

## How Performing Shakespeare's Plays Affects National Education in England

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### ABSTRACT

In the United Kingdom (England, Wales), the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) issued a booklet on teaching and learning Shakespeare in 2008. In relation to preparation for some examinations connected with the National Curriculum, teaching Shakespeare is officially required, so teachers usually try to use an approach which is pitched somewhere between desk-bound and drama-based teaching, and have done so for a long time. This traditional approach often results in students being forced to take their exams even though they can not understand Shakespeare's plays. However, methods of teaching Shakespeare through performance have been improved in many ways in the past decade. In this paper, I will clarify how the compulsory teaching of Shakespeare has been constructed by policy makers from the viewpoint of the pedagogical historian. Secondly, I will trace the history of both desk-bound and active methods of teaching Shakespeare, and will introduce the mixed teaching approach. Thirdly, I will analyse the Shakespeare classes I observed in England. Fourthly, I will discuss the mixed teaching approach which combines desk-bound and active methods, compare a number of schools which implement mixed teaching, and consider the effect of additional materials which support active Shakespeare teaching. Consequently, I will conclude that performing the play has become an effective method of teaching Shakespeare.

### KEYWORDS

Shakespeare, National Curriculum, Brian Cox, performing and desk-bound methods

### 研究論文

## 英国義務教育におけるシェイクスピア演劇の表現言語について

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### 要旨

イギリス(英国・ウェールズ)では1988年教育法以来、ナショナルカリキュラムとして教育内容が中央統制されている。その中で、カリキュラム内容コントロール局(QCA;現QCDA)では2008年に、義務化されているシェイクスピア授業について、アクティヴな方法を推奨するブックレットを発行した。しかし一方で、生徒は14歳、16歳において行われる学年修了試験、資格修了試験対策でシェイクスピアを学び、その結果を出すために教員は政府からの教育内容の視察を受ける。教員は演劇であるシェイクスピアを教えるのに、机で知識を学習するだけでなく、演劇的手法によって表現言語を教え、生徒がさらにシェイクスピアを理解できるように工夫し続ける。この論文において、まずどのようにシェイクスピアが義務化されたのかという歴史的経緯を論じ、次に現実の中等教育におけるシェイクスピアの授業記録を報告する。その結果近年の変化として、演劇で言語を表現する手法は、シェイクスピア言語理解について効果的であることを示唆する。

### キーワード

シェイクスピア、ナショナルカリキュラム、ブライアン・コックス、知識学習と演劇的手法、表現言語

## 1. Introduction

The term 'National Education', as employed in the nineteenth century, did not mean education for the whole nation, but rather an education organized and directed by the wealthy and powerful for the poor and unimportant (Aldrich, 1996).

In the twentieth century, the Kenneth Baker, who became Secretary of State in United Kingdom in 1986, challenged the aims and ideology of national education in schools. His policy of education was to ensure a traditional subject-based curriculum for all pupils in maintained schools (state schools). Before 1988, there was no subject-based national curriculum in England and Wales. In addition, for Baker, teaching Shakespeare was one of the primary purposes of the National Curriculum. Originally, the approach to teaching Shakespeare seems to have been a desk-bound style: students sat at their desks, read texts, and interpreted the plots. In answer to this desk-bound approach, Brian Cox, who was a chairman of the English department in the National Curriculum working group, recommended not only a desk-bound style, but also a performing style for teaching Shakespeare:

The project has demonstrated that the once-traditional method where desk-bound pupils read the text has been advantageously replaced by exciting, enjoyable approaches that are social, imaginative and physical. This can also be achieved by: use of film and video recordings, visits to live theatre performances, participation in songs and dances, dramatic improvisations, activities in which Shakespeare's language is used by pupils interacting with each other (Cox, 1992).

However, the current assessments test at schools in England (England and Wales in this paper), which includes some excerpts from Shakespearean plays, is a strict academic test focusing on knowledge of the texts. As mentioned above, the curriculum was planned based on the pedagogical assumptions of the traditional disciplinary approach, which emphasizes knowledge-centred study. Many arguments about how to teach Shakespeare have emerged over the past 20 years, because teachers have had to manage to teach knowledge of Shakespeare for the test within the National Curriculum without clear guidelines. In the early stages of the National Curriculum, few teachers and educators considered performing Shakespeare in order to help students pass the examination. However, at present, more teachers are employing mixed teaching methods: a mixture of desk-bound and active pedagogical approaches to English classes (Jane Cole, 2009). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, more teachers, performers and theatre educators are developing ways to perform Shakespeare for the purposes of secondary education. Significantly, the curriculum has been revised a few times; therefore English teachers are urged to use active methods in order to help students understand the plays as a whole. I will discuss these attempts to revise the curriculum in more detail later on.

In the latter half of the 1990s, some Shakespeare teachers in English departments claimed that they were not drama teachers, so they would teach Shakespeare plays as texts to be read. Hence,

not all teachers approved of using performing methods in their English classes. However, Maria Evan's comments from 2006 promoted an active method of teaching Shakespeare. This new argument for performing Shakespeare was discussed in the *Times Educational Supplement* in the 2000s. According to the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), the traditional method of teaching is boring for students because the teachers do not use drama or acting methods in teaching. The point the RSC argued is that performance is one of the key facets of teaching Shakespeare. Eventually, the pedagogy of performance was accepted as an effective way of teaching Shakespeare. Therefore, in 2008, the department for children, schools and families (currently the Department for Education, DFE) issued a booklet entitled *Shakespeare for all ages and stages* (DFE, 2008), and the current Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) issued *Introductory Guidance for teachers in 2010*. QCDA has worked with Globe Education and the Royal Shakespeare Company to develop materials for teaching Shakespeare. The materials in these guides introduce the learning text as something to be performed as well as ensuring that 'Shakespeare remains an integral part of your ongoing assessment of pupils' reading' (QCDA, 2010). However, on the other hand, English teachers still must concern themselves with text based assessment tests at each stage of the curriculum.

In this paper, we will define the active way as whatever the students do to actively participate in the classroom in addition to any performance methods and drama methods that are employed as teaching tools. We will define the desk-bound method, on the other hand, as classroom activity in which students sit at the desks, and study the knowledge of the text. While focusing on the teaching ways, we will discuss the political agenda of teaching Shakespeare in the National Curriculum in this paper. I will indicate the educational history of teaching Shakespeare, and clarify how the movement to perform Shakespearean language affects school teaching of Shakespeare. In England, the establishment of state education was relatively recent, stemming from policies instituted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, teaching Shakespeare represents the importance of English cultural identity and is a symbol of state education in England. Therefore I need to look back to the process of its establishment. In part 1, I will discuss the Brian Cox Report and its impact on how English in state education was established by the National Curriculum. In addition, I will mention the historical background of the subject of English, and how the compulsory teaching of Shakespeare was established. In part 2, I will discuss the desk-bound teaching method and the performance method respectively. In part 3, I will report my observation in England, and analyse some classes and interviews. Lastly, in part 4, I will discuss some active ways of teaching Shakespeare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ultimately, I will conclude that the performance focused method of teaching ensures that students understand Shakespearean language and satisfies pedagogical goals designed to promote the best use of English in the UK in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **2. Teaching English as a Subject Background**

The teaching of English in England is a political matter because English is the state language. English has been one of the core subjects in the National curriculum since 1988.

Teaching English is considered an essential component of a state education, an education which represents English cultural identity. This concept emerged in 1988. Therefore let us introduce the 1988 Act first. The Education Reform Act of 1988 led to the establishment of the national curriculum and national assessments monitored by an inspectorate whose goal is ongoing reform. This curriculum was designed to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools (not only in private schools) followed a ten-subject course with English, mathematics and science at the core, and history, geography technology, a modern foreign language (from age 11), art, music and physical education as foundation subjects. Statutory orders laid down 'programmes of study' and 'attainment targets' for each subject. Programmes of study constitute the knowledge, skills, and understanding which pupils are expected to follow in the four stages of schooling: Key stage One (age 5-7), Two (11-14), Three (11-14) and Four (14-16) (Aldrich, 1996).

## **2.1 How English as a Subject is Important**

English is one of the core subjects in the National Curriculum and has a role in English cultural identity. The policy statement of the curriculum underscores this point. It says that English is vital for communicating with others in school and in the wider world, and is fundamental to learning in all curriculum subjects. (QCDA, 2010).

Above all, in England, the teaching of Shakespeare has been debated for a long time among teachers, government, policymaker and drama groups. The media also focuses on this topic in the National Curriculum. From the viewpoint of English literature, many people would naturally regard Shakespeare as the greatest writer that the U.K. has ever produced. But from the viewpoint of English education, Shakespeare's challenging plays are a burden for students who are struggling academically. In addition, the National Curriculum for English prescribes drama and media study as well. Some are concerned about that media study and the influence of popular culture have extended the range of linguistic and visual experiences which might be explored in English schools. Literature is no longer perceived by everyone as the central study in English (Allen, 1991). However, the importance of English literature is established in the curriculum, and English has a role as a support subject across the curriculum; therefore we will assert that the 'English subject is meaningful as an organic medium (Aoki, 2009)' in the National Curriculum.

In the next section, let us review the history of the curriculum in English and teaching Shakespeare in order to analyse how the curriculum is constructed every year.

## **2.2 A Historical Background of English as a School Subject in the UK**

In 1921, the English government issued *the Newbolt Report* on Teaching English for British people (Her majesty's Stationery Office, 1921). Sir Henry Newbolt, who was a chairman of the report, focused on English grammar in order to ensure the nation's children's literacy. The report was aimed at all types of schools in England, even though the Act in 1944 was the first act which made secondary education free for all pupils. Hence the report was a new stream for national education in 1921. *The Newbolt report* states categorically: 'We believe that such an

education based upon the English language and literature would have important social as well as personal, results' (*The Newbolt Report* Introduction 15, HMSO).

*The Newbolt Report*, however, was also devised by the government in order to spread the political influence of English.

Brian Doyle argued the Newbolt Report in his 'English and Englishness' in 1989:

In fact, English turns out to overwhelm the very concept of education itself in that the overall goal is to provide 'the best use of English as a means of intercourse and of education (1/5)'. This is by no means a minor point since, as will be shown below, the Report sets out a programme for cultural renewal which has implications well beyond the institutional boundaries of formal education. (Doyle, 1989)

From the point of English as formal education, after 1944 this subject was designed primarily as a means of saving the nation's children from poor speech habits. From 1950 to 1960, the status of English as a school subject became more established. But let us return to the main topic: the National Curriculum.

### **2.3 The background of teaching Shakespeare and English as a subject**

Brian Cox reviewed teaching English in UK from the 1950s and 1960s, and concluded that 'conservative politicians were over-confident that they knew the right policies, and to a large extent they were contemptuous towards the professional teacher' (Cox, 1991). He mentioned that children in the 1960s would learn to read naturally without the help of formal instruction, which might be 'progressive education'. However by the late 1980s such excesses of progressive education had been banished from the best classrooms (Cox, 1991).

In the 1980s, Prime Minister Thatcher wanted to concentrate on the core subjects of English as well as mathematics and science, and Baker set up working groups for those core subjects. In English, Baker appointed a working group under the chairmanship of Professor Brian Cox from Manchester University. The task of this working group was to draw up a teaching programme to ensure that all school graduates would be competent in the use of written and spoken English by the time they left school (Baker, 1993).. In addition, Baker compiled a list of recommendations regarding what books children should have been expected to read by certain ages. After that, Cox indicated an authors list in his report for the National Curriculum.

### **2.4 Brian Cox's Working Report for the National Curriculum**

Cox was appointed a chairman of the English department of the National Curriculum by Baker at the beginning of 1987. English was defined as including both language and literature and the committee members were to take into account relevant aspects of drama, media studies, information technology and information handling. Cox organized a small nine member committee. He had the opportunity to determine how English would be taught in every state school in England and Wales, and to ensure that a true

balance was achieved between traditional and progressive modes of teaching. He wanted the Cox Report to be written in a lively style, to avoid bureaucratic jargon, and to impart enthusiasm for literature. Let us examine how Cox endeavored to balance traditional and progressive teaching methods in his recommendations.

In order to analyse how Cox arrived at the ideas profiled in his report, let us trace how Cox was affected by US pedagogical theory. The American Skidmore College magazine *Salmagundi* focused on contemporary issues in culture and its role in the curriculum in the USA in 1986. Brian Cox referred to this in order to define the canon and contemporary works from the viewpoint of multiculturalism. In the magazine, Robert Scholes suggested that conservatives desire a common curriculum - any common curriculum - because a common body of knowledge, in theory, would have a unifying effect upon a society that suffers from an excess of pluralism, and that this unifying effect - an achieved cultural consensus - would in itself be a good thing for the country, both socially and politically (Scholes, 1986). He carried on a dispute with E.D. Hirsh. Cox surmised that the desire for an 'English' tradition hides a deep fear of contemporary multi-cultural society, a determination to maintain the present class structure and the hierarchies of power which give Oxbridge dons their privileged and cushioned existence. In order to take a balanced approach in their recommendations for the teaching of literature, the Cox working Group considered national unity with the need for a curriculum which respected the present cultural diversity of the society (Cox, 1991). Therefore, Cox introduced not only contemporary works but "great literature", above all Shakespeare.

## **2.5 List of Authors: How Shakespeare was Chosen**

Cox mentions why he wanted to include Shakespeare in the curriculum in his 'Cox on Cox': Shakespeare's plays are so rich that in every age they can produce fresh meanings and even those who deny his universality agree on his cultural importance (Cox, 1991). The significant point for Cox is this 'cultural importance.' On the contrary, in the 1990s, John Haddon argued that Shakespeare was culturally important, but this was not the same as asserting that Shakespeare was of value to our culture (Haddon, 1990). In other words, not all teachers could approve of teaching Shakespeare based on an assumption of shared values.

Bob Allen, who was a high school English teacher in England, mentions that Shakespeare's plays appear to promote values at odds with those of modern society (Allen, 1991). Allen agrees that most teachers accept the 'cultural importance of Shakespeare', but added that some teachers thought some new critical perspectives, such as relating gender or class some more. In order to keep the balance between English tradition and multicultural society, Cox considered the social and cultural value of teaching Shakespeare for the National Curriculum.

In particular, the aim of the Cox Committee was to recommend knowledge of Shakespeare for every pupil, including the bottom forty percent in ability. This suggestion raised a somewhat complex problem: how to treat tradition or an English cultural value. The Cox Committee deliberately left teachers of Shakespeare free to use their professional judgment in selecting texts suitable for the needs of their own pupils. As a result, the Cox Committee put

forward three criteria for teachers in their choice of texts for a national curriculum.

In particular, every pupil should be given some experience of the plays or poetry of Shakespeare. Whether this is through the study, viewing or performance of whole plays or of selected poems or scenes should be entirely at the discretion of the teacher. (Cox, 1992)

At first, the aim of studying Shakespeare was experiencing the whole play. However, this did not emerge; Shakespeare's plays are treated as texts to be read in the later National Curriculum:

In order to achieve level 7, pupils should read some texts written for adults, including pre-20<sup>th</sup> century fiction, poetry and drama, including Shakespeare. Discussion of those texts should include the literary style, as well as themes, settings and characters. (National Curriculum Council, March 1989)

As Cox intended the active way such as Rex Gibson's (I will discuss this later on), QCA revised the curriculum and added explanatory notes on studying Shakespeare. As for example:

The study of Shakespeare should be based on whole texts and provide an experience of the play in performance (eg through drama techniques, acting out key scenes, watching a performance in the theatre). (QCDA, 2012)

Teachers tried to give their students some experiences of playing in performance and watching performances after this amended curriculum was issued. From the viewpoint of practical teaching methods, let us look in the next part at some ways of teaching Shakespeare.

### **3. Teaching Shakespeare: Desk-bound and Performance Methods**

In this part, let us introduce some methods of teaching Shakespeare in secondary schools. At first, we will clarify the active methods described by Rex Gibson, and then discuss a mixed teaching approach which combines desk-bound and active ways of teaching.

As we described how the curriculum indicates experiencing the whole play of Shakespeare above, we will discuss what methods are most meaningful for teaching Shakespeare in the secondary school below.

Before secondary level, it is widely thought that the pupils are not at a suitable level to understand Shakespeare. However, Janet Bottoms maintains that work in primary schools, for example, has successfully combined the 'practical, collaborative discovery process' in Shakespeare's language with 'active storytelling' (Bottoms, 1995). She explains that a combination of story-telling techniques, physical activities, and opportunities for discussion and prediction are effective, and work most effectively when the children do not know the story first (Bottoms, 1995).

Even though the pupils in primary schools do not know the story first, they contribute their own perception of character and relationships in order to figure the story out. Therefore the pupils experience Shakespeare plays through their own perception. Experiencing the whole play is a significant way of coming to an understanding of Shakespeare. We will look at how students experience Shakespeare's plays through active teaching.

### **3.1 Rex Gibson's Active Methods of Teaching Shakespeare**

In order to make sense of Shakespeare's plays, Cox thought of the active way of teaching Shakespeare and Gibson influenced his conclusions. He argues: "The 'Shakespeare and School' project, at the Cambridge Institute of Education, has shown that secondary pupils of a wide range of abilities can find Shakespeare accessible, meaningful and enjoyable" (Cox, 1991).

In the 1980s, Rex Gibson was a prominent leader of active teaching of Shakespeare. As Cox mentioned in his report, Rex Gibson recommended an active way of teaching Shakespeare in his *Teaching Shakespeare*, and he emphasized Shakespeare's distinctiveness in his book. Rex Gibson of the 'Shakespeare and Schools' project at the Cambridge Institute of Education visited the Cox Working Group to explain his methods for teaching Shakespeare to children who struggled academically. Since then, Cox introduced Gibson's *Teaching Shakespeare* as the appropriate method to teach Shakespeare.

Each play has its own uniqueness (Gibson, 1998). In addition, students should have opportunities to express their own responses to many aspects of Shakespeare's drama, including performance, dramatic and physical style, and design and writing (Gibson, 1998). That is the reason why Rex Gibson provides us with many resources for teaching Shakespeare.

He provides rich and practical examples, and recommends not seeking a universal recipe for teaching Shakespeare. He also suggests that the active methods describes will help release students' imaginations and involve them in speaking and acting. In addition, active methods dissolve the traditional opposition between analysis and imagination. We will consider how we teach Shakespeare with active methods to encourage the students' imagination.

Example: *Romeo and Juliet*

Teachers can invite groups of students to speculate about, then prepare and show the actual incident, long ago, that set the Montagues and Capulets at each other's throats. Shakespeare does not tell how the feud began; he hints only that it was 'bred of an airy word'. Students present their different versions of the origin of the feud (Gibson, 1998).

This example, *Romeo and Juliet*, is used often as the class material; hence, it is appropriate for the trial story in the class. Most students would present incidents relevant to the modern world; however, there is no one right answer. He mentions playful activities can yield surprising discoveries about teaching Shakespeare. Not only playful activities, but also discussion or writing practices lead to discoveries for the students.



Gibson recommends using the story of the play as well. There are many ways to act out Romeo and Juliet, and no limit to the number of ways you can tell the story of the play. You could describe it in a single sentence:

A boy and a girl, from families that hate each other bitterly, fall in love, but everything goes wrong for them and they kill themselves rather than be parted (Gibson, 1998).

Students could write each story in a single sentence, and teachers could then collect them. Teachers could then share various versions of this story with other classes, and reuse these materials.

From the viewpoint of storytelling, every type of student can participate in the class, and the whole class will experience the play.

However, students still have to study for their assessment test. Therefore, teachers use the text and teach knowledge for preparation of the test in secondary schools. In the next section, let us discuss how the teachers maintain a balance between desk-bound and active methods of teaching.

### **3.2 Complex Teaching between the Desk-bound and Active Methods**

Kim Diment mentions that the annual conference of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers criticized *the Shakespeare Paper* for being a knowledge-centred, marks-oriented test, and suggested a boycott of the SATs (Standard assessment tasks) test as well. They made these criticisms on the assumption that written assessment tests disturb the active approach (Diment, 2003). In support, Jane Cole points out a false dichotomy between ‘desk-bound’ teaching (bad) and ‘active’ teaching (good)(Cole, 2009).

Jane Cole observed year 9 *Macbeth* lessons, and mentions the class in her article (Cole, 2009). The opening lesson was provided in an improvisational way:

On the face of it Marie’s [the teacher’s] classroom approach appears to invite pupils to engage actively with a text initially conceptualized as drama. Within five minutes all pupils in the class are on their feet creating an improvisation around an idea such as ‘friendship’ or ‘bravely’. ... Aspects of Marie’s language reflect her pedagogy. In the first 30 minutes of the lesson Marie’s speech is full of drama reference and instructions which urge participation, for example: ‘ I would like each table group to come up with a role-play’: ‘OK, get out of your seats now’ ... (Cole, 2009)

From the viewpoint of active teaching, Cole mentions that in the first 30 minutes of the lesson Marie urged participation. However, she needed also to prepare the students for examination of the materials, so the themes suggested by each improvisation were all written up on the

whiteboard after each performance and copied down by the students; in the activity which followed, the whole play was reduced to a list of events to be sorted into correct order, then copied down. After that, they studied the worksheet which would help them prepare for the examinations. Cole argues that 'The worksheet itself becomes the dominant text, rather than the *Macbeth* play script' (Cole, 2009).

In the 1990s, a new combination of desk-bound teaching and modern technology appeared. Commonly, before a new play would be introduced, the teachers would show a video or DVD of the target play in their classes. After the film, desk-bound teaching methods would communicate knowledge of the play to the students. I will introduce my observation using this combination style later on. Before my report, let us look to a new suggestion from DFE and QCDA, which is a collaboration of teachers and arts educators.

### **3.3 Shakespeare for All Ages and Stages**

After Maria Evan's comments in 2006, as I mentioned in this introduction, curriculum design in England has endeavored to focus on teaching Shakespeare through performance. The contributing members were selected members of large field; by the Institute of Education, London, Shakespeare's Globe, Royal Shakespeare Company, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and more. Each department representative joined this committee of *Shakespeare for all ages and stages* in order to provide active methods of teaching Shakespeare. With this objective in mind, the QCDA issued the booklet *Shakespeare for all ages and stages*, which suggests teaching approaches and designs, and provides learning objectives for staging Shakespeare.

Shakespeare for all ages and stages

In case of Year 9:

Learning objectives:

- To understand how characters are developed during the course of a play
- To appreciate the dramatic conventions and linguistic qualities of scenes and understand their significance to the play as a whole

Concerning about Romeo and Juliet on Year 9:

Strand 5.2: Understanding and responding to ideas, viewpoints, themes and purposes in texts.

- Develop interpretations of texts, supporting points with detailed textual evidence.

Suggesting Teaching approaches

- Identifying key words to provide an understanding of the essence of a speech. Pupils work with a line each and are asked to pick one key word or ‘silver bullet’ from their line. (QCA, 2008)

This document suggests maintaining the original aims of the curriculum and encouraging students to experience the whole play as well.

#### **4. My Observation and Interview with Two English Teachers in England**

In part 3, I will analyse what I observed in an English class in a secondary school (a comprehensive school), and the content of interviews I conducted with two English teachers in different schools. One school I visited was a comprehensive school (not private school), and I observed a Shakespeare class in 2008. I interviewed one English teacher in 2006, who worked for the comprehensive school, and another interview was done in the grammar school in 2008 (Aoki, 2006 and 2008). To clarify my terminology, grammar schools refer to minor high grade schools, and comprehensive schools refer to major schools. In addition, both of them are state schools in England.

##### **4.1 An English Class in a Comprehensive School in 2008**

Place: Wakefield (the north east of England), secondary school

Pupils: 14 year-old class

Aim: To understand Shakespeare play *Romeo and Juliet*

Context: They would take an achievement exam at the end of the school year.

Text: a sheet of paper for the script and work (which was printed by the teacher)

Time: 50minutes

##### **Class transcription: (*Romeo and Juliet* Act1 Scene V in Year 9)**

The teacher reads the script below, and his students just listen to him at first. The students are required to ask for clarification of some difficult religious terms after listening.

Teacher:

ROMEO: [To JULIET] If I profane with my unworhiest hand

This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:

My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand

To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

JULIET: Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,

Which mannerly devotion shows in this;

For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,

And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

ROMEO: Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

JULIET: Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

ROMEO: O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;  
They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.  
JULIET: Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.  
ROMEO: Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.  
Thus from my lips, by yours, my sin is purged.  
JULIET: Then have my lips the sin that they have took.  
ROMEO: Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly urged.  
Give me my sin again.  
JULIET: You kiss by the book. (Shakespeare, 1984)

Teacher: (asked students) There are lots of religious image here. What is the religious imaginary? Tell me the religious words, A?

Student A: holy

Teacher: Yes, good, what about B?

Student B: Prayer

Teacher: Excellent, and C,

Student C: shrine

Teacher: Good,...

(Aoki, 2008)

In the next stage, the teacher pointed to two readers and two actors from the class. After that, the readers chosen by the teacher read the script above and the actors play this scene at the front of the classroom. However, the students were very shy to play at first, so the teacher encouraged them to act. In addition, the teacher compared the position of the actors to the exact position of the film they watched previously. After being informed of the act they should learn, the students went back to their seat, and did the worksheet prepared for the assessment test.

### **Analysis**

The teacher managed the class very well. At first, the teacher read aloud the script of *Romeo and Juliet* and the students just listened to him. The teacher pointed to two female students (on purpose, because the scene was one in which they had to kiss and hug) to act the scene. They played and the other students read the script. After that, the teacher asked questions designed to assess their knowledge of *Romeo and Juliet's* themes, in order to prepare for the SAT's test. The students answered the questions very well. Before the class I observed, the students watched the film of Zeffirelli's (1968) *Romeo and Juliet*. This film is rather old-fashioned, and if the students might be put off if by outdated productions. The problem, though, is that if students see only one production, they come to view the choices made in the staging of that production to be natural, and come to view its interpretative choices as authoritative (Yandell, 1997). Before all students in the class engaged on the work sheet of the scene, they compared the scene and story with the versions they were exposed to in both film and

performance media. The Aim of Year 9 (14 years old) is to develop an informed understanding of how ideas experiences and values are portrayed in texts from different cultures and traditions (QCA, 2008). For instance, the key theme of religion in Italian culture was successfully identified by the class, demonstrating understanding of the play's motifs. Consequently, the students in the class all studied the target script, saw the play, and eventually, came to understand the whole story through a combination of active and desk-bound approaches.

## **4.2 Two Interviews of the Different Type of the Schools in England**

### **a. Leeds**

First of all, in 2006, I had an interview an English teacher who had retired several years ago. He had been a teacher and the head of the English department in a comprehensive school in Leeds. He was coordinated taking me to the Wakefield school in 2008 as well.

I had been teaching Shakespeare for many years, sometimes it was joy and sometimes it was chore, because the exam requirement at Key stage 3 that is year 9, that is 13- 14years old. The exam requirement makes all students really engage it. Shakespeare is wonderful as you know, but it is very difficult for student, especially series of large classes.

You have to cut an idea of the whole play and only way you can do that normally for short amount of time given to you is to show the students films. I suppose a good teacher shows the animated tales in last half an hour per play. And fit in the lesson last a few minutes. You can play over and over again. But you should also find the time to show a whole length film. What a good teacher should do is to use the variety methods, only correcting is so difficult on Shakespeare's language. One of consequences fragmenting, the curriculum in English, there are so little time for genuine extended time of reading. And school worksheet doing very specific tasks, which you can call the death by worksheet, you know grinded in worksheet so much, and over and over and over again. I don't have a time to engage, but that is so important for the literature and theatre.

(Aoki, 2006)

### **Analysis**

From his point of view, teachers in schools don't have time to teach Shakespeare to get through the curriculum, and tried to teach over and over again but just grinded through the Shakespeare component of the curriculum using worksheets to drill superficial knowledge of Shakespeare. This teacher mentions that the students should grow up slowly with knowledge; therefore students need to study the story over and over again, which does not mean to just pass the assessment tests. He was a drama and an English teacher at the some secondary schools; therefore he agreed with RSC, which have tried educational treatment towards schools. He described there is no time to watch the film in the class, and no time to review the plot. The test comes at the end of the Year, so the schedule tends to be more mechanical.

## **b. Kent**

Secondly, let us introduce the grammar school example from 2008 (Aoki, 2008). This example is a kind of exception because most students would prepare to study Shakespeare, and the performed method of teaching was diversified at this school. In Kent (south east of London), I visited a girls' grammar school, and interviewed a head of the English department. (A: Aoki, B: the teacher)

A: Students often hate Shakespeare play because the plays are so difficult.

B: It is not like here because we are grammar school. So, the girls are top 25% of the country. The girls will have done little bit Shakespeare in their junior school. When they come to us, they know a little bit of Shakespeare. So when they start here, they are just before twelve. We would give them a story of Shakespeare plays to get to learn the quality of the story and joy. They get to realize that Shakespeare can write a really good tale. Then, when they are twelve years old, we give them a small extra language focus on the poetry, and even look at his sonnets. They are just give some flavor, they have to do what we call origins of language, which is a little Shakespeare and Chaucer, which is medieval. When they come to next year, year 8, we will do full of Shakespeare plays in year 8. They are 13 years old. We examine the play in verse a short bit, we always do it. We do *Midnight Summer Dream* because it is fairy Kingdom, which I take them see it in London. There is a big park in London, Regents Park, which is open air. We choose *Midnight Summer Dream* because it has a comedy, and it has a love, laugh and fairies. We often read easy section, so they get to grip the languages. Here is our school; it is actually very easy for girls to see what Shakespeare is.

(Aoki, 2008)

Even though I could not observe her lesson, she gave the document of her first lesson in 2009, which is targeted on Key stage 3, Year 9 below:

### **LESSON PLAN 1 in 2009**

The speech you are to study in this lesson is taken from Shakespeare's play "The Merchant of Venice" and is spoken by Shylock the Jew. This play is one of Shakespeare's most disturbing creations. The playwright's insight into human nature never fails to surprise and puzzle his audience. The play is full of joy and energy but it is never far away from darkness and pain. It deals with serious matters and yet can be wonderfully funny. Above all it asks questions about tolerance, prejudice and trust which remain as fresh and as challenging as when it was written in 1595.

...The plot centres on a Christian merchant named Antonio who has borrowed

money from Shylock to help his friend, Bassanio, court a beautiful, wealthy lady. Antonio's merchant ships are at sea so he has no ready cash to offer Bassanio. Shylock asks that the debt be repaid with a pound of Antonio's flesh cut off nearest the heart. Antonio signs a contract, believing he will never need to repay the debt this way. Unfortunately, his ships are wrecked on the Goodwin Sands and so Shylock demands a trial and his "pound of flesh".

#### TASK

In pairs or threes, prepare and present a **READING** and **ANALYSIS** of the attached speech by Shylock which is spoken when he discovers Antonio's ships are wrecked.

#### CONSIDER:

- tone, sentence structure, punctuation, rhythms
- effective language
- themes
- historical and social context
- audience

(Aoki, 2008)

#### **Analysis**

This Key stage Year 9 plan has no active or performance method of teaching because teachers have to aim to pass the SAT exam. However, in Year 8 (13 years old), acting is emphasized in the class and the students just have fun acting out Shakespeare. In addition, the students have a chance to go to the theatre park in London as well. The teacher said that her Year 8 students were very good at understanding Shakespeare's poetry in 2007. On the other hand, in Year 9, the teacher needed to prepare scenes designated by the curriculum, and analyse the script in 2008. For example, the students review the whole text and focus on tropes like: metaphor, tone, rhythm, power, imagery, and nature. At first the teacher reads, and then students are divided into groups, as this lesson plan outlines. In addition, the school regularly has some workshop of educational actors, and they act out the test scene to support their exam while performing. Those actors also ask some questions to the students in order to prepare for their test. From her comment, the students in this school, after the key stage test, enjoy reading, acting, and seeing Shakespeare plays. For the students in the grammar school, they study whatever their teachers provide. Hence, this example is rather exceptional class compared to the other schools I observed.

#### **5. Discussion**

The two types of schools have completely different starting points as far as the study of Shakespeare is concerned. One school in Kent has early preparation for the study of Shakespeare,

so the students end up being well-prepared for studying difficult plays by the later grades. Another school in Wakefield has not enough preparation for studying Shakespeare (the students might read some children's books about Shakespeare at home). In fact, most schools in England have the same system as the school in Wakefield because of comprehensive schools (the grammar school is exclusive, but comprehensive schools).

Let us look at the school data below: (GCSE and equivalent achievements of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4; achieving Level 2 (5+A\*-C) including English and maths GCSEs

Wakefield	52%
Kent	99%

(DEF, 2008)

This result merely indicates the score, so we can not show the quality of school. In addition, at the present time, more and more schools in England are accepting immigrant pupils who cannot write, read and speak English fluently (Yandell, 2006). Despite these significant differences across schools, we could find some common aspect in studying Shakespeare.

First of all, my observation record can be analysed following the standards recommended by *Shakespeare for all ages and stages* 5.2 (DFE, 2008). This document asks that students learn 'to develop interpretations of texts, supporting points with detailed textual evidence (QCA, 2008)'. Comparing this to my observation in Wakefield, the students who watched the film were given the keyword 'religious'. Next, they read the text and performed the scene while thinking about some religion-related words that appear in the scene. They could identify some key words to provide an understanding of the essence of a speech. Pupils worked with a line each and were asked to pick one key word. The English teacher in Wakefield followed this booklet very closely. However, in Kent, though the targeted play is different, at the beginning of the lesson the students are given more assignments about the play's literary features: tone, sentence structure, punctuation, rhythms, effective language. In addition, they had to consider theme, historical context and audience by themselves. In the grammar school, they had already learned some story about the plays at their early stages; hence, the teacher simply explained a short story. It is supposedly that the students can review the plot in order to consider the assignment given by teacher.

Here, we have findings to support effective performing practice. Let us look to some suggestions how the students learn Shakespeare plays through our analysis.

1. Before teaching original Shakespeare script, teachers will give an easy Shakespeare plays story. Then students will watch the Video or DVD for the targeted play.
2. At next stage, students will act out the targeted script on the exam.
3. After figuring a whole play out with some stories and acting, students will



engage a worksheet for the exam.

Concerning about the first point, the early stage learners will need some short information about the targeted Shakespeare plays. Hence this simple story is a good preparation for students. Rex Gibson's active method should be useful for this stage as well. Let us review the story of Gibson's short story example, *Romeo and Juliet*:

A boy and a girl, from families that hate each other bitterly, fall in love, but everything goes wrong for them and they kill themselves rather than be parted (Gibson, 1998).

For the beginner class, this story and some children's books are very helpful for the students who are inexperienced with Shakespeare plays. From these observations, I might suggest teaching Shakespeare in primary schools. If the teachers choose some good Shakespeare story books for children they will be able to figure those story out. In addition, there are core principles of preparation for the secondary English level. Therefore, some secondary classes might introduce story-telling practice if it is difficult for a given class to understand Shakespeare. Supposedly, most teachers use DVD or Video before reading script. These media will be helpful for the students' low standards.

The second point will be supported by the story. For immigrant people, especially, Shakespeare's language is extremely difficult to understand (Yandell, 2006). From the viewpoint of current immigrant society, before acting practice, the easy story might be very helpful for the students who immigrated, or whose parents are immigrants. Moreover, acting solves the difficulties of Shakespeare's language. Even though the Shakespeare language is difficult, acting is helpful to understand meaning of the stories of the texts.

On the one hand, we could say Shakespeare is the representative of the English literary canon, and his plays are universal. On the other hand, teaching Shakespeare has been changed because the pupils have changed year by year. Shakespeare plays as they are taught in school are different from the plays themselves. Teachers should not force students to engage only with the original script of Shakespeare's plays: they should also introduce supplementary material, such as children books and short stories. This will help the students to understand the plot, to appreciate the performance and, in time, to read the original play.

## **6. Conclusion: Active, Practical Exploration of Shakespeare's Plays**

Some 20 years ago, not many teachers adopted the performance methods, and formerly the QCA did not recommended performance as a means of teaching Shakespeare. English teachers had difficulty meeting the demands of the suggestions detailed in the new National Curriculum. However, the ease of delivering the new enhanced methods has been improved by modern media, which helps the teachers obtain new resources and suggestions immediately. Ironically, media and drama study are included in the English Department as part of the national

curriculum. From this viewpoint, English teachers cannot avoid using the new technology. In addition, the teachers can realize them more easily and effectively with some new methods of teaching using the new technology, and the teachers use the live performance from the new virtual world in their classroom.

As I explained at the beginning of paper, Globe Education (the education programme in Globe Theatre) and the RSC worked with QCDA in 2010. They developed the materials for teaching Shakespeare in order to support *school Shakespeare*. Previously, in 2008, the suggestion booklet *Active Shakespeare* was issued by QCA and DFE in order to support teaching Shakespeare classes. In 2010, QCDA and DFE have taken over the former materials *Active Shakespeare*, and have issued *Introductory Guidance for teachers*. This material offers support by introducing activities, providing photocopiable sheets and, in some cases, downloadable video clips available via the RSC website. Not only RSC, but Times Educational Supplement provides these resources for English teachers (TES: 2011). Concerning some of this new media, it is easy to observe and show the resources in the classroom at present.

As we have discussed in part 1, the political context in which the English subject was introduced needs to be considered in order to fully understand the National Curriculum arguments advanced in the 1980s. In part 2, we clarified how Shakespeare teaching was managed in the classroom in the 1990s. Shakespeare's texts were written to be performed on stage; even though they have to prepare for the examination, students should learn the plays as his stage craft intended them to be experienced. We surmised that desk-bound and active methods of teaching are effective in combination when applied in the secondary English class. In part 3, we reported on observations of real Shakespeare classes and analysed them. In part 4, we discussed those analyses, and introduced some new suggestions to support performing Shakespeare and figuring out the plot out in secondary English classes.

Paul Wright, QCDA English programme manager, states:

The materials (Which QCDA provided) will support and strengthen the teaching and learning of Shakespeare at Key stage 3 and ensure assessment of Shakespeare continues to be integral part of teachers' ongoing assessment of pupils. It will encourage lively and active approaches to teaching and learning that will involve the study of the whole text, engage with the text as something to be performed and consider Shakespeare as relevant in a wider cultural and literary context. (QCDA, 2010)

Students can be effectively exposed to participatory and exploratory performing methods through new media. Consequently, performing the play, watching films, and reading supplementary stories have become a significant way of teaching Shakespeare whenever the students learn Shakespeare plays. We should continue to observe secondary school English classes and monitor how teaching Shakespeare through performance in the secondary classes is developing. In the grammar school, before entering the secondary school, the students read some Shakespeare

stories (Aoki, 2009). We expect some more comprehensive schools in England to introduce this pedagogical method following *Shakespeare for all ages and stages* (DFE, 2008), which would offer the primary students more chance to read Shakespeare as in the form of children's stories, and act out Shakespeare's stories without the challenge of his difficult language. In conclusion, I expect that a more dynamic approach to teaching Shakespeare - one that combines a variety of pedagogical methods and source materials - to be the most effective, and suggest that such an approach be implemented in secondary schools.

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