Theater Arts Learning in Perspective of Child Development Psychology

Syina Dalila[1*] and Warih Handayaningrum[1]

[1] Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia
`syina.22010@mhs.unesa.ac.id`

Abstract. This study aims to describe the psychology of child development in theater learning by using Lev Vygotsky's constructivist learning theory. The research method used is qualitative descriptive with data collection techniques through literature studies. The study results show that in theater learning phase C, it is essential to understand the psychological nature of child development, where at the vulnerable age of phase C, children are still very much connected to the world of play. In this context, educators in theater learning need to utilize Vygotsky's constructivist approach, which emphasizes the role of social interaction, language, play, and imaginative activity. In engaging children in theater learning, educators can create an environment that facilitates creative exploration, collaboration, and the development of children's cognitive and social abilities. The results of this study provide valuable insights in designing theater learning strategies that are appropriate to the stages of child development in Vygotsky's constructivist perspective.

Keywords: Learning, Theatre, Psychology, Child.

1 Introduction

Childhood is play. A phenomenon that still often occurs is the rigidity of learning, which forgets the nature of childhood, especially learning arts and culture. Any teaching, especially art, should give a pleasant impression to children. Scientifically speaking, play is an essential activity in children's learning. Role-playing is a form of play that allows children to develop imagination, creativity, and social skills. In games such as cooking or buying and selling, children unconsciously use acting, dialogue, and story-building skills that involve specific roles. At this stage of children's cognitive development, role-playing allows them to develop an understanding of roles and character. They learn to understand the difference between the roles of buyer and seller, chef and customer, or hero and villain. Through this play, children build an understanding of the social relationships, actions, and responses attached to each of these roles.

Theater learning in children is an educational process that involves introducing and exploring theater elements, such as acting, improvisation, dialogue, body movement, sound, and emotional expression. As written in the achievements of theater arts learning in the independent curriculum:

At the end of Phase C, students understand a variety of simple theatrical techniques, such as acting (playing) and group dynamics such as improvisation, or characterization elaboration through action and reaction. Furthermore, students understand that there are rules in theater play and ensemble work, descriptions of performance arrangements such as storylines, settings, and characters in the production process of simple performances. In this phase, students can begin to be introduced to the theme of traditional stories to enrich cultural insights. Through this experience, students are expected to be able to collaborate in achieving performances, learn to be responsible for their respective roles, and be able to respond and anticipate to dominate the stage, both individually and in groups [1].

Through theater learning, children can develop various skills and abilities, including creativity, cooperation, communication, self-confidence, problem-solving, and understanding the perspectives of others.

In the Independent Curriculum, each learning phase is supported by Learning Outcomes (CP), which are general goals for students. In Phase C, students are usually between 11 and 12 years old chronologically, but their mental age can be more or less around 8 years. At this stage, students have some special characteristics. They are skilled in the inquiry process, namely the ability to ask questions about themselves and their surroundings. Apart from that, they are also skilled in identifying simple problems related to everyday life. They are able to recognize and be aware of minor problems that arise in their daily life. The focus of research on the object of phase C is the writer uses it because chronologically, phase C is an effective age stage in studying theater according to their abilities and cognitive development.

The theory of child development psychology, according to Vygotsky, is a theory that describes how children learn and develop through social interaction and their cultural environment. Lev Vygotsky, a 20th-century Russian psychologist, argued that children's cognitive development is inseparable from social context, and interactions with adults and peers play an important role in shaping their understanding and abilities. According to Vygotsky, children experience development through what is referred to as the zone of proximal development [2]. This zone refers to the distance between what children can do independently and what they can achieve with help or support from adults or more skilled peers. Children can acquire new, more complex skills and knowledge through interactions within this zone of proximal development. Vygotsky also emphasized the role of language in child development. According to him, language is not only a means of communication but also a tool of thinking. Children learn through verbal interaction with adults or peers. The process of internalization occurs when children gradually internalize external language into their own minds, and this helps them organize their thoughts, solve problems, and make sense of the world around them.

It is important to note that in Vygotsky's theory, child development is not seen as a process that occurs individually but as a result of social interaction and cultural influences. Contextual factors such as cultural values, social norms, and educational practices also influence a child's development [2]. In a supportive environment, children have the opportunity to interact with skilled adults and play with peers,

which contributes to their cognitive and social development. Children can develop more complex skills and knowledge through social interaction and cultural influence.

Huda's [3] research discusses theatrical games used to form children's characters. The results of this study indicate that learning activities through theater game training can expand social interaction and develop social skills, namely learning to share, living together with mutual respect and respect, and learning to participate in community life in general. In addition, the results achieved will be able to improve physical development body coordination, and develop and sharpen gross and fine motor sensitivity [3].

Abidin's [4] research discusses theater in elementary school learning, which shapes creativity, group dynamics, and psychological maturity. The results of this study give the meaning that theater learning is an essential part of child development. Theater is about language, perception, concept development, aesthetic knowledge, and the full spectrum of experience itself [4].

Syafi'i et al. [5] discuss theater in growing self-confidence in elementary school children. The results of this study provide a solution to the limitations of theater training to increase elementary school children's self-confidence, jokes between friends, confusion, and the appearance of laziness in practice in a controlling and motivating way [5].

Several researchers have focused on the benefits of theater in elementary school children's learning. Still, no researcher has paid attention specifically to how theater learning should be positioned in child development psychology. Therefore, this study uses Lev Vygotsky's constructivist learning theory to review child development psychology in theater learning.

The formulation of the problem from this research is how is the ideal theater art learning for children? And how is the psychology of child development in theater learning according to Lev Vygotsky's constructivist theory? Thus, the purpose of this research is to describe the ideal theater arts learning for children and the psychology of child development in theater learning according to Lev Vygotsky's constructivist theory.

2   Methods

The research method used in this study is qualitative, namely a research approach that aims to describe or describe phenomena or events in detail and depth [6]. This method focuses on a comprehensive understanding of context, meaning, and experiences related to the phenomenon under study.

Data collection techniques used are interviews, observation, and documentation [7]. Interviews were conducted with relevant sources, such as teachers, students, or theater experts, to get their views and experiences regarding theater for elementary school children. Observations were made by observing the theater process in elementary schools, either through rehearsals, performances, or other related activities. Researchers obtain documents and archives through theater programs,

scripts, practice notes, or visual documentation (photos or videos) related to theater activities in elementary schools.

Data analysis techniques are performed by coding the collected data to identify themes, categories, or patterns that emerge from the data. The data is then presented and validated through source triangulation.

3   Results and Discussion

3.1   The Ideal Theater Arts Learning for Children

A child's brain is like a sponge, absorbing facts, physical properties, and the muddled complexities of language in a fun and stress-free way [8]. It shows that learning in children should give a meaningful impression through empirical experiences that are unconsciously passed in a fun way.

Theater in the context of psychology can provide significant benefits in individual psychological development. Through emotional expression, developing empathy, creativity, problem-solving, social skills, and strengthening identity, theater can be a powerful tool for exploring and enriching the psychological lives of individuals. In a social context, role-playing allows children to learn to interact with others. They learn to communicate with each other, share roles, and collaborate in building stories. It develops social skills, such as listening, sharing, working in teams, and understanding other people's perspectives. Children also learn to deal with conflict and solve problems cooperatively, honing problem-solving and negotiation skills. Emotionally, role play provides opportunities for children to express and manage emotions. They can assume different roles and experience various experiences aesthetically.

Children can develop cognitive, social, and emotional skills through games and imaginative activities in their theater learning. These activities stimulate children's imaginations, encourage exploration, and allow them to participate in learning actively. In addition, imaginative games and activities strengthen children's sense of fun and interest in theatre, increasing their motivation to learn and participate in theatrical activities.

Fun theater learning through games can significantly benefit children's psychological development. Here are some ways to create a fun theater learning experience for children through play:

Role-playing. Children are given the flexibility to act out the characters in the story or improvised situations. It aims to help them develop imagination, empathy, and social skills. Kids can create their own dialogue, actions, and character reactions while learning to work in a team.

Short/Fragment Drama Performances. The teacher and the children write a short, simple drama script, either based on an existing story or their own creation. They can act out roles and learn dialogue, stage moves, and facial expressions. This

performance allows them to hone their public speaking skills, increase their confidence, and express their emotions.

Improvisation. Give children simple situations or scenarios and let them improvise dialogue and actions. It allows them to think creatively, develop problem-solving skills, and learn to adapt to changing conditions.

Motor Games. Use motor play to help children develop movement skills, emotional expression, and spatial awareness. For example, a mirror motion game, a pantomime game, or a group movement game.

Imaginative Theatre. Let the children make and play shadow theater by hand or using shadow puppets. They can create stories, characters, and scenes by exploring differences in form, movement, and emotion.

Musical Theatre. Combine musical elements in children's theatrical games. They can learn to sing songs related to stories or characters, create dance moves, or use simple musical instruments to add a new dimension to their performance.

Creating a supportive and safe environment where children feel comfortable experimenting and actively participating is essential. Provide positive feedback and encourage collaboration and courage in expression. Enjoyable theater learning through play can help children develop creativity, imagination, social skills, self-confidence, and problem-solving. In addition, through this process, they can also improve their verbal skills, emotional control, and knowledge of the world around them.

Theater learning in children can provide opportunities for them to develop creativity. While exploring characters and stories, children are faced with situations where they have to use their imagination and creativity to develop characters, understand the story's background, and make creative choices in acting. It can help children hone their divergent thinking skills and train their imagination.

Theater learning also encourages children to learn to work together in groups. In theatrical productions or theater rehearsals, children will interact with peers and learn about cooperation, mutual support, and valuing the contributions of others. They will learn to work in teams, develop self-confidence, and appreciate differences of opinion and the uniqueness of each individual in the group.

Communication is also an important aspect of theater learning. Children will learn to communicate clearly, use the right tone, and adequately convey emotions. They will engage in dialogue, practice expressing feelings and ideas, and learn to listen attentively. These good communication skills will be beneficial in various aspects of a child's life, both within the school environment and outside of school.

Theater lessons can help increase children's self-confidence. When they have to perform in front of other people, children will be invited to overcome nervousness, gain self-confidence, and face the fear of the stage. Through the exploration process, children will feel more comfortable being in public and learn to deal with any fears or anxieties they may experience.

Theater learning also involves problem-solving and decision-making. Children will learn to face challenges in understanding characters, situations, or conflicts in stories. They will practice analytical skills, think critically, and seek creative solutions to problems as they arise. This ability will help children develop a flexible and independent mindset.

3.2   The Psychology of Child Development in Theater Learning According to Lev Vygotsky's Constructivist Theory

Vygotsky's constructivism is an approach in developmental psychology that emphasizes social interaction, the role of language, cultural tools, and play in constructing individual knowledge and understanding. This theory provides the basis for a collaborative learning approach and applying critical thinking in education, recognizing the important role of social interaction and cultural context in learning [9].

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD in Vygotsky's constructivism also has a central role. ZPD refers to the distance between what an individual can achieve independently and what can be achieved with the help of another, more experienced person [2]. Through collaboration with others, individuals can acquire new, more complex knowledge and skills. The concept of ZPD in Vygotsky's theory is very relevant in children's theater learning. ZPD refers to the distance between a child's actual developmental level and the maximum potential development that can be achieved with the help of another, more experienced person. In the context of children's theater learning, ZPD can be applied in the following way:

Collaboration. Use a collaborative approach where children work together with adults or peers who are more experienced in theater. This collaboration allows children to achieve higher theater abilities and skills through guidance and assistance.

Mentoring. Adults or more experienced actors can act as mentors or instructors who help children develop their skills in theater. Mentors can provide guidance, feedback, and direction appropriate to children's developmental levels.

Distribution of Tasks. In theater performances or activities, children can be given tasks that are appropriate to their abilities but also challenging to expand their ZPD. For example, children can be assigned minor roles that allow them to learn and grow while still receiving support from adults or more experienced peers.

Feedback and Reflection. Provide constructive feedback and reflection to children regarding their performance in the theatre. It helps them understand areas where they have been successful and where they can continue to improve.

The Role of Language and Symbols. Vygotsky considered language to be the primary tool in the construction of knowledge. Language plays an essential role in shap-

ing individual thinking and facilitating communication and social interaction. In addition to verbal language, symbols and signs are also used in the process of knowledge construction [2]. Here are some ways in which the role of language and symbols can be applied in children's theatre learning:

Dialogue and Communication. Language is used to communicate between children while collaborating in theatrical activities. They can discuss, share ideas, and convey their ideas using language. Through dialogue, children can clarify their understanding, solve problems, and develop new ideas.

Script. Children can understand how to create scripts as well as dialogues in their performances. This process involves using language to articulate characters, stories, emotions, and interactions between characters. In creating a script, children think of the best way to convey their message through words.

Singing and Memorizing Lyrics. Language is also related to musical elements in theater. Children can learn to sing songs related to their staging. Children acquire linguistic, rhythm, and emotional expression skills through singing and memorizing lyrics.

Use of Gestures. Symbols and body language can be used in children's theater learning. Children can use body gestures to communicate ideas, characters, or situations in a staging. It helps them understand and translate language into visual forms and physical movements.

Text Interpretation and Analysis. As children read and study theatrical scripts, they develop interpretive and analytical skills. They can identify themes, characters, and conflicts and delve deeper into the meaning of the text. They can use text comprehension to bring characters and life stories into their staging.

Cultural Tools. In Vygotsky's constructivism, cultural tools, such as physical equipment, technology, and symbolic systems, are considered important sources in forming individual understanding. The use of these tools assists individuals in understanding and organizing their world [2]. Here are some examples of the role of cultural tools in children's theater learning:

Setting-property and Dress. Setting props and dress are used in children's theater performances to gain an understanding of the characters, situations, and context of the story. Children can use property-setting and dress to reveal themselves, feel the roles of their characters, and visualize elements in the story.

Stage Layout. Stage layout is an important cultural tool in children's theatre learning. They help create an atmosphere and visual context that matches the story being played. Children can learn to utilize the stage space, arrange props, and create an atmosphere that supports staging.

Music. Music in children's theatrical performances is also included in cultural instruments. Children can utilize music, sound effects, or simple musical instruments to add an emotional dimension and communicate the atmosphere or feeling in the stories they tell.

Technology. Using technology such as projectors, audio recordings, or lighting can enrich children's theatrical learning experiences. This technology can help children visualize ideas, create special effects, and explore more complex elements of theater.

Script. Theatrical scripts are also an important cultural tool in children's theatre learning. They provide a narrative and dialogue foundation for children to understand and play their part. Children can learn to read, analyze, and interpret theatrical texts to help them understand characters, plots, and themes.

Social Roles. Vygotsky argued that social interaction has an important role in knowledge construction. Through collaboration with others, individuals can participate in social activities, get feedback, and gain a deeper understanding of a concept [2]. Vygotsky emphasized that social interaction, cooperation, and collaboration with adults and peers play a key role in children's cognitive development and learning. [10]. Here are some examples of social roles in children's theater learning:

Cooperative. Children can work cooperatively in groups to develop theatrical staging. Through cooperative work, they learn to share ideas, discuss, and work together to create stories, set the stage, and act out roles. It allows them to broaden their understanding through positive social interactions.

Observation and Observation. Children can learn from and be inspired by more experienced actors or theater performers. By watching and observing them in action, kids can learn about emotional expression, stage moves, and how to role-play confidently [11]. Role models also help children understand theater conventions and develop their skills gradually.

Performance. Theater performances provide opportunities for children to interact with the public. Through performance, they learn to adapt to audiences, face challenges in public, and develop communication skills. Social interaction with the public can also strengthen self-confidence and provide useful feedback for their development in theater arts.

Joint Problem Solving. In the process of learning theater for children, children can face challenges and problems that require problem-solving. They can discuss, collaborate, and find solutions through social interaction. This process teaches children about cooperation, compromise, and courage in overcoming obstacles.

Games and Imaginative Activities. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of games in the construction of knowledge and understanding. In the play, individuals can use imagination, hone social skills, and combine abstract thinking with physical action [2]. Vygotsky recognized that play is the primary form of children developing their cognitive, social, and emotional abilities. Here are some examples of the role of imaginative games and activities in children's theater learning:

Characters. Children can play characters in various stories or theatrical situations through theatrical play. In this role, they can portray characters using their imagination and creativity. This activity helps them understand the character's perspective, develop empathy, and improve self-expression skills.

Improvisation. Improvisation is an activity in which children spontaneously create scenes or dialogues in a given situation [12]. These activities encourage children to use their imagination, think creatively, and adapt quickly. Through improvisation, they can expand their understanding of characters, situations, and conflicts in a theatrical context.

Story Creation. Children can engage in the activity of creating their own theatrical stories. They can use their imagination to develop plots, characters, and conflicts in this process. These activities help children think creatively, plan narratives, and hone problem-solving skills.

Development of Dialogue. Through theatrical play, children can learn to develop dialogue between characters. They can practice expressing emotions, communicating clearly, and interacting with other characters in the story. This activity strengthens children's language skills and verbal communication skills.

Creating and Using Properties. In theatrical plays, children can create and use theatrical properties. They can use their imagination to create objects, tools, or costumes that are relevant to the story and the character they are playing. These activities facilitate creativity, object manipulation, and understanding of the use of tools in a theatrical context."

4   Conclusion

From the perspective of Vygotsky's child development psychology, theater arts learning involves social roles, interactions, language, symbols, cultural tools, games, and imaginative activities. Children can develop social skills, creativity, and a deeper understanding of theatre through collaboration with adults and peers. Language and symbols are used as the main tools in conveying ideas and emotions in theatrical performances. Cultural tools such as props, costumes, stage, and music help create a rich theatrical experience. Imaginative games and activities allow children to play an active role, develop their imagination, and enhance their cognitive and emotional skills.

Through learning theater arts, children not only develop their artistic abilities but also acquire social, language, and creative thinking skills, which are important in their development. So, what needs to be emphasized from the application of children's theater learning is not to forget the psychological nature of child development, that children at vulnerable elementary school age are still attached to the world of play.

Acknowledgments

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