aware of this.

3.10.4 Vulnerable participant

Researchers must consider problems that might arise from working with vulnerable participants. It is crucial to ensure that participation is truly voluntary. When working within a research study where the topic requires data from vulnerable participants, a researcher has more responsibilities, which might include legal formalities. It is vital to ensure all participants are deemed capable, in other words, whether a person has the mental capacity to make a decision (Economic and Social Research Council, 2019). In this research, I considered my responsibilities towards two vulnerable participant groups. In the first one, I observed minor learners using English through drama and had a trusted adult or relative nearby during the observation. The second participant group concerns the teachers' interviews, who might feel vulnerable if confidential information is required. Both cases are covered through ethical clearance.

3.10.5 Conflicts of interest

Another ethical principle of qualitative research is conflicts of interest. Israel and Hay (2006, p. 120) state, "conflicts of interests occur when various personal, financial, political and academic concerns coexist and the potential for one interest to be illegitimately favoured over another that has equal or even greater legitimacy in a way that might make other reasonable people feel misled or deceived". Participants and researchers cannot have a conflict of interest. When researchers have a conflict of interest, they risk seeming careless, inept, or deceitful, including financial or personal gain for the participants, which might jeopardise their involvement and compromise the validity of the data.

3.10.6 Beneficence

The basis of benevolence in ethical theory is “a moral obligation to act for the others’ benefit, helping them to further their important and legitimate interests, often by preventing or removing possible harms” (Beauchamp, 2008). Furthermore, Israel and Hay (2006, p. 36) describe beneficence as “avoiding harm and maximizing possible benefits, with the intention of ensuring people’s well-being”. In this research, I protected and safeguarded the welfare and rights of those with whom I communicated and interacted. Researchers must not harm and should resolve conflicts that might arise responsibly to minimise risk (Maree, 2012).

3.10.7 Reciprocity and remuneration

In research ethics, reciprocity relates to the giving and taking between researchers and participants in the study. Lather (1986, p. 267) defines reciprocity as “give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power” (as cited in Galetta & Cross, 2013). The give and take occur in the communicative space and the conceptual space. The communicative space is the engagement space between the researcher and the participant, and the conceptual space is the interaction space between data and theory. Both incite a dialectic between opposing viewpoints, alternate explanations, and multiple viewpoints. The concept of reciprocity lies at the centre of this dialectic: establishing a dialogue between empirical data as it is collected and evaluated and the theory incorporated in one’s questions, framework, and design (Galetta & Cross, 2013). Moreover, the research aims to benefit the community, and a researcher must consider the society within the study and how these individuals should be reciprocated appropriately (Economic and Social Research Council, 2019).

3.10.8 Deception and trust

In research ethics, deception can manifest directly or indirectly. Direct deception refers to deliberate misinformation about a significant portion of the research given to respondents, including descriptions of fake research, staged manipulations, or dishonest feedback. Indirect deception refers to the researcher’s failure to disclose all the details of a study, and the participant cannot agree because all the data were not communicated (Boynton, 2015). In other words, the selected persons must trust that those conducting the relevant study have the best interests of their voluntary participants at the top of their research agenda and, as trustful contributors, are not running into any form of deception.

Therefore, a relationship of mutual trust in a research study exists between the participant as the sender of information and the researcher as its receiver. For the success of this communication process, participants must feel they can trust the researcher and the study's intent. Moreover, they must believe that their participation in the relevant study project will be significant, meaningful, and constructive regarding problem awareness, solution findings, and, most of all, enhancing the subject under investigation. In this study, participants must trust that I can fulfil my responsibilities towards them. Therefore, I focused on effective communication to build mutual trust, engaged with them and got to know them better. I created a positive environment and attentively listened to them during the interview.

3.11 Conclusions

In conclusion, I ensured trustworthiness by disclosing to the participants all information about the study and explaining my viewpoint and rationale in detail. Traditional approaches in teaching EFL and drama teaching tactics as disciplines have old and common characteristics: both need strong memory, sound intonation, clear phonetics, and prompt response to oral calls. To advance with the research, I must approach these common features as close as possible. Based on the teachers' empirical knowledge, I gathered the data, built my quest on what is known about both subjects, and introduced a drama teaching method as a language learning strategy rather than an innovative approach.

CHAPTER 4 APPROACHES AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter justifies and discusses the methodology and the qualitative approach used in answering the research questions. Furthermore, I present the research findings using a qualitative case study comprising interviews with South African teachers teaching EFL in Mainland China. In relation to the sociocultural theoretical framework, this process developed in the context of behaviour and the social situation where the relevant teaching/learning actions occurred.

The existing literature produced no empirical field study on using drama skills to teach EFL in China from a South African perspective. Therefore, this study will provide new insights into the professional perceptions of South African teachers and enhance their empirical knowledge in the field. Thus, this chapter focuses on answering one primary research question and one subsidiary question.

4.2 Research questions

4.2.1 *Primary research question*

How can a drama-based pedagogy be integrated into traditional teaching and learning to activate natural, spontaneous sources of learning among learners?

4.2.2 *Subsidiary question*

What are South African teachers' perceptions of drama as a pedagogical tool for EFL in China, and why?

4.3 Questions, response themes and sub-themes

The semi-structured interviews were guided by open-response questionnaires comprising 12 questions, organised and presented in nine themes and sub-themes, which arose from the questions and responses.

Table 4.1: Summary of questions, response themes and sub-themes

Questions	Response Themes
Question 1: Why did you decide to come and teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Mainland China?	<p>Theme 1: South African teachers' reasons for and experiences of moving to China</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.1: Reasons for moving to China</p> <p>Financial gain/environment change</p> <p>Better teaching conditions</p> <p>More job opportunities</p> <p>Adventure, travel, and learning about other cultures</p>
Question 2: Please describe your work or teaching experience before moving to China.	<p>Sub-theme 1.2: Work experience before moving to China</p> <p>Teaching in South Africa</p> <p>Teaching in another country</p> <p>Other career paths</p>
Question 3: Please describe your initial experience of moving to China (inside and outside the classroom).	<p>Sub-theme 1.3: Initial experience of moving to China</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.3.1: Inside the classroom</p> <p>Culture differences</p> <p>Curriculum</p> <p>Received training</p> <p>Learner discipline and behaviour</p> <p>Learner and teacher' workload</p> <p>Learners' parents</p> <p>Learners' language abilities</p> <p>Teaching approach</p> <p>Teaching resources</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.3.2: Outside the classroom</p> <p>Culture shock</p> <p>Language barrier</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>Transportation</p>
Question 4: Please explain your teaching approach in your EFL classroom.	<p>Theme 2: South African teachers' teaching approach in China</p>

Questions	Response Themes
<p>Question 5: Have you ever experienced any challenges in your classroom due to culture differences? If yes, please explain.</p>	<p>Sub-theme 2.1: Differentiated learning styles Sub-theme 2.2: Social-emotional learning Sub-theme 2.3: Cultivate creativity Sub-theme 2.4: Motivation and enjoyment Sub-theme 2.5: Student-centred approach Theme 3: Challenges of teaching EFL in China for South African teachers Sub-theme 3.1: Differences in Eastern and Western learning styles Sub-theme 3.2: Poor support for special education Sub-theme 3.2: Competitiveness in the Chinese education system Sub-theme 3.3: Speaking about sensitive or controversial topics in the classroom</p>
<p>Question 6: What techniques, strategies, or games do you use in your classroom to teach EFL?</p>	<p>Theme 4: Suggested techniques, strategies, and games to teach EFL Sub-theme 4.1: Techniques and strategies Sub-theme 4.2: Games</p>
<p>Question 7: What is your perception of using drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL in China? (For example, using drama skills or games, such as role play or improvisation, to teach).</p>	<p>Theme 5: Teachers' perception of using drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL in China Sub-theme 5.1: Positive Sub-theme 5.2: Negative</p>
<p>Question 8: Have you ever used drama to teach EFL in your class?</p>	<p>Theme 6: Teacher's experience of incorporating drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL Sub-theme 6.1: Experienced Sub-theme 6.2: Inexperienced</p>
<p>Question 9: What are the benefits of using drama to teach EFL in China?</p>	<p>Theme 7: Advantages and disadvantages of using drama to teach EFL in China</p>
<p>Question 10: What are the disadvantages of using drama in EFL in China?</p>	<p>Sub-theme 7.1: Benefits Assists in language learning Cultivates creativity, imagination, and spontaneity</p>

Questions	Response Themes
<p>Question 11: Have you experienced any limitations regarding your teaching? If yes, please explain.</p> <p>Question 12: What impact has Covid-19 had on your teaching, and how did you adapt?</p>	<p>Fosters expression</p> <p>Motivates and engages learners</p> <p>Promotes group work</p> <p>Relieves academic pressure on learners</p> <p>Sub-theme 7.2: Limitations</p> <p>Lack of participation from learners</p> <p>Apprehension of indiscipline</p> <p>Cultural Differences</p> <p>Not applicable to all subject areas</p> <p>Time-consuming</p> <p>Theme 8: South African teachers' experiences of limitations in teaching in China</p> <p>Sub-theme 8.1: Limitations</p> <p>Academic pressure on learners</p> <p>Classroom management</p> <p>Lack of teaching experience</p> <p>Language barriers</p> <p>Rigid curriculum structure</p> <p>Sub-theme 8.2: No Limitations</p> <p>Theme 9: The impact of Covid-19 on teaching in China and how the teachers adapted</p> <p>Sub-theme 9.1: Impact</p> <p>Sub-theme 9.2: How the teachers adapted</p> <p>Sub-theme 9.3: Limitation to online teaching</p>

The group from which data were collected includes 10 South African teachers currently teaching EFL in Mainland China, specifically in Tier 1 cities, namely Beijing. This group is identified as teachers, and the order in which I interviewed them is their codes, for example, participant 1 and respondent 1. They are referred to by their codes, and the terms participant and respondent are used interchangeably. The participants' responses to the interview and questionnaire questions revealed similarities and differences in perceptions. Therefore, this chapter presents the findings under each theme and sub-theme.

4.3.1 Theme 1: South African teachers' reasons and experiences of moving to China

Aiming first at the South African teachers' reasons for and experiences of moving to China, this section addresses the why part of the subsidiary research question. In the data collection process, the ten participants were asked a) why they decided to come and teach EFL in Mainland China, b) their work experience before moving to China, and c) their initial experience of China inside and outside the classroom. Second, aiming at the South African teachers' perceptions of drama as a pedagogical tool for EFL in China and why, the research revealed that the participants' backgrounds and empirical knowledge significantly influenced their teaching approaches in Mainland China.

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Reasons for moving to China

Four thematic findings emerged from the interviews and questionnaires about why skilled South Africans decide to teach in China: a) financial interest, b) a better teaching environment, c) more job opportunities, and d) adventure, travel, and opportunity to learn about other cultures.

Financial gain

Two respondents mentioned that they moved to China for financial gain to pay off existing debt and save for the future.

Participant 6: *I was interested in taking on new challenges, and the school also provides me the opportunity to build up some savings for the future.*

The data revealed that many participants' perceptions of teaching in China were influenced by their financial status in South Africa.

Better teaching environment

Four respondents explained that they moved to China for a better teaching environment. All four participants were teachers in SA and mentioned that SA's teaching environment is mundane and that they were overworked and underpaid.

Participant 4: *The workload was just too much. Instead of it being an 8:00 to 14:00 job, it was 8:00 until 21:00 in the evening job. So, 13 hours. And it was too much. It was too overwhelming. And I felt most of the time I was stressed, I was under pressure, and I didn't enjoy it. Let's be*

honest, I didn't enjoy teaching in South Africa.

Teachers in SA are overworked because they are given too much grading, classes, assessment, and extracurricular activities. The working hours are too long, strenuous, and overwhelming. Participant 4 said she worked more than 13 hours daily in SA as a teacher. Additionally, two respondents said they did not enjoy teaching in SA but enjoy teaching in China. Participant 2 mentioned that he was given too many extracurricular activities as a teacher in SA.

Participant 2: *Perhaps they're just overworked me a bit because I was working six days a week because they had me teaching, they had me coaching soccer and rugby and cricket. So that was my working experience before coming to China.*

Job opportunities

Six respondents commented that they moved to China for more job opportunities. China has more teaching vacancies and professional development opportunities for educators. Participant 8 mentioned she felt stagnated in her career in SA and wants to develop professionally.

Participant 8: *My second year as a teacher in South Africa I knew there was more I wanted to learn and experience and if I continued to work in SA, I would never gotten the opportunity unless I decide to quit my teacher job and move to a different country and teach there.*

Similarly, two respondents stated that there were no teaching opportunities in South Africa and they struggled to find teaching jobs. Both participants are highly skilled and struggled to find teaching positions in Pretoria and George. Furthermore, China's Covid-19 restrictions on the entering of foreign nationals have resulted in a teacher shortage, as mentioned by Participant 2.

Participant 2: *There are so many opportunities here, especially for teachers. And as well, we didn't mention earlier, as we mentioned, as I can say now, especially with the pandemic, the opportunity is even more so. The people that haven't left there are even more opportunities because they can't get more people in. So, the market is shrinking, and the demand is rising.*

Thus, expatriate teachers teaching in Mainland China can find higher-paying teaching positions in top-tier cities. Furthermore, two respondents mentioned they could secure better teaching positions. However, not all the respondents were educators in SA. Two respondents mentioned that they were allowed to pursue education by moving to China.

Participant 5: *I always wanted to get into education. And this gave afforded me a different route to get into an education.*

Both respondents worked in a corporate setting, and China allowed them to complete their teaching certifications and pursue a career in education.

Adventure, travel, and learning about other cultures

Four respondents said they moved to China for adventure, travel, and learning about other cultures. Two respondents stated that they moved to China for a change, to experience new things, and for adventure. Two respondents answered that they wanted to travel and see the world.

Participant 7: *Before my journey to China, I was working in a corporate setting and realised that it was not my calling in life. I decided that I wanted to travel and work in a new country so the most appealing option at the time was to teach in China.*

4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Work experience before moving to China

Based on this study's qualitative findings, three themes emerged regarding the participants' work experience before moving to China: teaching in SA, teaching in other countries, and other work-related experience. Five respondents were teachers in SA before moving to China. Their subject fields range from English, Arts and Culture, and Economics. Two respondents taught in countries other than SA and China. Both participants had taught in Brazil for more than 18 years and have been teaching in China for the last five years. Three respondents had worked in other career paths before their involvement in teaching, namely, acting, promotions, marketing, and store managing. All ten respondents have degrees, a prerequisite for teaching in China.

4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Initial experience of moving to China

The respondents discussed their initial experience of moving to China, divided into two categories: inside and outside the classroom. Different experiences that arose inside the classroom for the participants are culture differences, curriculum differences, training, learners' discipline and behaviour, learner and teacher workload, learners' language abilities, and a difference in teaching approaches. When the participants moved to China, their initial experiences outside the classroom pertained to culture shock, language barriers, overcoming challenges, and transportation.

- Inside the classroom

Cultural differences

Three respondents said they experienced cultural differences in the classroom. Chinese learners are culturally different from South African learners and tend to be shy. In response to the relevant questions, participant 3 responded that Chinese learners' etiquette, mannerisms, and behaviour are different, making teaching more challenging. Similarly, participant 5 referred to Chinese culture as maintaining face and communicated that as a teacher, *you must read between the lines* when interacting with your learners.

Curriculum

Three respondents experienced a difference in the curriculum when first moving to China. They described that the Chinese curriculum is more strenuous and rigid. One participant mentioned he found the Chinese curriculum challenging and that Chinese learners at younger ages were doing more challenging lessons than his learners in SA. In parallel, participant 4 commented that the Chinese curriculum involved less play learning and more memorisation learning approaches.

Received training

Participant 2 recounted his work experience at a training centre and mentioned receiving two weeks of teacher training when first moving to China.

Participant 2: *I was very happy when I originally got here because they took us for training. They gave us two weeks training on the product. Everything was quite monitored so they could see if you would fit in, where you would fit in, how you would do. And I was very happy with the training beforehand.*

This training included teaching approaches, culture shock workshops, and other essential topics assisting a foreign teacher when initially moving to China. However, the participants working at public and international schools noted that they received minimal orientation and found adapting to their teaching environments challenging.

Learner's discipline and behaviour

Three respondents experienced positive differences in learners' discipline and behaviour.

Participant 3: *Very well-behaved kids in terms of discipline ... Learners show a lot of respect.*

All three respondents mentioned that Chinese learners are better behaved, more disciplined, and show more respect towards the teacher than learners in SA. Similar to participant 3's comment, participant 4 described her view on teaching in China.

Participant 4: *Now, I really like teaching. The kids are decent, they're nice; they are kind, they are hardworking.*

Correspondingly, participant 6 stated that Chinese learners show respect to teachers differently. Chinese learners are not encouraged to question a teacher or speak up in class, as this might be disrespectful. Learners show respect by obeying all the teacher's instructions and not disputing the teacher's class materials.

Learners and teacher workload

The participants alluded to a vast difference between teachers' and learners' workloads. Two respondents emphasised that learners in China have a bigger workload and more pressure than learners in SA.

Participant 4: *The pressure in South Africa for a child to succeed and to do well in school is not as high as it is in China. And I think that is to do with the population.*

The heavy academic and extracurricular load on Chinese adolescents generates high stress levels and takes a social and emotional toll. However, participant 6 observed that the teaching workload in China is less strenuous than in SA.

Participant 6: *Totally different culture, where the workload is less than in South Africa.*

Learners' parents

One respondent affirmed that the learners' parents in China differ from parents in SA regarding their communication with the teachers. Chinese parents are more appreciative towards the teacher, and if a learner is not doing academically well, the blame is put on the learner and not the teacher. According to another respondent, Chinese parents place more pressure on their children than in SA.

Learners' language abilities

The findings demonstrate that two respondents experienced challenges when moving to China based on their learners' language proficiency. All ten participants reported they had no experience speaking Mandarin before moving to China and found the language barrier challenging inside and outside the classroom.

Teaching approach

Participant 4 described that she experienced a difference in her teaching approach when initially moving to China. She stated that at the training centre where she worked, they encouraged teaching to be more fun and teachers to plan more playful lesson tactics.

Teaching resources

Participant 2, who worked for a training centre, mentioned they were provided with all the necessary teaching resources.

Participant 2: That was really quite nice for me because again in South Africa a lot of the year plans and semester plans are left to you... They didn't care how you went about it, but they gave you all the resources, they gave you all the information, and they kind of left you two devices, which, again, very freeing but nice and structured in a way that you know what your targets are.

The schools have bigger budgets, more teaching props, and state-of-the-art classrooms. One respondent revealed that his classroom in China was equipped with more advanced technology than his classroom in SA. He explained that his classroom is equipped with a smart board, laptops or tablets for learners, and cameras for parents to live stream the class's teaching/learning activities.

- Outside the classroom

Culture shock

The findings revealed four respondents experienced positive and negative culture shocks when first moving to China. The participants mentioned that different sights, languages, mannerisms, gestures, smells, and food contributed to their initial culture shock. Two respondents found the culture shock challenging. Participant 3 revealed that South Africans find adjusting challenging as they are set in their ways. Contrarily, three respondents expressed a sense of accomplishment

when overcoming challenges.

Participant 5: *So being able to adapt and take this big leap and ... it's amazing! There's a sense of fulfilment, a tick that I've done it and I can do it!*

Participant 5 mentioned that he experienced the culture shock as positive, as one gets more *exposure* to different types of people. In parallel, participant 10 stated that she developed as a person after moving to China.

Participant 10: *It has taught me a lot about myself and the most important, that I really do love teaching.*

After their initial culture shock and encounter with the unfamiliar and strange, the South Africans acknowledged the cultural differences, understood them, and could navigate their way around.

Language barriers

The language barrier in China is a challenge inside and outside the classroom and is evident as a theme in both these findings.

Participant 8: *Not being able to understand the language was a challenge for me, unable to communicate on a level that both parties understand.*

The participants revealed that many people do not speak English in Mainland China, even in Tier-1 cities. The respondents had to rely heavily on translation apps and adapt by learning basic Chinese phrases.

Safety

China is recognised as being one of the safest countries in the world. Two respondents declared that they found China much safer than SA.

Participant 2: *I feel constantly safe everywhere I go because I know there's always a camera watching me and no matter, I can leave something I did. I lost my cell phone on a bus, and it found its way back to me within an hour, which is crazy!*

Subsequently, China has strict law enforcement with a 99% conviction rate. The participants mentioned that cameras are everywhere, community members volunteer as guards, and most

street corners have security guards patrolling the area.

Transportation

China has a comprehensive transportation network of airports, trains, subways, high-speed trains, and ride-hailing apps. Participant 2 described that he found transportation in China much more advanced than in SA and affordable, and most people do not own or need cars.

4.3.2 Theme 2: South African teachers' instruction approach in China

This theme corresponds to the primary research question, How can a drama-based pedagogy be integrated into traditional teaching/learning to activate natural, spontaneous sources of learning among learners? This theme investigates the traditional teaching methods used by South African teachers in China and explores how drama can be incorporated into these traditional instructional methods. In their biographical details, all participants indicated that they have been teaching in Mainland China for over three years. Each individual's teaching method differs and refers to the general principles of pedagogy and management strategies used for classroom instruction. The participants' teaching approaches also depend on their educational philosophy, classroom demographic, subject area, and the school's mission statement (Teaching Methods, 2022). The respondents summarised their teaching approach in China into five categories, thematically listed as differentiated learning styles, developing emotional and social skills, fostering creativity, motivation and enjoyment, and a learner-centred learning approach.

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Differentiated learning styles

Four respondents described their teaching approach in China as offering differentiated learning instructions and tailoring lessons to meet their learners' individual needs. Participant 3 emphasised that differentiated learning styles are vital for building learner–teacher trustful relationships and a teaching/learning productive interaction.

Participant 3: You then build a feeling and understanding of what works for your learners, even if you're teaching in groups. So, you're able to kind of customise whether they're working with somebody else, a stronger learner, or whether they, they are taking on a weaker learner or two stronger learners together. You then kind of find the style that works for them and that's what you're going to try and reproduce the whole year through.

The participants described that differentiated learning applies to learning styles and English-speaking levels. Participant 7 defined her teaching approach as not holistic because she must personalise her teaching standards according to the learners' different English-acquired levels. This teacher describes her approach to creating a homogeneous, convenient, holistic standard.

Participant 7: I like to incorporate activities that are mainly play and inquiry-based learning that create a holistic balance between the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical abilities of learners.

The respondents stated that lessons must be continually assessed and adjusted to meet the learners' individual needs. However, some respondents mentioned they are unsure how to implement differentiated instruction in their EFL classroom effectively.

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Social-emotional learning

Four respondents said they aim to develop emotional and social learning in the classroom. The teachers aim to develop the learners' skills in a foreign language through a social and emotional process that includes interaction, games, and teamwork. Three respondents share similar perspectives, summarising that they use group work activities in their EFL classes.

Participant 8: I would make sure that the majority of my tasks are created that learners are able to work in pairs so in the case where a learner is not sure what he or she needs to do (after explaining thoroughly) they will be able to ask their partner their paired up with.

Correspondingly, participant 10 uses the CLT method to develop her learners' emotional and social skills.

Participant 10: Most teachers use a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, which offers learners the opportunity to communicate in real-life contexts, accepting offers and reacting to them by explaining how it makes them feel.

Notable is that the CLT method focuses on using only the target language in the foreign language class.

4.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Cultivating creativity

Two respondents aim to cultivate creativity in their foreign language classroom by focusing on problem-solving and out-of-the-box thinking. Two respondents proposed using the acronym

PPP which stands for present, practice, produce.

4.3.2.4 Sub-theme 2.4: Motivation and enjoyment

Three respondents suggested that learners must be motivated in the EFL classroom and that learning occurs through enjoyment. Consequently, the respondents all worked at training centres. The training centres encouraged fun classroom environments where teachers had to be silly and use big facial expressions and gestures to excite the learners. Moreover, they suggest that games and activities must be incorporated into the lessons, and different visual aids must be used.

4.3.2.5 Sub-theme 2.5: Student-centred approach

During the discussions, two respondents revealed that they view their pedagogy as student-centred. Participant 7 reiterates by stating that she involves learners in the decision-making process.

Participant 7: My teaching approach would be to make the classroom environment as student-centred as possible, which focuses on the whole-being of a young learner.

The same sentiment is shared by participant 6.

Participant 6: Student-centred approach is followed, which forces the learners to escape from their comfort zones and engage with others in the classroom.

Both participants describe their classroom environments as collaborative, flexible, and engaging learners in the learning process.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Challenges of teaching EFL in China for South African teachers

This theme interrelates with one of the objectives of this research study: to determine how drama can be integrated into the foreign language classroom. The data revealed that their sociocultural environments triggered the participants' reactions and responses to questions. All participants responded to the interview and questionnaire questions based on their cultural experiences in China. Challenges that arose are positive and negative and can be summarised into sub-themes: differences in Eastern and Western learning styles, competitiveness in the Chinese education system, and speaking about sensitive or controversial topics in the classroom.

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Differences in Eastern and Western learning styles

Four respondents cited differences in their Chinese learners' learning styles compared to their SA learners. Participant 3 observed that Chinese learners struggle with critical thinking.

Participant 3: *For me as a teacher, when you're trying to teach subjects and trying to get these kids to use what we call critical thinking, which I think is something that's inbred in us, it's taught from us at a very young age. You know, where I don't think Chinese kids actually learn this. It's not part of their culture, not part of their education.*

Respondent 3 stated that the Chinese education system focuses on assessment rather than actual learning. He describes Chinese education as rigid and driven by memorisation learning. Another participant mentioned that in her foreign language classroom, emphasis is placed on memorisation and not understanding the context, as her learners can recall the vocabulary but grade poorly in comprehension. Participant 3 agreed with this statement, giving an example where one of his Grade 10 learners excelled in an international department compared with her former public school.

Participant 3: *Chinese education is great for people with good memories, people that ... that don't mind doing a lot of homework. Whereas I think the Western education is ... is more for those that are more creative, expressive and this type of stuff. So, we had a learner, she came to us in grade ten. Her name is Lisa and she's just finished grade 12. And I think this is a very good example. When she came to our school in Grade ten, she told me that she's a bad learner and I said, You're a bad learner? Why? And she said to me, well, teacher, you know, the high school entrance examination. I said, Yeah, yeah. She said, I only got 490. And I didn't really understand too much about what does 419 mean, but anything really below 500 is not a good score in the Chinese education. So, I was like, okay, well, okay, you're a bad learner. Doesn't really mean much for me. Three years later, she's graduated in grade 12. She's done the A-level curriculum. She achieved one a star and two A's. She has been, she received offers from the top ten universities in the world. So how do you, how do you say that here's a bad learner but can produce in another curriculum? It's just different curriculums (sic!) for different people.*

Eastern and Western language teaching and learning approaches are suitable for learners based on their individual needs and strengths.

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Poor support for special education

The findings revealed that based on participants' responses, Chinese learners with learning disabilities do not receive the recognition or teaching strategies they need.

Participant 7: Another challenge is the recognition of learning disabilities that I have suspected certain children in my classroom may have but are not formally diagnosed and therefore as a teacher who is not experienced in special education may feel that such learners are deserving of an environment that require the expertise of this particular professional in order to maximise their learning opportunities.

Children with impairments are still faced with discriminatory barriers in China while trying to enrol in regular schools. Learners with learning disabilities are disregarded, and the majority of public schools do not provide special needs programmes.

4.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Competitiveness in the Chinese education system

Three respondents raised concerns about competitiveness in the Chinese education system. Participant 9 cited that learners' academic life rules and dictates everything in their life.

Participant 9: The biggest challenge I must say is seeing the learners' academic lives rule and dictate everything in their life. The pressure from parents, the social standings in class, the fear in learners' eyes of tests and disappointing their families.

Chinese learners receive immense pressure from their parents, instilling fear of disappointing their families. Most Chinese families only have one child due to exorbitant child-raising costs in urban areas. Furthermore, China recently relaxed the country's decades-long one-child policy; however, despite these efforts to boost population growth, Chinese families still choose only to have one child. Moreover, Chinese children are expected to care for their parents one day, as reiterated in the following statement.

Participant 2: I think some of the cultural differences would be how a lot of the parents expect their children to be the smartest in the class or the hardest working in the class. And if they're not, then the child or the teacher, depending on the parent, will get shouted at.

Furthermore, learners have gruelling school hours; when they finish school, they have classes at training centres until late into the evening.

Participant 10: *Classes at the training centre only starts after 5 PM till 8:30 PM. This means that the learners have already been to school, completed other activities and then join the training centre for further studies. The level of academics is very high in China.*

Participant 2 said that he views Chinese parents' view on learning as challenging. Chinese parents do not want their children to have fun while learning; they would rather have their child focus on reciting and learning.

Participant 2: *They don't understand that you can learn in other ways. They just want to see the academic results and they don't see the point in ... in having fun through learning.*

Chinese parents struggle to view games and activities as learning opportunities, which limits educators.

4.3.3.4 Sub-theme 3.4: Speaking about sensitive or controversial topics in the classroom

Two respondents shared that they cannot speak about sensitive or controversial topics. There are taboo topics that one cannot speak about in China. As a teacher, you must always be mindful and careful about what you say. The Chinese have a different belief system, and foreign teachers cannot discuss religion or their beliefs inside and outside the classroom.

Participant 7: *I have encountered several challenges when it comes to differing belief systems as we are required to teach our own celebratory beliefs such as Christmas, however, it is important to only convey information to learners without explicitly stating religious views that may be sensitive in nature.*

The government scrutinises schools, and international schools and departments are not allowed to celebrate Western holidays such as Easter, Halloween, or Christmas. During random inspections, local authorities often inspect schools, curricula, textbooks, and teaching resources.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Suggested techniques, strategies, and games to teach EFL

This section assesses practical procedural strategies used in the EFL classroom with relevant examples. The participants proposed techniques, strategies, and games to incorporate drama into traditional instructional methods.

4.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Techniques and strategies

Eight respondents discussed techniques and strategies they incorporate into their foreign language classrooms. Strategies refer to decisions directing your actions, whereas techniques refer to things you do or actions you make. The first strategy is getting to know your learners. Learning your learners' names, interests, and needs will help provide them with quality learning opportunities and a personalised teaching approach. The second technique is moving around, which can be facilitated in various ways by the teacher moving around the classroom, changing the learners' desks, or adjusting their standing level. Participant 2 suggests using learning stations.

Participant 4: *I like to create learning stations whereby I set up different areas around the class that learners can participate in at the same time. This allows learners to engage and explore activities that interest them while I interact with different groups or individuals.*

Participant 4 elaborates on learning stations, stating that it keeps learners engaged, pique their interest, and shows the teacher who is paying attention. Similarly, participant 4 proposes using different facial expressions, gestures, and tones in your voice.

Participant 4: *I realise if you use your tone of voice, if you go high or you go low, you go loud and you go soft, that grabs attention.*

Then, she suggests using the learners' physical bodies to assist learning.

Participant 4: *If I use my body and also just stand like this all time boring, they will not if I use my arms and I make movements and also my face using facial expressions, using hands, and then they're a little bit more engaged as well.*

Furthermore, this strategy can be incorporated into lessons by having learners spell out vocabulary words using gestures, clapping when pronouncing a word, or forming sequences in groups using their bodies. The third strategy is creating creative and colourful teaching materials, mind maps, flashcards, and worksheets. Three respondents recommend incorporating visual aids into teaching, such as creative PowerPoints and video materials.

Participant 6: *Games and videos are always helpful tools to gain the attention and interests of the learners. These activities are not complicated, and they are fun to take part in.*

Using different teaching materials piques learners' interest and assists them in language acquisition. The fourth strategy is incorporating a reward system in the classroom. The fifth technique only allows learners to speak English in class, and two respondents only allow learners to speak in the target language. The final technique is to make mistakes to see whether a learner corrects you purposefully, and participant 2 coins this as the ignorant teacher.

Participant 2: *I can tell you one of my favourite strategies is silly teacher, dumb teacher, or ignorant teacher. When you teach something and then you'll purposely get it wrong because you want them to correct you ... it's a way to not only test their knowledge, to review the content, to see if they have learnt or and it's also to see who's paying attention.*

4.3.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Games

Seven respondents proposed using games in the foreign language classroom. Games must allow learners to practice the target language and encourage them to interact and communicate with one another. The seven participants suggest the following games: warm-up games, musical chairs, quizzes, crosswords, performing short plays, hot seat, dice, buzzers, 30 seconds, word searches, find someone who, board games, spin the wheel, tableaux, throwing balls, and performing dialogues. These activities create a meaningful context for language use.

4.3.5 Theme 5: Teachers' perception of using drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL in China

Theme 5 addresses the *what* part of the subsidiary research question, **what are South African teachers' perceptions of drama as a pedagogical tool for EFL in China and why?** This section explores the participants' positive and negative perceptions.

4.3.5.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Positive

All ten respondents hold positive views on using drama as a pedagogical tool in the foreign language classroom. They describe drama as a helpful tool in the EFL classroom as it is practical and fun.

Participant 7: *I believe that drama is an excellent tool to teach EFL in China mainly due to the language barrier. Drama has a way of explaining ideas and concepts through various mediums that is essentially universal to all young learners. Drama is an excellent way of portraying a visual representation for learners to better understand what they are being taught and is also*

a way for learners to exert their imagination and creativity to the best of their ability.

Furthermore, drama keeps learners engaged and assists with their learning. It makes lessons interesting and interactive and increases learners' retention rates because they are doing instead of sitting at a desk for the entire day. Based on this study's demographic findings, five participants formerly worked at training centres and expressed that their training centres encouraged using drama as a teaching tool in lessons.

Participant 1: *So, I would say it's very, very useful. Very useful. It's one of the biggest things that are actually encouraged to do in the training centre ... There's a time to be serious, but and they said time to have fun. And I feel the more fun you make it for them and more interactive using games, using different approaches, help the children to remember without them actually realising that they remember.*

4.3.5.2 Sub-theme 5.2: Negative

However, four respondents who perceive integrating drama as positive also hold negative perceptions of using drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL in China. They argue that drama as a pedagogical tool does not apply to all topics or subjects.

Participant 6: *At the same time, it is very important to choose the correct activity and not over-complicate things. The teacher must realise the level of English-speaking abilities of the learners and structure lesson accordingly.*

Moreover, the respondents expressed that incorporating drama into their language lessons is time-consuming because it takes longer to explain to the learners due to the language barrier. Drama as a teaching aid is effective when it relates to the subject matter, but schools try to incorporate it into all work schemes, confusing the learners. Participant 2 elaborates on this as follows.

Participant 2: *I think it has its benefits when incorporated correctly. I have seen it here. Unfortunately, not being used correctly and I have seen it used correctly as well. So, in my personal experience, it was a bit rushed, and they thought, well, this is the new direction we need to go in. So, from now on, everything we teach, no matter if it's countries or if it's scientific properties or if it's yeah, anything that they wanted to teach in the curriculum, they try to incorporate drama into it, and that's where it fell off.*

Furthermore, for drama to be correctly incorporated, teachers must be experienced.

Participant 1: *Sometimes my classes are crazy because the kids would jump up, they would scream, we would run around and do silly things and people would come knock on the door and say like, Hi, hello. Everything okay? Like, Yeah, cool. Just teaching. Sorry, sorry, guys. And we would have to calm down.*

Structuring a drama-based lesson is challenging because learners become over-excited, influencing the effectiveness of the learning.

4.3.6 Theme 6: Teacher's experience of incorporating drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL

Theme 6 explores the participants' experience of using drama as a tool to teach EFL. Furthermore, it correlates with this study's purpose, which is to investigate how South African teachers of English in China could be professionally better equipped if they were introduced to the pedagogical role of drama in the Chinese cultural context.

4.3.6.1 Sub-theme 6.1: Experienced

Eight participants responded that they have experience incorporating drama as a pedagogical tool in their EFL classrooms, of which five have used drama activities to teach English at the training centres where they used to work. However, many respondents mentioned they incorporate drama-related activities but not as a teaching method.

Participant 7: *I do not use it as a teaching method; however, I would incorporate drama-related activities such as role play and storytelling.*

4.3.6.2 Sub-theme 6.2: Inexperienced

Two participants answered that they are inexperienced in incorporating drama as a pedagogical tool in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, the eight participants who stated they were experienced could not differentiate between drama-based pedagogy and drama activities.

4.3.7 Theme 7: The advantages and disadvantages of using drama to teach EFL in China

Theme 7 addresses the why part of the primary research question. This section assesses why drama is beneficial and how it can be used to activate natural, spontaneous sources of learning

among learners, as mentioned in the research question. Additionally, it explores the disadvantages of using drama and promotes using drama as a teaching method in EFL and, if possible, in other foreign language learning.

4.3.7.1 Sub-theme 7.1: Benefits of using drama to teach EFL in China

This study investigates the benefits of using drama to teach EFL based on participants' perceptions and experiences. Six themes emerged from these findings: drama assists in language learning, cultivates creativity, imagination, and spontaneity, fosters expression, motivates and engages learners, promotes group work, and relieves academic pressure on learners.

Assists in language learning

Based on this study's qualitative findings, four respondents discussed that an advantage of using drama in the EFL classroom is that it assists in language learning. Drama as a teaching tool assists learners in communicating in the target language, including those with limited vocabulary, if structured in a developing, ascending mode.

Participant 10: Helps develop self-confidence and improve communication.

Using drama as a pedagogical tool develops learners' communicative competencies. The respondents mentioned that when they incorporated drama activities into their EFL classroom, the learners showed improved self-confidence, use of language, and vocabulary. Also, drama assists language learning through a natural process by placing learners in real-life contexts.

Participant 5: The kids are like sponges and with drama alone it's an extra big sponge and they help them soak in the language in a more natural way because it's conversational.

Using drama in the EFL classroom provides them with an authentic setting for natural language to be used in real-life situations. Lastly, it assists in remembering the target language and connects language with gestures.

Participant 10: It assists in remembering target vocabulary by connecting language with TPR (gestures).

Total physical response (TPR) is a teaching method using verbal communication and physical body movement. The TPR process mimics how infants learn language and reduces learners'

inhibitions and lowers stress (The Teacher Toolkit, 2022). In this context, drama is beneficial in developing oral communication.

Cultivates creativity, imagination, and spontaneity

Two respondents stated that drama cultivates creativity, imagination, and spontaneity. One interviewee explained that drama fosters imagination and emotional intelligence.

Participant 4: *It helps with imagination. It also helps being able to understand sympathy and empathy, like understand how somebody else might feel and how to respond.*

Similarly, another respondent stated that drama involves learners in the instruction process. Moreover, drama activities help learners develop spontaneous oral communication.

Participant 7: *It develops a better understanding of what is being taught because learners are able to actively participate in their learning as opposed to just receiving information from the teacher.*

Fosters expression

Two respondents listed that drama is beneficial as it fosters expression. Respondent 3 explained that he uses drama activities to help his learners express themselves.

Participant 3: *I think they might be nervous, but at the same time, they, they're open to actually express themselves more than what they would do in a classroom environment.*

EFL learners in China are shy and nervous about speaking in front of an audience. Participant 3 elaborates by commenting that drama encourages learners to engage with their peers and speak in front of an audience, thus, fostering expression.

Participant 3: *Normally in drama, you they're wearing different costumes. So, whether they're doing a role play and then a different costume, a different costume is like a mask. You're a different person. You can be somebody different and you won't be judged for this. So, I think drama is a very effective way in in getting through to kids and also getting them to express themselves.*

Furthermore, at a higher level of language proficiency, drama allows learners to pretend to be a different person, fostering expression through distancing techniques.

Motivates and engages learners

Four respondents added that an additional positive trait of drama is that it motivates and engages learners. Respondent 10 explained that drama keeps learners focused.

Participant 10: *It keeps them focused. You also get to take advantage of high-energy levels of some learners.*

Similarly, respondent 9 emphasised that drama grabs the learners' attention.

Participant 9: *Main points would be gaining the learners attention, increasing both the rate of participation and retention rate on content.*

By incorporating drama activities in lessons, the learners' daily schedules or routines are varied, motivating them. The respondents concluded that the drama techniques they use, such as mime, improvised language, role play, and dialogue exercises, allow each learner to be actively engaged.

Promotes group work

The data revealed the views of four respondents on how drama activities can be pedagogically beneficial because it promotes peer work and teamwork in the classroom. According to these teachers, the drama activities, exercises, and prompts frequently require teamwork, which is beneficial because it helps learners interpret and respond to each other's needs. Learners must cooperate with others to produce drama skits.

Relieves academic pressure on learners

Two respondents stated that drama techniques are valuable instructional tools because they relieve learners' academic pressure. Participants 1 and 10 theorised that drama relaxes learners, improving their concentration and eliminating stress.

Participant 1: *When you teach it with a drama, environment, games, whatever it is, the kids relax. And when they relax, they learn more.*

Participant 10: *It relaxes the learners' minds while they can learn and retain information better.*

Drama provides learners with a fun and relaxing atmosphere, relieving pressure. Respondent 1 asserted that drama activities in her classroom allow learners to have fun and disengage from

their stressful lives.

Participant 1: *And I really feel sorry for these kids. There's no time for fun. There's no time for relaxation. There's no time for anything. And when they come to us, they are always tired. And that's why I strive to make my classes as interesting and as fun as possible for them just so they can relax a little bit and have that breather.*

4.3.7.2 Sub-theme 7.2: Limitations of using drama to teach EFL in China

The participants listed challenges when using drama to teach EFL in China. Five themes emerged: a lack of participation from learners, apprehension of indiscipline, challenges arising due to cultural differences, drama does not apply to all subject areas, and it is time-consuming.

Lack of participation from learners

Four respondents replied that some Chinese learners in the foreign language classroom do not want to participate in drama activities for various reasons. Chinese learners are not used to using drama or performing in the classroom. Next, the learners feel that their language abilities are not good enough, and they do not understand the instructions or what is expected of them.

Participant 8: *Learners who are not participating, for example a learner has to do role play, if the learners is not able to speak English very well that learners will immediately lose interest in the lesson.*

Finally, teenagers or older learners do not want to participate because they feel embarrassed.

Apprehension of indiscipline

Five respondents commented that using drama activities or games in the EFL classroom distracts learners and leads to challenges in managing the class. Implementing drama activities in the classroom over-excites the learners, leading to high-energy levels and a lack of focus. Participants 9 and 10 shared similar views.

Participant 9: *It may get taken too far and distract away from the exercise. Since it is no longer a "normal" class setting, the learners tend to start talking amongst themselves and don't stay on track.*

Participant 10: *The learners might get over-excited, and it can create disorder. The focus on my drama activity gets lost.*

Furthermore, the objective becomes lost because learners focus more on the performance than learning materials. Moreover, learners do not take it seriously, removing the learning process.

Cultural differences

Two respondents mentioned that cultural differences hinder their learners' involvement in drama activities. Chinese learners are introverted and shy. In Chinese culture, learners are taught to blend in and not stand out in the crowd. However, drama encourages them to express themselves and stand out.

Not applicable to all subject areas

Two participants mentioned that drama does not apply to all subject areas.

Participant 5: *Some things you must teach the old-fashioned way. I mean, you try and show me how you teach math through drama. You can, but it's very difficult. So not everything can be transcribed with drama.*

Drama cannot be integrated across all topics and subjects, and teachers do not have the knowledge or skills to explore drama as a learning resource across subjects.

Time-consuming

Two respondents stated that drama lessons are time-consuming, and participant 2 stated that it takes much time to set up drama lessons or activities due to the language barrier. Instructions must be explained clearly, and the forty-minute lessons end up being too short to facilitate a drama activity.

4.3.8 Theme 8: South African teachers' experiences of limitations in teaching in China

During the interviews, the participants were questioned about the limitations they experienced in China regarding their teaching. This section correlates with theme 1, elaborating on the teachers' experiences of teaching in China after the initial culture shock. The qualitative feedback highlighted five limitations: academic pressure on learners, classroom management, lack of teaching experience, language barriers, and rigid curriculum structures.

4.3.8.1 Sub-theme 8.1: Limitations

Academic pressure on learners

One respondent commented that there is too much academic pressure on learners who receive up to five to six hours of homework a day.

Classroom management

Respondent 10 explained that she struggles with classroom management. She lists the reasons as follows.

Participant 10: There might be a few learners, or one learner that dominates the lesson. Learners are bored and take naps during class because they are just too tired. Learners arrive late or disrupt the class if discipline isn't set. Learners have too much homework. Learners are too dependent on the teacher.

In the Chinese working environment, it is a standard practice to take naps in the middle of the day. School, class, and working hours are longer and continue late into the evening, resulting in two-hour lunch breaks where children and adults are encouraged to nap. However, learners are overworked and frequently fall asleep during lessons.

Lack of teaching experience

Participants 3 and 5 found their lack of teaching experience when moving to China challenging.

Participant 5: Initially coming over to China and teaching, I've never taught before my life and stepping into a classroom and there are 12 kids looking at you.

Participant 3: I think, ... probably the biggest limitation and it's you know, I've initially when I started teaching; I had a lot of limitations. I was new at it. I persisted. I pushed through a time, you know, they say they say the best teachers or the best learners.

Foreigners do not need teaching qualifications when they teach in China. For visa purposes, a bachelor's degree is required but does not need to be specifically in education, resulting in many expats struggling to adapt.

Language barriers

Three respondents stated that they found the language barriers challenging. In training centres, public schools, and international schools, the learners rather speak in their native language than in the target language.

Participant 10: *Yes. Learners speak more of their native language than English.*

The teachers do not understand Chinese, proving EFL teaching to be challenging. Another limitation is that learners in training centres only have classes twice a week, which is insufficient for effective language learning.

Participant 4: *Also, with the training centre, because you only see them twice a week. They're not used to your English the whole time. So, when you can come into the class, they don't always understand what you said.*

Rigid curriculum structure

Three respondents stated that the curriculum structures are too rigid.

Participant 2: *When your content is all already made for you, your limitations are kind of set by that content, and you can't really explore other avenues.*

Their schools' curricula are tightly defined and heavily standardised, offering little opportunity for creative outlets.

Participant 9: *The school's rigid policies of how a class should be taught, along with the lack of resources to fulfil the requirements of the lesson.*

In parallel, participant 3 elaborates on how the national objectives hinder the international curriculum.

Participant 3: *I think the greatest limitation is. When you teach an international curriculum where you know what the requirements are for an international curriculum, critical thinking and so on. But at the same time, you fall under Chinese management. We are in China. They are Chinese schools, whether they international schools. And sometimes there's a lot of influence from the Chinese education in how things should be done. So, I think, I think there's a limitation.*

Although many schools advertise offering a hybrid curriculum fusing Western and Chinese approaches, the international is still embedded in the national. Chinese politics and history are compulsory subjects for Chinese learners at international schools.

4.3.8.2 Sub-theme 8.2: No limitations

Two respondents stated that they experience no limitations in their teaching.

4.3.9 Theme 9: The impact of Covid-19 on teaching in China and how the teachers adapted

The Covid-19 pandemic severely affected education in China. To aid this study, I investigated how the pandemic impacted South African teachers in China and how they adapted.

4.3.9.1 Sub-theme 9.1: Impact

Five participants responded that the Covid-19 pandemic had an immense impact on Chinese education. The pandemic and current regulations in China caused the closure of most training centres. Furthermore, four interviewees stated that their schools changed to online learning at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, whereas one respondent said that her school closed and she went months without payment.

4.3.9.2 Sub-theme 9.2: How the teachers adapted

China's Covid-19 policies are different than other countries. China has a zero-Covid policy, meaning that schools immediately close and resort to online learning if there is one positive case in a city of millions. Most Chinese schools have policies to facilitate off-campus teaching and learning. Training centres quickly developed excellent online teaching tools at the beginning of the pandemic and before closing learning centres. Respondent 3 stated that the online teaching platform was more interactive than in-person classes.

Participant 3: As a teacher, you have to come up with dynamic ways to teach online. There are so many platforms, there are so many tools that you can use. You've got videos, you've got access to all of this. You can get learners to share their screen, interact to give presentations, but it's just that that effectiveness of the class because there are other things distracting them.

However, three respondents commented that it was challenging to effectively engage their learners online because they were easily distracted at home.

Participant 4: *So, you still needed to make the class a little bit more interesting that you would have in class. You had to create a little bit more visual stuff, like a little bit more piece with pictures, more videos, more sound. You, as the teacher, were not enough anymore. You needed a lot of more additional things to create a what do you say? Atmosphere. Get their attention.*

Online learning influenced teaching effectiveness, and parents were unhappy with the outcome, as corroborated by participant 8, who observed the following.

Participant 8: *As a teacher you always need to be ready be adapt a lesson. Collaborating with teachers to share ideas and that was one thing that worked for me during online teaching sharing ideas with my colleagues.*

The participants adapted using various teaching tools, platforms, and implementing activities to keep learners engaged.

4.3.9.3 Sub-theme 9.3: Limitation to online teaching

Three respondents experience limitations in online teaching. One respondent reported that Chinese learners are addicted to their mobile phones and, when not regulated, it steals their attention during online classes. Additionally, three respondents stated that teaching a foreign language online is challenging because it is difficult to be animated and fun online. Moreover, two respondents said that using drama techniques or activities was even more challenging because learners are not engaged, and performances are poor compared to how they would have been in person. Lastly, Chinese learners are shy and frequently switch off their cameras.

Participant 4: *The kids hide behind the screen as well. And while in class they were there, you saw them. They can't hide while on screen. They physically hide. So put their finger over the camera or a book or a pencil or whatever.*

It is challenging to teach a foreign language when you cannot see the learners' faces. Learners mute themselves, switch off their cameras, and rather message on the online class's chat function, regardless of school rules or policies, inhibiting team activities.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter presents the analysed data based on sub-textual responses to and perceptions of using drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL in China. The information was collected through semi-structured interviews and open-response questionnaires and analysed through thematic content analysis. The findings revealed the participants' perceptions of using drama as a pedagogical tool in the foreign language classroom, which were informed and influenced by various subjective individual and shared experiences. In Chapter 5, I discuss the relevance of these themes and sub-themes through the lenses of the literature review, the theoretical framework, and the research questions underpinning this study.

CHAPTER 5 EVALUATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This study explores how drama can be integrated into teaching EFL in Mainland China from a South African perspective. In this chapter, I discuss the study's findings (presented in Chapter 4) under the different themes that emerged from the collected data and the analysis of the relevant semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The results are contextualised, incorporating the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework analysed in Chapter 2 into the discussion.

5.2 South African teachers' reasons for migrating, perspectives, and experiences of teaching EFL in Mainland China

Based on the participants' responses, skilled South Africans choose to migrate to China primarily for reasons defined and explained as follows.

5.2.1 *Financial gain*

The declining economic status of the teaching profession in South Africa significantly influenced the exodus of South African teachers from their country (Manik et al., 2006). This study's findings revealed that most teachers cite better financial rewards as the primary reason for migrating. Due to inadequate pay and working conditions, SA has been unable to stop professional educators from leaving the country, and many participants expressed their frustration because their salaries in SA are too low. According to the salary database PayScale, teachers in SA earn approximately R16 000 to R17 700 a month, depending on their subject, experience, location, and qualifications (Writer, 2022). Statistics indicate that South Africans working in China earn almost 50% more than at home. According to BusinessTech by Global Teacher Recruitment, South African teachers earn approximately between R30 000 and R45 000 a month, depending on their location and specialist subject (Writer, 2019). Due to the significant wage differences between China and SA, the respondents affirmed that they use the money to pay off debt and save for the future.

5.2.2 *Better teaching and learning environment*

South African teachers migrate due to poor job satisfaction in SA and better teaching environments abroad. All respondents who taught in SA mentioned that the teaching

environment was mundane, and they were overworked and underpaid. Poor working conditions and job security cause SA to lose valuable teachers. The participants cited that they are given too much grading, classes, assessments, and extracurricular activities in SA, and their working conditions have improved since working in China. The respondents mentioned that their work hours in China are manageable compared with SA, where their working hours are too long, strenuous, and overwhelming. The data coincide with my initial literature review. Verster (2018) states that large class numbers, heavy workloads, a lack of professional advancement, an inefficient curriculum, student discipline, and poor school leadership and management contribute to teachers' dissatisfaction. Furthermore, some participants initially moved to China because it is a safe country in which to live and work. This study's results show that South African teachers abroad will only return to SA if the working conditions improve.

5.2.3 Employment opportunities

This study confirms that South Africans move to China for better employment opportunities. Foreigners in China do not necessarily need a teaching degree because a bachelor's degree is sufficient to teach EFL. Consequently, before relocating to China, only half of the respondents worked as teachers in SA, and their academic specialities included English, the Arts and Humanities, and Economics. Outside of SA and China, two participants have been teaching in other countries. Acting, promotions, marketing, and retail management are the other professions that three respondents had previously pursued. All participants have degrees, a prerequisite for teaching in Mainland China. The respondents who were teachers in SA struggled to find teaching jobs in their home country, and they listed that China has more teaching vacancies and professional development opportunities for educators. Some respondents have furthered their studies while working as teachers in China due to better time management and financial benefits.

5.2.4 Adventure, travel, and learning about other cultures

The respondents moved to China for adventure, travel, and learning about other cultures. They wanted to experience a new country with different outlooks and customs to enrich their teaching experiences. Nevertheless, all participants experienced a culture shock when initially moving to China and revealed positive and negative views. Different sights, languages, mannerisms, gestures, smells, and food contributed to their initial culture shock. Other cultural differences between SA and China include communication barriers, population density, air

pollution, traffic, squat toilets, and mannerisms, such as spitting, burping, and smoking (How to Deal with Culture Shock in China, 2021). Participants travel using China's comprehensive and affordable transportation network of airports, trains, subways, high-speed trains, and ride-hailing apps. Some participants found it hard to adapt, whereas others found it exciting and felt a sense of accomplishment when figuring out how to achieve menial tasks. However, after their initial encounter with what they deem unfamiliar and strange, they acknowledged the cultural differences, understood them, and could navigate their way around.

5.3 Teaching EFL in Mainland China

5.3.1 Challenges in the classroom

To reach this study's aim, I had to identify the challenges South African teachers face in EFL classrooms in China. Understanding their challenges, the problems of adapting to different sociocultural environments and analysing their improvised solutions have supported the investigation as to *why* EFL teachers could be professionally better equipped if they were introduced to the pedagogical role of drama in the Chinese traditional educational system.

5.3.2 Cultural differences in the classroom

This study's results indicate various cultural differences between South African and Chinese learners. According to the participants, their learners are shy and show respect to their teachers differently than expected. Chinese learners' social behaviour, etiquette, and mannerisms are fundamentally different to the South African yet multifaceted custom protocol. This observation proves challenging for new foreign teachers because Chinese learners do not question a teacher or speak up in class. Learners obey most of the teachers' instructions and do not dispute the teachers' class materials because, in the Chinese sociocultural context, this is how learners show respect to their teachers. From their viewpoint (cultural and educational), the respondents find it hard to identify whether their learners have questions or understand the language lessons and find it challenging to pedagogically and socially maintain proper communication.

Another essential sociocultural concept is about saving face. You must read between the lines when interacting with your learners as a foreign teacher. In Chinese culture, saving face refers to a cultural understanding of retaining respect and social standing in terms of prevailing and enduring. To save face means demonstrating respect by giving gifts, awards, and other good-

offering actions. As an antonym, to lose face refers to disrespectful actions or words (Saving Face in China, 2010).

5.3.3 Differences between Eastern and Western learning styles

Crucially, respondents cited differences between learners' learning styles in China and SA. The EFL classroom in China focuses on memorisation and assessments, and the participants described the Chinese education system as rigid and driven by memorisation learning. Learners struggle to understand the context and can recall vocabulary but perform poorly in comprehension.

5.3.4 Lack of differentiated instruction

Based on the findings, China's education system lacks differentiated learning strategies in the classroom. Some participants noted that the EFL curriculum, resources, and teaching materials do not cater for their learners' diverse needs. Differentiated instruction emphasises learners' differences and how teachers can adapt various teaching tactics and assessment criteria to cater for learners' individual needs (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Furthermore, some participants noted that China's learners with special needs or learning disabilities do not receive the proper support they need. Chinese education is firmly based on Confucian beliefs where distinctions among learners in the social context of school classes are ignored. Additionally, due to urbanisation, the class sizes in urban areas have increased, and teachers struggle to accommodate the vast needs of their learners (Bi, Struyven, & Zhu, 2021).

5.3.5 Competitiveness in the Chinese education system

China has one of the largest populations globally, leading to competitiveness at schools, universities, and the labour market. Critically, the respondents raised concerns about the competitiveness in their classrooms and the Chinese education system in general. This competitive market severely pressures students to succeed and causes many Chinese learners to become disillusioned or burned out. Participant 9 stated that learners' academics dictate their lives, and they receive immense pressure from their families to succeed. Furthermore, one participant noted that his learners receive an average of five to six hours of homework daily because learners are burdened with strenuous school hours and extra classes that run late into the evening.

China's current youth are referred to as the involuted generation, a social concept where population growth has no positive impact on innovation or production (Wang & Wang, 2021). Involution negatively impacts China's competitive education system because learners are increasingly overworked, standardising what is deemed as good scores. Consequently, involution affects the Chinese national standardised tests (*Gaokao*), which recalibrates itself by becoming increasingly challenging each year. This social phenomenon has also influenced the Chinese labour market (Teng, 2021).

5.3.6 Family structure and parents of Chinese learners

Chinese families are smaller, with most families only having one child due to China's longstanding one-child policy. In the 1980s, the Chinese government viewed the country's population as increasing too rapidly. The one-child policy was implemented to decrease the country's population growth, and families were restricted to having a single child. This policy proved effective as China's population decreased. However, it had negative consequences. China's gender ratio comprises more males than females and a wide generation gap with a large elderly population (Fletcher, n.d.). In 2021, China changed its one-child policy, encouraging families to have up to three children. However, due to the exorbitant cost of education and living, families are hesitant to have more than one child. Similarly, some respondents mentioned that most of their learners do not have siblings. Chinese children are expected to care for their parents when their parents retire.

Teaching is regarded as a highly respected profession in China. According to participants' views, their learners' parents are more appreciative towards teachers than parents of learners in SA. In China, parents place more responsibility and blame on their children than the teacher. Moreover, Chinese parents place too much pressure on their children's academic achievements. Parents in China are actively involved in their children's education by extensively supervising home learning, frequently communicating with schools and teachers and investing in expensive after-school programmes (Zou, Anderson, & Tsey, 2013). It has also been noted that Chinese parents do not support Western teaching approaches. These parents prefer traditional teaching tactics where their children learn through reciting the relevant vocabulary and memorising class materials.

5.3.7 Learners' discipline and behaviour

Regarding learners' discipline and behaviour in China, the respondents had positive views, and

some cited that learners are more well-behaved, better disciplined, and express more respect towards teachers than learners in SA. Furthermore, taking naps during lunchtime in the Chinese working environment is standard. On average, lunch breaks in China are two hours long, and children and adults are encouraged to nap. School and working hours are longer because they last late into the evening. Although learners have time during lunch to nap due to the academic pressure put on them, it is not unusual to fall asleep during class.

5.3.8 *Language barriers*

All participants reported they had no experience speaking Mandarin before moving to China and found the language barrier challenging. Many people do not speak English in Mainland China, even in Tier-1 or Tier-2 cities, and most foreign teachers must rely heavily on translation apps. The participants adapted by learning basic Chinese phrases and attending extra language classes. In the foreign language classroom, learners rather speak in their native language than in the target language, which is frustrating for the teachers as they do not understand Mandarin and can hinder the success of learning in the classroom. Additionally, it causes low language proficiency among the learners.

5.3.9 *Teaching resources and materials*

Some participants noted that teaching materials were abundant in China due to parents paying high fees for foreign language classes and the participants being hired by top-tier schools. They view their schools equipped with larger expenditure budgets, more teaching props and resources, and better state-of-the-art classrooms. China's technology is more advanced than SA's, and classrooms are equipped with smart boards, laptops or tablets for learners and cameras for parents to live stream the class's teaching/learning activities.

5.3.10 *Rigid curriculum structure*

China has implemented a highly centralised administrative curriculum system, and the government strictly controls curriculum implementation and reforms. Schools and teachers maintain national classroom standards, inhibiting schools and teachers from changing the curriculum (Cui, Lei, & Zhou, 2018). The participants consider the curriculum structures in their schools as being too rigid. The Chinese national curriculum is heavily standardised and imposes traditional teaching approaches, and national objectives hinder the participants' schools. According to interviewees, there is a strong need to consider differentiation in the

curriculum.

5.3.11 Speaking about sensitive or controversial topics in the classroom

In China, foreign teachers are contractually prohibited from speaking about sensitive or controversial topics in the classroom. The participants viewed this as professionally defying and challenging. Some taboo topics include geography, politics, and religion. Some respondents stated that local authorities frequently search schools, curricula, textbooks, and teaching resources during random inspections.

5.3.12 Rapid changing policies

The participants viewed the rapidly changing policies in China as a limitation. Recent reforms include the zero-Covid policy, changing the one-child policy, and suspending for-profit tutoring. Many participants have lost their jobs at training centres and had to change schools. Additionally, China's Covid-19 epidemic control measures are strict and negatively affect schools and the economy. China's zero-Covid policy requires citizens to be vaccinated, receive frequent mandatory covid tests, and scan HealthKits before entering any establishment. Schools immediately close and resort to online learning if there is a cluster outbreak. Most schools in China have policies to facilitate off-campus teaching and learning, and some participants noted that they went months without receiving a salary.

The schools and teachers have adapted their teaching approaches to facilitate hybrid learning, and schools use online teaching tools; however, this has limitations, as noted by the participants. It is challenging engaging learners during online classes because they are easily distracted. Most participants' schools have a no-cell phone policy, and when learners are learning from home, it is hard to monitor their mobile phone usage during class. Some participants mentioned that teaching a foreign language is challenging when you cannot see the learners' faces. Regardless of the school's regulations or practices, students mute themselves, turn off their cameras, and communicate via the online classes' chat feature. Moreover, language barriers between teachers and learners negatively affect the effectiveness of online foreign language teaching. The teachers try to solve the problem by making the lessons as interactive and engaging as possible, but learners are not responding, and performances are poor compared to face-to-face teaching and learning. Drama and group activities are challenging to implement, and teachers must work even harder to facilitate effective communication with parents.

5.4 Eastern versus Western EFL teaching approaches: a South African perspective

This study investigated the differences between Eastern and Western EFL teaching and learning approaches from a comparative viewpoint. The Eastern learning approaches (researched in my initial literature review) are based on traditional teaching methods: the grammar-based traditional approach, audio-visual (which replaced the former audiolingual system), the direct approach based on using a foreign language, and most recently, the communicative approach (Yule, 1985). This study investigated the teaching methods used by South African teachers in China and found that their teaching approaches differ from the traditional teaching approaches in the literature review. In the context of this research, I have identified three primary teaching approaches used by South African teachers in China.

5.4.1 Differentiated instruction

Learners in the foreign language classroom have different learning styles and English-speaking abilities, a common phenomenon experienced in most instruction subjects. However, in the case of a foreign language teaching and learning interaction due to its direct communicative nature, its occurrence imposes a severe problem that demands the responsible teacher's professional ingenuity. This study's respondents offered differentiated learning instructions to their learners, where they function as facilitators who find the best methods and strategies to assist their learners throughout their learning process, depending on their empirical knowledge (Bahous et al., 2011). Offering differentiated instruction to learners is a positive way to respond to students' differences (Tomlinson, 2017).

The lack of formal differentiated teaching and learning approaches in the EFL classroom in China is a challenge South African teachers face. The participants offered differentiated instruction in their classrooms by tailoring lessons to meet their learners' individual needs, and the participants' views harmonised with the available literature. Suwastini and Rinawati (2021) state that implementing differentiated instruction improves students' vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, speaking ability, and listening comprehension. The participants differentiate their teaching by continuously assessing their learners and incorporating group activities.

Next, the participants suggested incorporating creative and colourful teaching materials into the classroom. Examples include mind maps, flashcards, worksheets, PowerPoints, and video materials. One participant proposed using the TPR method. TPR defines a teaching method

using verbal communication and physical body movements. The TPR process mimics how infants learn a language, reduces learners' inhibitions, and lowers stress (The Teacher Toolkit, 2022). It assists in remembering the target language and connects language with gestures. Consequently, in sociocultural studies, it is theorised that signs and symbols mediate human activity. Similarly, Lantolf (1994, p. 418) cites, "higher forms of human mental activity are mediated by symbolic means" (as cited in Mahn, 2012). Learners can use their physical bodies to assist in their learning by having learners spell out vocabulary words using gestures, clapping when pronouncing a word, or forming sequences in groups using body movements. A strategy used by some participants to differentiate instructions is moving around while teaching. Besides walking around the classroom, the teacher can change the order of the learners' desks or adjust their standing level. Furthermore, a teacher can use different facial expressions, gestures, and tones in their voice to pique learners' interest.

5.4.2 *CLT*

The findings reveal that some respondents use the CLT approach, which focuses on using only the target language in the foreign language class. Similarly, in line with the initial literature review, the research indicated that CLT is popular in China (Liao, 2004). China has been implementing the CLT system to keep up with the developments in English teaching methods because it is considered by many as a counterreaction to the audiolingual method. This result underlines the similarity of the objectives, namely, to develop functional communicative competence among learners. The primary differences are evident in the CLT methodology because it centres around learners' participatory experience through meaningful communicative interactions and situations. In contrast to the traditional audiolingual method teaching approach, the CLT approach replaces the learning of scripted dialogues with games, problem-solving tasks, and unscripted role plays (Dörnyei, 2009). Similarly, Richards and Rogers (2001, p. 162) cite, "In CLT, learners are responsible to cooperatively create an environment in which subconscious learning is enhanced through real communication and interaction."

The participants indicated that the CLT method is best used to develop learners' emotional and social skills, which, they believe, can lead to successful outcomes in EFL learning. They emphasise group activities and aim to cultivate creativity in the EFL classroom by focusing on problem-solving and out-of-the-box thinking. Some respondents teach using the acronym PPP, which stands for Present, Practice, Produce, and coincides with the CLT method.

Consequently, from the results of this study's literature reviews and the data analysis findings, drama is beneficial in language teaching and learning.

5.4.3 *Constructivist approach (student-centred learning)*

Most participants cited their teaching approach as aiming to be student-centred. A “shift in classroom culture from a teacher-directed to a more interaction-based pedagogy” is needed (Behroozizad et al, 2014). The sociocultural component, the ZPD, supports the student-centred approach where the teacher hands over the responsibility to the learner (Storch, 2017). The participants mentioned that students actively participate in the decision-making process regarding lesson plans and activities. To provide learners with quality learning opportunities and a personalised teaching approach, learning their names, interests, and needs is vital. The constructivist method (the student-centred approach) connects learners with prior knowledge. Additionally, some participants described their student-centred class environment as collaborative, flexible, and engaging. The constructivist instructional methodology contradicts the traditional approach. The grammar-based and direct approaches are examples of traditional teaching approaches, involving direct instruction and little room for student-initiated questions, independent thoughts, or interactions. However, constructivist learning encourages teamwork, student collaboration, student engagement, and more enthusiasm and interest in the subject matter (Khalid & Azeem, 2021).

Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories were both considered in this study's literature review. This study focuses on the sociocultural theory as the theoretical framework because Vygotsky's theory focuses on the importance of social interactions, whereas Piaget's theory emphasises self-initiated discovery. Based on sociocultural theory, a teacher-student dialogue can be a strong means for developing reasoning and enhancing academic performance. Furthermore, learner participation and educational outcomes improve when teachers use interactional strategies in the classroom (Mercer & Howe, 2012).

The findings show that the participants are unsure how to effectively implement differentiated instruction and student-centred teaching and learning in their EFL classes. Therefore, a drama-based pedagogy is proposed to enhance the established methods creatively and successfully, not as an alternative to the traditional approaches in EFL classrooms in China. The two approaches should not oppose one another but meet and support each other's role constructively through a well-balanced integration where action, in our case drama, would

precede linguistic and structural rules, such as grammar, syntax, and spelling. Therefore, this study has effectively investigated *why* South African teachers of English in China could be professionally better equipped if they were introduced to the pedagogical role of drama in the Chinese cultural context.

5.5 Integrating a drama-based pedagogy

5.5.1 Language learning through a drama pedagogical scope

This study's theoretical underpinning is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory because it emphasises the value of social and collaborative learning. Moreover, the sociocultural theory argues that "the development of meaning is a process shaped by its relationship with other psychological functions" and that "the structure of meaning is determined by the systemic structure of consciousness" (1997a, p. 137). Krashen (1980) discusses variables relating to success in second-language acquisition: motivation, self-confidence, and lack of anxiety. Similarly, according to Duff (2015), language teachers should develop methods that remove the subconscious barriers that might cause self-consciousness and poor learning performance.

Eastern and Western language teaching and learning approaches differ because EFL classes in China apply traditional methods of language teaching, which do not allow learners to develop motivated interest, individual initiative, linguistic self-confidence, and spontaneity. Social factors such as cultural differences, shyness, and the dominant sociocultural concept, saving face, can inhibit language learning. In contrast to rigid language instruction structures, drama is a communicative instruction method that supports the acquisition of meaningful language. Since learners can participate spontaneously in oral communication and freely express themselves, they are given free rein to their thoughts and feelings to be expressed in verbal and nonverbal interaction, subconsciously learning the foreign language. Through drama, learners' affective filters are lowered, and they overcome the temptation to monitor their language output, thus engaging and subconsciously learning (Duff, 2015). Gill (2017, p. 45) states that "theatre helps generate a greater output of authentic language through interactive, hands-on activities that are of greater relevance to learners, with the teacher as a guide and an observer rather than a controller". Based on the above discussion, applying a drama-based pedagogy in the foreign language class can narrow the distance between the formal learning of the English language and the natural acquisition of foreign language skills.

5.5.2 Subconscious learning EFL through drama in China

Based on this study's literature review and findings, drama is essential in developing the unconscious use of a foreign language because it is contextualised in the learning process. Fregger (2002) elaborates on subconscious learning, stating that the subconscious is responsible for all we perceive. Inspiration, insight, and realisation all stem from our subconscious (as cited in Rezaee & Farahian, 2015). Language learning occurs naturally because learners are placed in real-life contexts. Learners communicate in the target language and are provided with authentic settings for natural language to be used in real-life situations. Drama activities in EFL classrooms improve learners' self-confidence, use of language, and vocabulary. In this context, drama is beneficial in developing oral aptitude in communication.

5.5.3 Fostering expression

Using drama as a teaching tool can help learners in the foreign language classroom. Drama fosters imagination and emotional intelligence and can assist learners in expressing themselves and improve self-confidence, grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1987), which maintains that "learning takes place less consciously when learners are reading or adding a certain characterisation to a piece of drama". By incorporating drama activities, shy learners' embarrassment and inhibitions can be reduced (Alasmari & Alshae'el, 2020) because these activities foster expression by encouraging learners to engage with their peers and perform in front of an audience, pretending to be a different person. Through this process, learners adopt unfamiliar expressions and apply distancing techniques to obliterate any self-conscious intimidating linguistic interferences.

5.5.4 Active group participation

Engaging learners is crucial for achieving better language proficiency. As a creative counterpart to traditional language teaching, drama inspires active group engagement and motivates learners to move from the familiar to the unknown context through spontaneous expressive reactions. In response to the rigid curriculum structure of the Chinese education system, learners can be better motivated by incorporating drama activities in their traditionally approached lessons.

Through drama, learners unintentionally acquire essential language skills that steer their involvement and render the instruction student-centred (Alasmari & Alshae'el, 2020).

Additionally, Vygotsky asserted that play is “a source of development and creates the child’s ZPD” (Ugaste, 2005, p.22). As mentioned in the initial literature review, Vygotsky defines the importance of play as “Action in the imaginative sphere, in an imaginary situation, the creation of voluntary intentions and the formation of real- life plans and volitional motives – all appear in play” (1976, p. 552). Thus, a drama-based pedagogy fosters imaginative situations, engaging and motivating learners.

5.5.5 Promotes group work

By working in groups in the foreign language classroom, learners must interpret and respond to each other’s needs, creating a collaborative environment in line with sociocultural theory. Learners make a concerted, ongoing effort to find a solution or construct common knowledge. Through drama-based settings, a group can generate a joint commitment towards a shared goal based on reciprocity, mutuality, and the continual (re)negotiation of meaning (Mercer & Howe, 2012). Grounded in peer learning and collaboration, the ZPD is a crucial pedagogical sociocultural view, defined by Vygotsky (1978) as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”. Hence, if learners can learn actively in the company of a mentor, teacher, or peer, teachers can apply a drama-based pedagogy to expand their learners’ ZPD (Pathan, Memon, Memon, Khosa, & Bux, 2018).

5.5.6 Relieves academic pressure on learners

Drama techniques are proposed for the foreign language classroom as a valuable instructional tool to relieve learners of their academic pressure. The participants noted that their students are relaxed when drama activities are introduced in the EFL class. Based on the literature review, cultural beliefs and attitudes affect how learning occurs. In the foreign language classroom in China, Eastern and Western cultural and linguistic differences are evident. Vygotsky’s mediation theory correlates with using a drama-based pedagogy to bridge the gaps between these differences. Participation in socially mediated activities is crucial to the semiotic process of learning and language acquisition. Learners’ concentrations are improved, their stress levels decrease, and they are more engaged in a fun and relaxing atmosphere.

5.6 Limitations of using drama in teaching EFL in China

The participants noted that the constraints preventing integrating drama are caused by cultural differences, learners' lack of participation, apprehension of indiscipline, not applying to all subject areas, and instruction is time-consuming.

- Cultural differences between Chinese learners and foreign teachers hinder learners' involvement in drama activities. Subject to strict behaviour norms, Chinese learners are reserved, and drama pushes them out of their conventionally and socially correct status quo.
- A few learners in the foreign language classroom do not want to participate in drama activities. Learners do not have experience in drama or performing in the classroom, hindering them. Next, learners feel that their language abilities are inadequate or do not understand the instructions regarding what is expected of them. Moreover, older learners do not want to participate because they feel shy or embarrassed.
- Drama is a collaborative art form and relies heavily on interactive social situations in the classroom. From a teacher's viewpoint, it might frequently lead to learners' attention being distracted and not focused on the instructions. Learners become over-excited, which could lead to high-energy levels and a lack of focus. The learning objective can become lost because learners focus more on the performance than on the given instructions.
- As a teaching aid, drama cannot be applied to all subject areas because it is only effective when it relates to a specific subject matter. However, schools are trying to incorporate it into all schemes of work, which confuses the learners. Moreover, the participants mention that they do not have the knowledge or skills to explore drama as a learning resource across subjects.
- Incorporating drama into language lessons is also time-consuming. Due to language barriers, setting up drama activities can be tedious. For drama activities to be correctly implemented, teachers must be experienced. Structuring a drama-based lesson is challenging because learners become over-excited, influencing the learning effectiveness.

5.7 Conclusions

One of the primary aims of this study was to identify and assess practical procedural strategies

used in the EFL classroom. Despite the positive aspect of the findings adding supportively to the existing literature about drama activities to be used in the foreign language classroom, this study brought significant, reality-associated limitations. Some participants stated that they are experienced in incorporating drama as a pedagogical tool in their EFL classrooms. However, many respondents mentioned incorporating drama-related activities but not as a teaching method. Furthermore, the participants who stated they are experienced cannot differentiate between a drama-based pedagogy and drama activities.

The participants mentioned using warm-up games at the beginning of their lessons. They incorporate games such as quizzes, crossword puzzles, musical chairs, and board games. These activities create a meaningful context for language use and use different materials to engage learners, such as dice, buzzers, or balls. Based on the initial literature review and data analysis, more research should be conducted on which drama activities can be incorporated into the foreign language classroom. Furthermore, teachers can be better equipped by being introduced to the pedagogical role of drama in a Chinese cultural context. Drama as a teaching tool and activities can be incorporated into traditional instructional methods to supplement language teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study investigated the effectiveness of using drama as an additional tool to traditional foreign language teaching and learning instructional methods. This chapter discusses the study's implications and limitations experienced throughout the research process. Furthermore, recommendations are outlined for future studies.

6.2 Implications of this study

This study analysed the integration of drama with traditional approaches for developing a stronger pedagogical tool for teaching EFL in China. The findings support previous scholars' claims that drama promotes effective learning in foreign language classrooms. This study provides skilled South African teachers professionally with a better understanding of the realities facing teaching another language to learners of a different sociocultural identity. Furthermore, this research identified shortcomings regarding teachers' employment circumstances in SA and specialised training through proper orientation and contextualisation of teaching EFL in Mainland China. Interviews have substantiated the findings and conclusions. Based on the findings, the study indicated that the participants maintain positive perceptions towards integrating drama into foreign language classrooms. This study aims to enhance traditional pedagogy by successfully implementing additional pedagogical approaches. Successful integration can only be achieved if the participants hold positive attitudes and views towards a drama-based pedagogy. Hereby, integration strategies and actions to improve existing approaches are duly recommended. Therefore, I have examined the research phenomenon through direct observation as the researcher and the research participants were placed in the sociocultural environment of the focused country.

Proposed implementation strategies include comprehensive professional development courses, workshops, a textbook, and websites for South African teachers choosing to work or currently working in Mainland China. The textbook can include teaching strategies and drama activities for the foreign language classroom. These resources could assist current and future expatriates in China in integrating fundamental, specialised, and empirical knowledge with innovative instruction tools, such as a drama-based approach. Implementing such a programme will confirm the EFL teachers' professionalism and campaign globally in favour of the South

African strong educational system. Furthermore, these resources can apply to non-South African expatriates teaching second or foreign languages in China and other countries abroad.

The results demonstrated that a drama-based approach integrated with traditional approaches could develop the unconscious use of different language learning, an essential factor in turning learning into an acquiring process. This study also revealed that although teachers know the benefits of using drama as a teaching aid, their ability is low due to not being professionally equipped to effectively implement it as a potential linguistic aid. Furthermore, a methodological lesson was the impact of this research on some participants' perceptions of using drama as a teaching aid. In further discussions, some participants reflected on their current practices.

This study revealed the need to shift from teacher-centred to student-centred teaching. Drama inclusion in the teachers' training programmes can be most resourceful to professional development. Moreover, these programmes can approach differentiated instruction and assessment discretely and productively through drama. Through social and interactive drama activities, a greater familiarity with the target language is generated for foreign language learners. Consequently, along with the learners' oral communication skills development, the spontaneous engagement with peers and active collective involvement in the learning process minimise peer intimidation. The benefits of drama and constructivist learning go hand in hand as both encourage teamwork, collaboration, engagement, and interest in the subject matter. Target language learners in the foreign language classroom can benefit from teachers as guides or facilitators rather than controllers. Nevertheless, there are limitations to a drama-based pedagogy. The participants view using drama activities in the EFL classroom as time-consuming and not applicable to all subject areas because it might hinder learning due to cultural differences. Moreover, support from Chinese schools was also noted as crucial in ensuring the successful integration of drama activities into foreign language classrooms.

This study assists educators in integrating innovative and pedagogically valid methods in their established teaching styles with confidence, helping learners acquire the required language skills. Moreover, this research could be considered a reference source and add value to the existing knowledge on integrating a drama pedagogy in teaching and learning EFL.

6.3 Recommendations

The recommendations are based on the research conducted and on my personal and empirical

knowledge of the subject matter, focusing on foreign language teaching and integrating drama pedagogy with existing traditional pedagogical approaches. I have outlined the following recommendations in line with this study's findings.

- Creating more awareness of the importance of incorporating drama pedagogy into the classroom for English language teachers is imperative.
- The effectiveness of implementation strategies, including workshops, training centres, websites, and textbooks, must be researched to identify ways of benefiting foreign language teachers in China and, hopefully, in other regions in Asia.
- Foreign language teachers in China who have been applying traditional approaches in their courses must enhance their pedagogical methodologies by incorporating drama-based activities.
- This study identified gaps in the research, indicating the need for relevant studies on the practical procedural drama strategies to apply in the foreign language classroom. Therefore, further research should be conducted to ascertain the relevance and effectiveness of drama through games and activities in language learning, exposing areas that need amendments to bring the knowledge of foreign language teachers in line with the current pedagogy for its successful implementation.
- Future research is essential to determine how differentiated assessment can be used in the foreign language classroom as an alternative assessment that can accommodate student-centred learning.
- There is a need to continue the search for approaches that will guide the fusion of traditional and innovative methods of teaching EFL.
- Consequently, frequent reviews of course content and curricula require an ongoing process efficiently executed by a collaborative effort of specialists.

6.4 Limitations

Most objectives of this research have been accomplished. However, this study was challenged by limitations that influenced and impacted the research process. Since a qualitative approach guided the research, the limited number of South African participant teachers currently teaching in Mainland China cannot be a generalising factor. Consequently, the findings, conclusions, and suggestions might not apply to all South African teachers teaching EFL abroad.

Another limitation was caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which significantly affected the data collection process. Due to China's pandemic regulations, all schools remained closed for an extended period, and schooling reverted to online classes. Consequently, in-person interviews and observations were impossible since interviews had to be conducted online. Since China's borders were closed, there was a reduced number of available respondents. Furthermore, since the study's focal point was the perspectives of learners and teachers, due to the reluctance from the head of schools, the necessary permissions to observe and approach learners for crucial information were not obtained, resulting in adapting the data collection process to semi-structured interviews and questionnaires from solely teachers. Consequently, the findings might not be a complete qualitative representation of all learners' and teachers' views. Critically, the researcher found limited research available in the initial literature review. Notably, due to the lack of a suitable curriculum and established pedagogical tactics, the participants' responses demonstrated strong reliability on improvisation rather than established strategies or applicable examples. Conclusively, despite the lack of effective research on practical procedural drama strategies in the EFL classroom and the above limitations, this researched phenomenon could serve as a paradigm to contribute constructively to advancing drama integration in teaching and learning EFL abroad.

6.5 Summary of the study

Chapter One

Introducing the study, I unpack the topic and define the research purpose to explore *how* and *why* a drama pedagogy could be integrated into the EFL classroom in China. I explain that this study's motivation is to enhance traditional approaches pedagogically in teaching EFL in China for South African teachers. After a short overview of the theoretical framework based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, I presented the following research questions:

- How can a drama-based pedagogy be integrated into traditional teaching and learning to activate natural, spontaneous sources of learning among learners?
- What are South African teachers' perceptions of drama as a pedagogical tool for EFL in China, and why?

Chapter Two

To guide the study accordingly, I reviewed the literature and theories and defined the themes of my research focus as follows.

- Identifying differences between language learning and language acquisition and applied approaches in teaching and learning EFL
- Discussing linguistic and cultural problems of Chinese learners caused by fundamental differences between Eastern and Western language teaching and learning approaches
- Exploring the role of drama-based pedagogy in the EFL classroom and discussing the benefits of using drama as a teaching interacting tool in China
- Proposing practical procedural drama strategies to use in an EFL classroom and activities to narrow the distance between learning and acquiring a foreign language

Chapter Three

This chapter answered the primary research questions by elaborating on the chosen research design and methodology for the data selection and analysis. To investigate and respond to the research issues, I outlined the study's goals, the paradigm guiding my quest, data-gathering, and the setting or environment in which they were conducted. The study's methodology, which was addressed from a qualitative perspective, substantiated the data analysis. This chapter concludes with a discussion on the trustworthiness of the research, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

Chapter Four

This chapter comprises the findings presented under nine major themes:

- (1) South African teachers' reasons for and experiences of moving to China
- (2) South African teachers' teaching approach in China
- (3) Challenges of teaching EFL in China for South African teachers
- (4) Suggested techniques, strategies, and games to teach EFL
- (5) Teachers' perceptions of using drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL in China
- (6) Teachers' experiences of incorporating drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL
- (7) Advantages and disadvantages of using drama to teach EFL in China
- (8) South African teachers' experiences of limitations in teaching in China
- (9) The impact of Covid-19 on teaching in China and how the teachers adapted

Each theme had various sub-themes related to the study's research questions and theoretical framework.

Chapter Five

This chapter presented the data analysis findings and duly discussed them under the following themes and sub-themes.

- (1) South African teachers' perspectives and experiences of teaching EFL in Mainland China
 - (1.1.) South African teachers' reasons for migrating to China
 - (1.2.) Challenges in the foreign language classroom
- (2) Eastern versus Western language teaching approaches: a South African perspective
- (3) Integrating a drama-based pedagogy
 - (3.1.) Language learning through a drama pedagogical scope
 - (3.2.) The benefits of using drama to teach EFL in China
 - (3.3.) Limitations of using drama to teach EFL in China
 - (3.4.) Proposed drama techniques and strategies to integrate into the foreign language classroom

To contextualise the findings, the discussion incorporated the literature review and theoretical framework as presented in Chapter Two.

Chapter Six

In the concluding chapter, I provided an overview of the study, followed by a discussion of its implications and my suggestions for future studies and research. Lastly, after having elaborated on the limitations experienced and discussed their impact on my research, I concluded the study by providing a summary of each chapter.

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Appendix 1: Interview Protocol for Teachers



INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

Time of interview: _____ Duration: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____ Pseudonym: _____

Male / Female: _____

Type of School (International, Public or Training Centre):

Age of EFL students:

- The purpose of this study is to contribute to research on **Integrating drama in teaching English as a foreign language in China: A South African perspective**. Pseudonyms will be used in the interviews, data analysis and the findings. The data collected in this study will serve for research purposes only and be treated as confidential. Access to the data will be granted to the researcher and the supervisor only. Thank you for your participation.

Questions:

1. Why did you decide to come and teach EFL in Mainland China?
2. Please explain your teaching approach in your EFL classroom?
3. Have you ever experienced any challenges in your classroom due to culture differences? If yes, please explain.
4. What techniques, strategies or games do you use in your classroom to teach EFL?
5. What is your perception of using drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL in China? (For example, using drama skills or games, such as role play or improvisation, to teach).
6. Have you ever used drama to teach EFL in your class?
7. What do you think are the benefits of using drama to teach EFL in China?
8. What do you think are the disadvantages of using drama to EFL in China?
9. Are there any other thoughts that you would like to share on the topic?

Thank you

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for Teachers



Researcher Name: Engela Ackermann
Email address: pienk.kaktus@yahoo.com
Contact number: +86 130 310 82494
Supervisor: Dr. Raita Steyn
Email address: raita.steyn@up.ac.za
Contact number: +27 82 442 6190

Dear Responder

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire. The questions I would like you to answer are listed below. There are no right or wrong answers. The purpose of this study is to contribute to research on **Integrating drama in teaching English as a foreign language in China: A South African perspective**. Pseudonyms will be used in the interviews, data analysis and the findings. The data collected in this study will serve for research purposes only and be treated as confidential. Access to the data will be granted to the researcher and the supervisor only. Thank you for your participation.

Please complete the following information:

Date:
Name and surname
Signature:
Place: Beijing
Gender: Male
Age: 30
Name of School:
Type of School (International, Public, or Training Centre):
Subject you teach:
How many years you have taught this subject in China:
Age and grade of EFL students:
Amount of students in a classroom:

Please complete the following questions:

10. **Why did you decide to come and teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Mainland China?**
11. **Please describe your work or teaching experience before moving to China?**
12. **Please describe your initial experience of moving to China (both inside and outside the classroom)?**
13. **Please explain your teaching approach in your EFL classroom?**
14. **Have you ever experienced any challenges in your classroom due to culture differences? If yes, please explain.**
15. **What techniques, strategies, or games do you use in your classroom to teach EFL?**
16. **What is your perception of using drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL in China? (For example, using drama skills or games, such as role play or improvisation, to teach).**
17. **Have you ever used drama to teach EFL in your class?**
18. **What do you think are the benefits of using drama to teach EFL in China?**
19. **What do you think are the disadvantages of using drama to EFL in China?**
20. **Have you experienced any limitations in regards to your teaching? If yes, please explain.**
21. **What impact has Covid-19 had on your teaching and how did you adapt?**
22. **Are there any other thoughts that you would like to share on the topic?**

Thank you

Appendix 3: Teacher letter of consent



Researcher Name: Engela Ackermann
Email address: pienk.kaktus@yahoo.com
Contact number: +86 130 310 82494
Supervisor: Dr Raita Steyn
Email address: raita.steyn@up.ac.za
Contact number: +27 82 442 6190

Dear Teacher

I am Engela Ackermann, currently pursuing a Masters in Education at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study towards my Masters degree is **Integrating drama in teaching English as a foreign language in China: A South African perspective**. I am working under the supervision of Dr. Raita Steyn, from the Department of Education at the University of Pretoria.

The study aims to investigate whether drama can be pedagogically used as a tool in the EFL classroom and how it can assist learners to narrow down as much as possible the distance between the formal learning of the English language and the natural acquiring of the foreign language skills.

I kindly invite you to participate in this study. This study involves the use of a semi-structured interview and video observation. The interview will be conducted at your school of practice in a venue convenient to you and should not last longer than one hour. An audio recorder and video camera will be used to record the interview. The data collection procedure will be done outside your official working hours in order not to interfere with your regular duties. I will also make use of non-participant observation to observe the learners. For the sake of my comparative analysis, I will also document the learning aids, such as school-books and homework notebooks of the learners. I will receive both consent from your teaching institutions and the learners' parents. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to avoid the spread of the virus,

the interviews and observations might be done virtually. This will be discussed with you prior to the virtual meeting.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You can decide not to participate or have right at any time to withdraw from the study without any consequences or explanations to anyone. Any information that you reveal will be treated as strictly confidential. Anonymity will be guaranteed at all times. Your identity will be protected. Only my supervisor and I will know your real name, as a pseudonym will be used during data collection and analysis. Your school will not be identified either. The information you give will only be used for academic purposes. In my research report and any other academic communication, your pseudonym will be used and no additional identifying information will be given. Collected data will be in my possession or my supervisor's and will be locked up for safety and confidential purposes.

I also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

If you have any concerns regarding the data collection procedures, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me at the numbers given below, or via email. As a participant, you will have the opportunity to access and verify the recorded views and the transcriptions of your interview responses made if needed.

Kind regards

Miss Engela Ackermann

Email address: pienk.kaktus@yahoo.com

Contact number: +86 130 310 82494

Supervisor: Dr Raita Steyn

Email address: raita.steyn@up.ac.za

Contact number: +27 82 442 6190

Teachers' Consent Form

I _____ consent to respond to the interview guide by Miss Engela Ackermann for her study on **Integrating drama in teaching English as a foreign language in China: A South African perspective.**

I understand that:

- I have not been subjected to any form of coercion or inducement to gain consent to participate.
- Participation in this study is voluntary and out of my own free will.
- That I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the research project at any time.
- Confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed.
- Within transcribing and reporting the data confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed as recordings will be transcribed in a private setting or with the use of headphones and participants will be coded so that no names will be included in the transcriptions or the report. If direct quotes are used in the report, no identifying information will be included. All gathered data will be securely stored on a password-protected computer and will only be accessed by myself and my supervisor.
- We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for different research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.

TEACHERS' PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH
I, _____, hereby give permission to Miss Engela Ackermann to include me as a participant in his research on Integrating drama in teaching English as a foreign language in China: A South African perspective.
Signature: _____
Date: _____

Appendix 4: School Permission to Conduct Research



Researcher Name: Engela Ackermann
Email address: pienk.kaktus@yahoo.com
Contact number: +86 130 310 82494
Supervisor: Dr Raita Steyn
Email address: raita.steyn@up.ac.za
Contact number: +27 82 442 6190

Dear Principal/Headmaster

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at your educational institution. I am Engela Ackermann, currently pursuing a Masters in Education at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study towards my Masters degree is **Integrating drama in teaching English as a foreign language in China: A South African perspective**. I am working under the supervision of Dr. Raita Steyn, from the Department of Education at the University of Pretoria. The study aims to investigate whether drama can be pedagogically used as a tool in the EFL classroom and how it can assist learners to narrow down as much as possible the distance between the formal learning of the English language and the natural acquiring of the foreign language skills.

I hope that the school administration will allow me to recruit five (5) EFL teachers from the school to anonymously engage in a semi-structured interview and observation. This study involves the use of semi-structured interviews and video observation. I would also like to recruit learners from each class to anonymously engage in a non-participant observation. I will document the learner's learning aids, such as schoolbooks and homework notebooks. I will not engage directly with the learners. Teachers, parents, and learners will be given consent forms to be signed and returned to the primary researcher (please see the copies enclosed). The research process will take no longer than six (6) months and the research will be conducted from September 2021 to February 2022.

The data will solely be used for academic purposes, and all gathered information will be confidential. Your educational institution will not be identified either. In my research report and any other academic communication, pseudonyms will be used, and no additional identifying information will be given. Collected data will be in my possession or my supervisor's and will be locked up for safety and confidential purposes. The data will be used, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

If you have any concerns regarding the data collection procedures, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me at the numbers given below, or via email.

Kind regards,



Miss Engela Ackermann
Email address: pienk.kaktus@yahoo.com
Contact number: +86 130 310 82494



Supervisor: Dr Raita Steyn
raita.steyn@up.ac.za
+27 82 442 6190

Signatures

a.) I have fully explained to the Principal the nature and purpose of the procedures described above and the risks involved in the school's participation in the study. I have asked if he or she has any questions and I have answered them to the best of my ability.

Signature of Researcher

Date

b.) I have read/been read the information presented above and understand the purpose of the study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my schools' and students' participation is voluntary. I agree to allow Miss Engela Ackermann to conduct a research study at my educational institution.

Signature of Principal/Headmaster

Date

Appendix 5: Parent/guardian letter of consent



Researcher Name: Engela Ackermann

Email address: pienk.kaktus@yahoo.com

Contact number: +86 130 310 82494

Supervisor: Dr. Raita Steyn

Email address: raita.steyn@up.ac.za

Contact number: +27 82 442 6190

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is Engela Ackermann and I am currently enrolled to complete my Masters in Education at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study towards my Masters degree is **Integrating drama in teaching English as a foreign language in China: A South African perspective.** I am working under the supervision of Dr. Raita Steyn, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria.

The principal of your child's school has granted me permission to my research at this school. For my study, I need to peruse your child's EFL schoolbooks. I will not interview or directly engage with your child. I am hereby seeking your permission to have your child participate in the study which will involve non-participant observation of your child in the EFL class. The perusal will take place during the spring semester between September 2021 and February 2022.

The information obtained from this study will be treated in the strictest confidentiality possible, and it will be used for research purposes only. The research findings might be published in an accredited journal, but confidentiality and anonymity will be honoured. No reference will be made to any information that may convey any personal or identifiable information. Your child's name will not be revealed. I will make use of pseudonyms in this research. We also

would like to request your permission to use the data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

You are free to ask me any questions regarding this study at any time on +86 130 310 82494. Please note that his/her participation is voluntary and that he/she may withdraw from the study at any time. If you are willing to allow your child to participate in this study, please keep this letter as an indication of your consent. The anonymity of non-participant observation participants will be respected and their identity will not be revealed in any reports, the final thesis, research articles or papers. If you object to your child and his/her schoolbooks to be analysed then please fill out the reply slip below.

Kind regards



Miss Engela Ackermann

Email address: pienk.kaktus@yahoo.com

Contact number: +86 130 310 82494



Supervisor: Dr. Raita Steyn

Email address: raita.steyn@up.ac.za

Contact number: +27 82 442 6190

DECLARATION

If you do not wish your child to be observed then please fill out the reply slip below and return it to your child's teacher.

I, (name) _____, **object** to Engela Ackermann observing my child.

Name of the School: _____

Name of the Child: _____

Parent's name: _____

Signature of the Parent or Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 6: Learner assent for participating in a research study



Researcher Name: Engela Ackermann
Email address: pienk.kaktus@yahoo.com
Contact number: +86 130 310 82494
Supervisor: Dr Raita Steyn
Email address: raita.steyn@up.ac.za
Contact number: +27 82 442 6190

Project Title: Integrating drama in teaching English as a foreign language in China: A South African perspective

To be read to children under the age of 18 years

Why am I here?

Sometimes when we want to find out something, we ask people to join something called a project. In this project we want to learn more about you. Before we ask you to be part of this study, we want to tell you about it first.

My name is Engela Ackermann and I am currently enrolled to complete my Masters in Education at the University of Pretoria. My study focuses on using drama to teach English as a foreign language in China. I am working under the supervision of Dr. Raita Steyn, from the Department of Education at the University of Pretoria.

This study will give us a chance to see how we, together with your school and teachers, can help you learn English here at your school by using Drama. We also want to help you gain some skills in your learning here at school. We are asking you to be in this study because your parents/guardians have agreed that you can be part of our study.

What will happen to me?

If you want to be part of our study, you will allow us to observe your schoolbooks and

homework notebooks. You won't have to answer any questions or talk to anyone. The observation will be about your learning in the EFL classroom. However, we will not tell anyone your name.

Will the project hurt?

No, the project will not hurt. You will not have to answer any questions or participate in any activities. All of your work will be kept private. No one, not even someone in your family or your teachers will be told about your schoolwork.

Will the study help me?

We hope this study will help you in learning English, but we don't know if this will happen.

What if I have any questions?

You can ask any questions you have about the study. If you have questions later that you don't think of now you can phone Miss Engela Ackermann (researcher) at +86 130 310 82494 (telephone number).

Do my parents/guardians know about this project?

This study was explained to your parents/guardians, and they said you could be part of the study if you want to. You can talk this over with them before you decide if you want to be in the study or not.

Do I have to be in the project?

You do not have to be in this project. No one will be upset if you don't want to do this. If you don't want to be in the project, you just have to tell us. You can say yes no and if you change your mind later you don't have to be part of the project anymore. It's up to you.

Writing your name on this page means that you agree to be in the project and that you know what will happen to you in this study. If you decide to quit the project all you have to do is tell the person in charge.

Signature of Learner

Date

Signature of Student

Date

Appendix 7: Example of interview transcript

Interview Video (Participant 2).mp4

Engela: [00:00:00] Alright, I'm recording. I'm just going to read you something. So thank you for participating in this interview. The questions I would like you to answer are listed below. There are no right or wrong answers, and please be as truthful and as honest as you can. The purpose of the study is to contribute to research on drama as a pedagogical tool for South African teachers of English as a foreign language in China. It's a long title. I know your real name will not be used. Sure you are. Participant two So items will be used for the interview, data analysis and the findings. The data collected in the study will serve for research purposes only and be treated as confidential. Access to the data will be granted to the research and the supervisor only. If you would like to see a transcript of our meeting, you can also let me know and I can sing that to you. Thank you for your participation.

[00:00:54] Thank you.

Engela: [00:00:56] Okay. So my first question is because my my research study is also a little bit about the cultural why South African teachers are coming to China and also like the cultural experience coming here. So my first question is, why did you decide to come and teach English in mainland China?

[00:01:18] So on. When I was in well, when I was leaving high school, my my dad got a very important position abroad in Tanzania and we ended up uprooting our whole family and going through to Tanzania to kind of for his job. While there I saw my my sister attended international school and I got to see the teachers and meet the teachers. And I thought, well, this is quite something unique. This is and a lot of them told me that they move around every two years, two years here, two years there, and they they kind of yeah, they get to see the world and get paid for it and they get paid well. So that was my first experience to international schools and it really did light a fire under me. And in fact it took I was going to study something in communications and it changed my whole trajectory towards studying education. So I decided to touch education, study education for that purpose, to take it abroad, to start teaching anywhere really that would I'd get to see and would pay me. Well, I did study by like I said, f t phase English specifically actually. And I ended up working in South Africa for just over a year and a half as a teacher at Kure. And then I one night I just decided I

Appendix 8: Example of audio and video transcript

AUDIO AND VIDEO INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Date: 7 June 2022

Time of interview: 15:30 – 16:00

Duration of interview: 30 Minutes

Place: Beijing, China

Interviewer: Engela Ackermann

Supervisor: Dr Raita Steyn

Interviewee: xxxxxxxx

Pseudonym: Participant 1

Gender: Female

Age: xxx years

Name of School: xxxxxx xxxxxx xxxx

Example of interview questions and answers:

1. Why did you decide to come and teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Mainland China?

Yeah. And China. And we decided, okay, for another adventure, let's go. We didn't know much about China, so we thought, okay, let's go and find out what it's about. And here we are five years later.

2. Please describe your work or teaching experience before moving to China?

Okay. Well, let me just give you a little bit of a background about me. Although I'm from South Africa, I lived 18 years in Brazil. I left when I was about 22 years old with my husband and my daughter. We went there and we actually wanted to teach English. In Brazil. We stayed there. We were going to stay there for about two or three years, but we ended up staying 18 years. I loved it. I thought from literally. And it was kind of like a training center slash school and actor from age. What grade age for a up to about 90 years old. So, I really had all kinds of ages that I taught. And I just loved it. And then we went back to South Africa for a year and then the opportunity came. Yeah. And China. And we decided, okay, for another adventure, let's go. We didn't know much about China, so we thought, okay, let's go and find out what it's about. And here we are five years later.

3. Please explain your teaching approach in your EFL classroom?

So I have a very holistic kind of teaching approach. It's also because we have different kinds of levels. As a teacher, you have to be creative. No matter how many times you do your lesson plans, there's always something that comes up that you have to kind of do the spur of the moment. So when I say holistic, I just mean, you know, it's like I do like a comprehensive approach and I do. I kind of address everything in my class. It's not just about teaching. Because I feel if you teach a language, especially as a second language, you have to teach them not just English. Yes, your grammar code. You have to teach them about social skills. You have to teach them the emotional part that comes with it, especially in China. We know kids are not very emotional. They hide their feelings. So you kind of have to draw that out to them. So that's kind of my approach in my classroom that I have not just focusing on one specific thing, but kind of like attach a little bit of everything in the classroom.

4. Have you ever experienced any challenges in your classroom due to culture differences? If yes, please explain.

Yes, kind of. And no, it's kind of like how do you answer that question? Because we know there are certain things that's taboo to speak about in China. And you have to be very careful and very mindful what you say at all times. And that's basically the biggest challenge for me. You have to be very

mindful, especially with high school kids. You know, when you teach kindergarten, they're very different. From high school kids. They supersensitive. I mean, we've all been teenagers and. You just you just have to be very, very careful how you approach things, how you say things, and actually what you say as well. If that makes sense?

5. **What techniques, strategies, or games do you use in your classroom to teach EFL?**

Okay. So, I'm a very I'm a very strict teacher. But I'm also very fun teacher because I believe if kids have fun in the class, they learn more. If they are relaxed, they more open and learning and and taking in new things. So, I like to joke a lot in my class. I talk about someone will say something and I'm like, Oh, did you fart? Oh, my goodness, we don't fart in class, so I'm not even afraid to use that thing. And it's like, Oh, you smell and we kind of joke a lot. So, I like to use the joking approach with my kids, make them relaxed. Um, games. I like to play games with him. I do a lot of. What do you call those words? Search, which is not for the kids, the older kids. I do word search, I do crosswords, I do spin the wheel, which is kind of like a vocabulary game where I have different words in there and that would spin the wheel and that would give me have to give me a sentence, a full sentence explaining the meaning of the word. And sometimes I would do a timing and then I would put a time on. It. To, to, to see I would like count down if they take too long because sometimes they would wouldn't register and I would say I got five, four, three to bed and then I wouldn't laugh and I would just I would pick random kids and I could just get them all going and involved. And I also like to work on rewards systems. I'm a firm believer also, kind of we call. It. They call it reward, but it's more bribery in a way as well. So that's something else I use in my class. The kids really like it. Oh, if you do all your homework this week, then at the end of the week I'll bring you a chocolate. So the kids like and whoever brings me the most homework will get the biggest chocolate. If you can answer the most questions during class, the most part participant put oh my goodness. The kid who participates the most will get a candy at the end of class. So, I also do that a lot to draw them out, to try and interact a little bit more with each other. I do some board games. Where they design their own board sometimes depending on the theme we are teaching. I work a lot with videos. And then they have to have a worksheet and we watch videos and just and do different kinds of things on on the videos. So that's most of my teaching that I do.

6. **What is your perception of using drama as a pedagogical tool to teach EFL in China? (For example, using drama skills or games, such as role play or improvisation, to teach).**

I feel sorry. I feel it's extremely important, especially as a second language, no matter the age of the child, whether they're kindergarten, primary school or high school. Like I said, kids need to have fun when they learn. There's a time to be serious, but and they said time to have fun. And I feel the more fun you make it for them and more interactive using games, using different approaches, help the children to remember without them actually realizing that they remember. And I'm to be very honest, I was a kindergarten teacher before and also in China. And I used drama to be part of my teaching. And at the end of the semester, we actually did a drama Little Play with the children. So throughout that semester, we would have a specific curriculum, we would teach specific things, and then at the end we would kind of combine all of those things and have a little drama performance. And I loved doing it because whatever you learn, you put together at the end and the kids can express themselves and they can, can, can show what they have learned through drama. And I really, I love it. It's a great idea. Teaching using drama with a teaching approach.

7. Have you ever used drama to teach EFL in your class?

Yes. Yes. So I do it also on a daily basis, not just when I was in kindergarten. I also taught grade one and grade two where it was a lot of games. We really did a lot of games, board games, like I said. And unfortunately for us, kids in China are very competitive. So, these kinds of games make them want to win, make them want to learn, and it really helps. Sometimes my classes are crazy because the kids would jump up, they would scream, we would run around and do silly things and people would come knock on the door and say like, Hi, hello. Everything okay? Like, Yeah, cool. Just teaching. Sorry, sorry, guys. And we would have to calm down. The kids would laugh and then it's great. It's great fun. Okay.

8. What do you think are the benefits of using drama to teach EFL in China?

One to just. Ah, I feel like I said before, kids learn without them realizing that they are learning. When you teach it with a drama, environment, games, whatever it is, the kids relax. And when they relax, they learn more. Um. And I find it extremely beneficial for the kids because also it's very stressful learning today. Kids are under a lot of pressure and I feel you need to just give them that little bit of break, that breather. And by this kind of teaching, I feel it just helps them to breathe and to relax. Especially in China. I think it's very comfy. Yes. Yes. And now school is. It's extremely hard because the kids start at seven in the morning until 10:00 at night. Monday to Friday. And it's boarding school. And it's and it's very difficult. And I really feel sorry for these kids. There's no time for fun. There's no time for relaxation. There's no time for anything. And when they come to us, they

are always tired. And that's why I strive to make my classes as interesting and as fun as possible for them just so they can relax a little bit and have that breather.

9. What do you think are the disadvantages of using drama to EFL in China?

The disadvantage could be that not all kids, depending on your age group that you teach use in kindergarten. They would love it up to about maybe grade six. Then you can mod. Then it might start to be like. How could I say? When we are teenager, you kind of have this. Like they roll their eyes at you. I don't want to participate. It's embarrassing. You kind of like letting me do things that on one, too. And. And that's what I feel like when they get older. You have to be very careful with older kids because, you know, you don't you cannot embarrass them in front of you, their friends. You cannot force them too much...and...they get into the teenage moodiness. I mean, guys and girls like we've seen it today, they're happy tomorrow, they said. Then they're angry, then they hate the world. And there's nothing you can do about it. So...

10. Are there any other thoughts that you would like to share on the topic?

It's really hard. I think we kind of discussed everything and I gave you all my ideas. I just think, you know, as teachers, we have to understand. Whether you know how it works in China, not everyone is an actual qualified teacher. And I believe not everyone can be teachers. I'm just lucky enough that I taught in Brazil for 15 years and then I came here. I have two girls and I kind of understand how it is. And and you have it needs a special kind of person to be a teacher. You have to understand how kids work. You have to be creative. You have to have that special thing. That needs to be a teacher. Well, anyone can actually be a teacher if they want to. But whether you're a good teacher, that depends on who you are. And that's all I have to say about that.

Thank you