

**COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION:
REFLEXIVE DIALOGUE THROUGH EXPERIENCING THEATER AS PLAY**

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**FACULTY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES
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REFLEXIVE DIALOGUE THROUGH EXPERIENCING THEATER AS PLAY**

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Faculty of Information and Communication Studies**

November 2020

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

*Words are small shapes in the gorgeous
chaos of the world. But they are shapes,
they bring the world into focus, they corral
ideas, they hone thoughts, they paint
watercolors of
perception.*

— Diane Ackerman

Weaving words is a craft and preoccupation that Ana Katrina, fondly called Kate by her family and friends, considers a deep-seated need. This dissertation was completed in a time and space where humanity breathes uncertainty. Facing an invisible enemy manifesting itself as the COVID-19 pandemic, Kate found it particularly challenging, at the same time, exciting, to discover what she is truly capable of. Apart from the words that made it in the ensuing pages, Kate kept a reflective journal, and this in turn, helped her make sense of her experiences and kept her moving.

Born in 1983 in a church in Biñan, Laguna where her granduncle was serving then as a priest, Kate's first language was that of love and serenity. Her mother Cecilia, and her father Nicanor welcomed Kate, yet the one who first held her was a nun. Her granduncle, the late Rev. Fr. Emilio C. Palma, was instrumental in shaping her education, beliefs, and values, as he taught her reverence to God, love through service, and exemplary work ethics.

Kate grew up in a big, often chaotic, laughter-filled home with her six sisters and one brother. Her childhood can be best painted as carefree, adventurous, and holistic. Her academics was balanced with a healthy dose

of play. Being amiable and sociable, Kate experienced the gift of friendship early on. Kate also found joy in writing as she later served as her high school paper's editor-in-chief.

In college, she followed the footsteps of her sister Ancy who also studied in the University of the Philippines Los Baños. Kate finished her degree in BS Development Communication, major in Development Journalism. It was also in college where she painted yet another gradient in her increasingly becoming kaleidoscopic life. This was when she met her would-be husband, Gian Carlo de Jesus, a Los Baños native and her batchmate in DevCom. Kate's serene, yet predictable life began to unfurl, as if welcoming the mighty wind and waters. It was Gian who challenged her beliefs about love, service, and commitment. In the same light, Kate's presence in Gian's life was a welcome respite.

As if dancing their way into the pages of destiny, Kate and Gian worked together in their mutual advocacy of transformative education through the power of play. In 2013, Kate earned the Master of Development Communication degree, also from the UP Open University, with a Dean's List citation. She then transitioned to becoming an Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities, University of the Philippines Los Baños. Drawn to the nurturing energy of Mount Makiling, Kate and Gian discerned that it was best to raise their four daughters in this science and nature city. As if serving as title for each chapter of their lives, the names of their daughters have very significant meanings. The name of the eldest, Kahla Urduja, means warrior

princess of the arts, while the second one, Satya Amaranta, means unfading truth. The third daughter's name, Avika Malaya, translates to 'free and as strong as the earth.' Finally, the youngest' name, Leela Haraya, means divine play. Indeed, this dissertation is Kate's lila or leela, which in Sanskrit, means God's creative play, giving birth to the cosmos. Art, truth, freedom are the aspirations, and the enabling force is divine play or lila.

How important is it to play in this day and age where the chaos is fast becoming not so 'gorgeous' for most people? In a highly complex world where we do know the palette of colors we used in the past, and we have an inkling of the hues we want for the future, we are in between. This liminal space calls for living liminally. Living liminally means 'reframing' so that we get to see the light in the dark, and we can make the light dance like a prism of colors, should we choose to. It is us who decide on the intensity of hues and colors. This intersectionality of experiences is what Kate strives to celebrate each moment. Given God's challenge as stated in Ephesians 6:12, *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places"*, it is also the world forces of LIGHT that shall bring us to victory.

ANA KATRINA PALMA-DEJESUS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. - Ecclesiastes 3:11

If I were to trace my steps from beginning to end, I would not cease to be in awe of God's orchestration. I am grateful, first and foremost to my dissertation adviser, **Dr. Grace Javier Alfonso**, who, for some reason, bears resemblance to my mother, not only physically, but also in the strength and grace she shows. Doc Gigi's genius lies not only in her knowledge of communication praxis, but also in her subtle, yet powerful mentoring filled with reflection-provoking questions like *"What's your big Why?"*, *"Why do you do what you do?"*, and more. One conversation with you, and I am steered into discovering possibilities and new directions. These conversations did not even need to be actual, real-time interactions. For instance, as I learned more about your work, such as the sculpture *"Culture of Sharing Wisdom,"* which can be experienced in the main entryway of UPOU, I got to articulate what my Doctor of Communication journey was like. Mediated communication, open learning, self-mastery, and connections with *kapwa* scholars - these are what enabled me to thrive. Doc Gigi said it best: *"You only become whole when you share."* My deepest gratitude to my adviser who prodded me to hold on and who bravely told me that the pandemic is a time of reimagining, creativity, and innovation. Through this, renewal arises.

I am equally grateful to my dissertation committee members, **Dr. Alexander Flor** and **Dr. Benjamina Paula Flor**, as well as to **Dr. Jean Saludadez**. You are all wisdom bearers who generously share so we, students, can find our own way, connect knowledge using different lenses, and continue the culture of sharing. Doc Sandy and Doc Benj, I will not forget how each time I approach you, even in chance meetings, both of you take the time to engage, to listen, and to dialogue. It was also the Flor power couple who gave me confidence to use the Filipino language to represent key terms in my grounded theory. Doc Jean, I am truly grateful that you welcomed me in your office and in your home as I sat together with your other advisees and my friends, enthralled with your sharp insights, thought-provoking questions, work ethics, and life lessons that are truly inspiring.

To the committed men and women of the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, led by **Dr. Alexander Flor**, and to **Ms. Emely Amoloza**, I am grateful for the work that you do. I believe in what FICS stands for, and I intend to co-create aligned with the FICS manifesto. To **Ms. Germaine Basan**, thank you for your efficient coordination of FICS activities. **Dr. Felix Librero**, **Dr. Jean Saludadez**, **Dr. Melinda Bandalaria**, **Dr. Melinda Lumanta**, **Dr. Alexander Flor**, and **Dr. Jean Saludadez**, my utmost gratitude for the vistas of learning that opened as I took my core courses under your wing. The way you designed the courses propelled me to interrogate my beliefs and predispositions, and to actively construct my own understanding as I strive to be attuned to the cacophony of voices in the Communication field.

I also thank my University of the Philippines Los Baños colleagues led by our Department Chair, **Dr. Leonora Fajutagana** who was very supportive of this endeavor. Special thanks to **Tita Daisy Diola** who always extended a helping hand, a comforting smile, and the *kumustahan* which kept me grounded. To the **DHUM Mommies**, cheers to more stories of striving and becoming better!

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My loving parents, Nicanor and Cecilia, heartfelt thanks for designing a nurturing home for us. The value that you placed to education is what propelled me to achieve. Thank you for always being there when our family needed support. At times when we had to leave town for work, the peace of mind I felt knowing that my children are in safe hands is priceless. **Ate Ancy**, our eldest sister who opens up her home for our family, may it be so I can work without interruption in her office, or so the kids can play with their cousins while we are away, or to safely house theater costumes or props, your generosity is without equal. To my sisters and brother, **Ate Monet, Kuya Nick Jr., Niña, Anne, Tricia, and Majeng**, our almost weekly food and conversation feasts, occasional travel, and daily chats gave me the energy and enthusiasm to always give it a go.

My husband Gian and daughters Kahla, Satya, Avika, and Leela, you are God's most stark reminder of how blessed I am. Having you as my teachers, listening to your unique voices, witnessing each of you expand developmentally and consciously, all led to a journey of discovery for me. Our conversations sustained my desire to research more on play and

communication. From Kahla's provoking questions on the origin of life to the power of memes, Satya's introspection and embodiment of the stories in her mind, Avika's rapid prototyping of playful ideas that come her way, and Leela's curiosities, from asking whether Jose Rizal is now in the "Filipino" version of heaven to declaring that she is *makulit AND mabait na bata*, which is why she enjoys occasionally showing each of her 16,000 personalities - you are all LOVE in ACTION. Equally so, love in action is something that Gian is a master of. Indeed, God answers our prayers. When I was in college, I came across Nietzsche's idea of having friendship as the strongest foundation of marriage, and I prayed for that. Almost two decades in our relationship, and I have always thought of myself as blessed to have you, Gian, as my partner. What we have is inspired co-creation that allows us to thrive because we always find reasons to challenge and push each other towards expansion. Thank you for creatively dealing with my quirks and thank you for being my mentor. When you flow, I stand in awe. When I succeed, you applaud the loudest. I look forward to more years of meaning, celebration, and *a-ha* moments with you. I respect you and I believe in what you stand for. If I can talk to Nietzsche, I would gladly tell him that love and romance stay ablaze when playful hearts participate.

To my Lolo Pari, the late **Fr. Emilio C. Palma**, I feel your presence until now. For a young girl to have had a role model like you, I am most fortunate. I bring your legacy with me as I raise my own children. Finally, and most of all, to **God Almighty**. He who makes things beautiful in its time. I praise you and I offer this *lila* to you.

DEDICATION

*This piece of work is playfully dedicated to
my husband*

Gian Carlo Unabia-de Jesus

my children

Kahla Urduja

Satya Amaranta

Avika Malaya

Leela Haraya

my parents

Nicanor M. Palma

Cecilia S. Palma

my siblings

Ana Cecilia

Anna Monina

Nicanor, Jr.

Ana Niña

Ana Andrea

Ana Patricia

Ana Margarita

my mother-in-law

Lilibeth de Jesus

my kids' fairy godmother

Sergio C. Pesons, Jr.

and to my Lolo Pari, **Emilio C. Palma**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	iv
DEDICATION	ix
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS	xiv
LIST OF APPENDIX	xviii
ABSTRACT	xix
I. INTRODUCTION	
Background of the Study	1
Research Positioning	8
Rationale and Significance of the Study	14
Research Purpose	18
Scope and Limitation of the Study	20
Definition of Key Terms	20
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
Play and communication	25
Transformative Potential of Theater	27
Theater in Education	29
Bahay-bahayan System and Philosophy	31
Bahay-bahayan Theater	36
Bahay-bahayan Applied in Teaching	38
Bahay-bahayan Applied in Training	39
Dialogue and Reflexivity	41
Stories and Narratives	43
III. METHODOLOGY	
Research Design	47
Research Methods	48
Setting of the Study	51

Participants of the Study	52
Data Sources	52
Ethical Considerations	53
Dayta Analysis and Interpretations	54
IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	
<i>Pagpapasigla</i> (Activating)	68
<i>Pagtatauli</i> (Reacting)	76
<i>Pagmamasid</i> (Observing)	78
<i>Paggaya</i> (Imitating)	82
<i>Pagsubok</i> (Testing)	85
<i>Paglubog</i> (Immersing)	89
<i>Pagtugon</i> (Responding)	96
<i>Pagsasakatawan</i> (Embodying)	105
<i>Pag-angkin</i> (Owning)	109
<i>Pagpapadayon</i> (Lingering)	115
<i>Pakikiramdam</i> (Sensing)	120
<i>Pagbabanyuhay</i> (Transforming)	124
<i>Wari at Yari: Proseso ng Pakikipag-dayalogo</i>	148
V. SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION	
Summary	173
Implications	179
Recommendations	184
BIBLIOGRAPHY	186
APPENDICES	193

LIST OF TABLES

NO.	TITLE	PAGE
1	Key activities in the pre-production phase	57
2	Key activities in the actual performance inside the immersive play	62
3	Stages of critical reflection in Tr. B's experiences	130
4	Stages of critical reflection in Tr. K's experiences	131
5	Stages of critical reflection in Tr. R's experiences	132
6	Stages of critical reflection in Tr. H's experiences	133
7	Stages of critical reflection in Student K's experiences	134
8	Stages of critical reflection in Student C's experiences	135

LIST OF FIGURES

NO.	TITLE	PAGE
1	<i>Bahay-bahayan</i> System and Philosophy	20
2	<i>Wari at Yari: Proseso ng Pakikipag-dayalogo</i>	148

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

NO.	TITLE	PAGE
1	Actor-facilitators introduce their balai names through actions	70
2	Actor-facilitators create their homes using found materials	71
3	Actor-facilitators dress up using available materials	71
4	Players begin their participation in the play through the journey walk	72
5	Players join the journey walk	74
6	<i>Babaylans</i> lead the journey	75
7	<i>Babaylans</i> performing a ritual at the beginning of the play	76
8	Players help in depicting the creation story	77
9	Players listen to the story and rules in Pailah	79
10	Players find their respective <i>balais</i>	80
11	Players discussing the details of the debt case	82
12	Players show the gesture of respect	83
13	Players find their dwellings	84
14	Pailah Chieftain "Jayadewa" gives orders	85
15	Players show respect and deference to Chief "Jayadewa"	86
16	Players respond to the drum beats signalling for them to go to the tribal hall	89
17	The Laguna Copperplate is shown	90
18	Players perform tasks in Pailah	93

19	Players design their dwellings	96
20	Players survey the area for materials they can use for their weapons and tools	97
21	Players witness the Chieftain performing the " <i>Pagtatarak</i> ," marking the establishment of their new settlement	99
22	Players barter their clay potteries to the foreign merchants	101
23	Players become aware of the debt case to be settled, and they discuss their decision	103
24	Student playing nobleman presents the group's decision to the Chieftain regarding the debt case	104
25	Players respond to the sound signals and show the gestures of respect as they pass by the Holy Shrine	107
26	Players paying close attention to the Baybayin lesson	108
27	Players learning the <i>Babaylan</i> ritual dance	108
28	Chieftain overseeing the performance	112
29	<i>Babaylans</i> in their costumes, make up and accessories	114
30	<i>Babaylans</i> performing a ritual of offering	115
31	Players show respect to the <i>dambana</i> or the Holy Shrine	116
32	Student playing chieftain was shown respect even after the play	117
33	Actor facilitators doing tasks together	118
34	Players attentively listening to the Chieftain's pronouncements	121
35	<i>Facimunos</i> deciding on the players' captivity	122

36	Players witness the wedding of the Chieftain and the daughter of Lady Angkatan	125
37	Players, including adults, show respect to the Chieftain as they present their works	127
38	Actor-facilitators converse about adjustments they will do in the play	129
39	<i>Facimunos</i> and players showing different facial expressions	143
40	Players buying food from merchants in the play	144
41	Players gathered around the tribal hall	146
42	Actor-facilitators playing the foreign merchant roles welcome the arrival of the players	151
43	Lyrics contributed by the actor-facilitators to the wedding song used in the play	154
44	Actor-facilitators playing the <i>babaylan</i> roles performing a ritual	156
45	Actor-facilitators who play the roles of lower-class servants	157
46	Actor-facilitators who play the roles of apprentice <i>babaylans</i>	157
47	Actor-facilitators who play the roles of warriors	158
48	Actor-facilitators playing on their own (those at the back) while it was not yet their turn	159
49	Actor-facilitators playing their own play during the breaks	160
50	Actor-facilitators and changes in their clothing and demeanor	163
51	The facade of the Pailah storyworld	164
52	Actor-facilitators immersed in their roles	167

53 *Facimunos* coming up with their own penalties for offenses done 168

54 *Facimunos* that serve as drummers in the play give the signals 169

 using drumbeats

55 A ritual being performed in front of the Holy Shrine 170

LIST OF APPENDIX

NO.	TITLE	PAGE
1	Informed Consent Form	193
2	Photo and Video Consent Form	194

ABSTRACT

DE JESUS, ANA KATRINA, PALMA, University of the Philippines Open University, 18 November 2020, Communication and Education: Reflexive Dialogue Through Experiencing Theater as Play

Adviser: **Dr. Grace Javier-Alfonso**

With communication and education being interwoven, this study sought to generate an abstract theoretical understanding of the communication processes emerging from an educational experience. Specifically, this constructivist grounded theory was guided by the question “How do participants experience the *Bahay-bahayan* theater as play?” in the context of the immersive play “*Pailah: Ugat ng Lipi*.” Immersing in the performance space together with the research participants, and doing successive levels of comparative analysis, the following social processes emerged - *pagpapasigla* (activating), *pagtatauli* (reacting), *pagmamasid* (observing), *paggaya* (imitating), *pagsubok* (testing), *paglubog* (immersing), *pagtugon* (responding), *pagsasakatawan* (embodying), *pag-angkin* (owning), and *pagpapadayon* (lingering). These processes are mutually supportive and constitutive. It was revealed that meaning-making is very much influenced by, and in turn, influences cultural contexts and behaviours, as the participants go back and forth these processes.

The *Wari at Yari: Proseso ng Pakikipag-dayalogo* (Discern and Design: Process of Reflexive Dialogue) is therefore forwarded as a middle range theory describing creative processes of making sense of communication contexts and transforming these through playing, replaying, and re-playing possibilities, actions, and reflections. Permeating the entire play experience are *pakikiramdam* (sensing) and *pagbabanyuhay* (transforming). How each process is placed in the infinity model represents the processual and intuitive nature of theater as play.

The model has important implications for the design of learning experiences anchored not only on outcomes, but also on playful dialogic interactions. Further research may look into the experiences of the audience-players since this study privileged the voices of the actor-players.

Keywords: reflexive dialogue; communication and education; theater; play

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Communication is interwoven with education, as much as education is interwoven with communication. Amidst the changing landscape of communication, how people engage in meaning-making is crucial in the pursuit of educational goals. Whatever discipline it may be, from history to mathematics, to science and humanities, an understanding of communication practices is central to our discursive consciousness. Craig (2006) asserts that such consciousness shapes practice because it prods us to reflect, interrogate, and plan. Education as a discipline is also about reflection and action.

The importance of the study of communication was described by Morreale and Pearson in a thematic analysis of journals and articles that forward dimensions of communication considered socially relevant. These themes are “the development of the whole person; the improvement of the educational enterprise; being a responsible participant the world, both socially and culturally; succeeding in one’s career and in the business enterprise, enhancing organizational processes and organizational life, and emerging concerns in the 21st century” (2008, p. 226). These themes attest to the need to further study communication and education. Thus, as both educator and

communicator, I set out to study the communication processes emerging from an educational experience.

Responding to Craig's invitation for communication scholars to not allow themselves to be uninvolved observers in the communication practice (2006), I embarked on constructivist grounded theory as research design. Seeking out and conceptualizing patterns emerging from the data allowed me to engage in interpretive theoretical practice. Charmaz emphasized that theorizing, as a practice, "entails the practical activity of engaging the world and of constructing abstract understandings about and within it" (2006, p. 128). Thus, the premise of this research is "a dialogic, social constructionist approach to the world" (Mumby, 1997) and "authentic communication, or dialogue, founded on the experience of direct, unmediated contact with others" (Craig, 1999). Let me begin the dialogue through a disclosure of my research interest, which is founded on my experiences as educator and communicator.

I am a Communication teacher, and based on available metrics for effective teaching, I have confidence to say that I performed my teaching duties diligently. Having well-crafted lesson plans, with clear and measurable learning objectives, teaching and learning activities, and the appropriate assessments, I was all set. However, as I mature in the profession, and perhaps, with the changing socio-psychological profile of learners, I have had the feeling that what I have been doing to engage learners is not enough. The turning point came when I experienced handling a large lecture class of 160 to 170 students for the course College English. I knew that the lecture class set-up limited the modes of engagement I have with the students. I struggled, and

evidently, the students struggled too. Occasionally, I would see furrowed eyebrows, and I could not even stop to investigate if that look meant concentrated thinking or utter confusion. The call is to cover and uncover the topics as stated in the syllabus within the given time. So, I lectured, posed questions whenever I can, gave them activities and practice exercises whenever possible, tried to be as entertaining as I can to ward off student boredom, and assessed students' learning through their class 'performances'. When the examinations came, I could sense some of the students' anxiety. I thought to myself, "Is this really what education is for? How come that even if I profess being constructivist in philosophy, I cannot feel that students are empowered enough to construct their own learning from their own experiences?"

I have heard of teachers saying one cannot be just a chapter ahead of his/her students, so I sought ways to have mastery of the subject matter. I have attended trainings and workshops meant to 'retool' teachers, and now I realize that even the word 're-tool' in itself is problematic. I have kept a reflective journal as a way of improving my teaching practice. All these helped to certain extents, but I kept on seeking. The next turning point happened when I participated in a theater play on February of 2015. Titled "*Dito Sa Atin*," the play was an adaptation of Thornton Wilder's "Our Town." Surprisingly, it was staged in a barangay basketball court, instead of a theater stage or auditorium. I did not see that much props, yet I was led to believe that the space was Grove by the way the actors related to us, along with the music, and the dialogue. Through that play, I momentarily got transported to Grove circa 1990s. I am uncertain as to how, but my connection to the characters

became deeper than I would have expected from a theater play. The director of the play, my husband, was then germinating the idea of *Bahay-bahayan*, loosely translated as “pretend play” as a way of doing theater. In the kind of theater he envisioned at that time, there is no wall separating the actors and the audiences, thus making it participatory through the act of playing.

I brought this thinking to my classes as I imagined how play can make a difference in the students' learning experiences. Thus, in the second semester of 2015, I incorporated the idea of *Bahay-bahayan* in my classes. From a blog I wrote on October of that year, as a reflection to what ensued in my large class, I quote,

Overall, *Bahay-bahayan* or playing house is about entering a world of limitless possibilities. *Bahay-bahayan* stands on the relationship of the three elements – the *facimuno* (teacher), the *kalaro* (students), and the *espasyo* (space) that altogether make the learning environment. *Bahay-bahayan* is about creating spaces physically, virtually, or imaginatively.

Most notable improvement I observed among the students is that their level of motivation and engagement increased. However, I am uncertain if this connects to constructivist and dialogic learning, essential to making education transformative.

In the foreword of the classic “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (Freire, 1970), Richard Shaull writes:

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

With Freire's emphasis on the educational process as critical, creative, participatory, and transformative, teachers are called to help realize education that empowers and that brings us closer to becoming more fully human. For Freire, "To exist humanly is to *name* the world, to change it." If a learner like me can name what is missing in my educational experience, then I can be aware of what to change, modify, enrich, omit, or whatever process is necessary. With such awareness comes action. This action-reflection process is continuously being sought by educational programs that aim for humanist education.

This reflective process leading to reflective social action is dialogue. For Freire, there is no communication without dialogue, and there can be no true education without communication. From this springs forth my commitment to unravel the meanings of communicative acts and processes of those who experience education as play.

My research curiosities were these: What difference can play make in educational experiences? What makes learners engage in communication and dialogue, which according to Freire, are requisites of education that empower? How does play figure in the present education system, which is based on planning, purpose, and outcomes?

Many educators are seeking learning designs that can truly engage learners in critical and creative thinking. A pedagogy that aims to liberate is anchored on the premise that every human being is capable of transforming his/her reality, or to break out of societal programming, so to speak. This is also consistent with Habermas' assertion that rationality is "constituted through the ability of dialogic partners to engage in communication that is free

from coercion and constraint” (Mumby, 1997). When learners actively construct knowledge and realize their power to create culture, with themselves as subject, instead of object, the “culture of silence” may begin to break.

For such education to take place, there must be a quest for mutual humanization. In this regard, many educational approaches and methodologies have used theater owing to its transformative potential. According to Pammenter (as cited in Valverde, 2003), theater serves as a space where our political, moral and ethical values interact at a philosophical, emotional, and intellectual level. To quote, “Theatre, at its best, is the communication and exploration of human experience...” (p.1).

Theater forms may differ in motivations and intents, but find similarity in the notion that “art is not an inert product of social processes but an agent of these processes,” as Mojares (1985) contends. In other words, theater actively shapes and contributes to social construction of meaning and realities. Not only does theater represent society, but it also serves important societal roles evolving along historical milieu.

As such, literature on theater includes its role in education (Tiller, 2015; Rifkin, 2010; Hughes & Wilson, 2004), in social research (Erel, Reynolds & Kaptani, 2017; Conrad, 2004), in development (Craig, 2011; Hageman, 2017), in communal healing (Bauer, 2013), in eliciting aesthetic experiences (Breel, 2015), to cite a few. These are indicative of the vast potential of theater in engaging the audiences in action-orienting processes owing to its emphasis on experience. According to Balasoto, Rimando, and Roque (1979), theater

uses more elements than any other medium, which is why the learning processes are reinforced, particularly in development contexts.

Experiencing theater occurs in many ways - from the conventional theater that positions audiences as spectators, neatly seated as they watch the events unfold on the stage to the more participatory ones where audiences are invited to interact with the performers, read a few lines, or even participate in activities. Another distinction is made by Wirth who described reactivity and proactivity in theater. Audiences are reactive when they respond and observe. Audiences are proactive when they collaborate with others, and actually live the action, with mind, body, and spirit contributing to their actions (Howard, 2004). Reactivity implies having passive audiences akin to the passive learners in a classroom waiting to be filled with knowledge. Thus, for theater in education to become a subversive force, the spectators must act or perform and have their voices heard too.

Emphasizing the potential of theater in transforming society is the Theater of the Oppressed by the Brazilian scholar Augusto Boal. Inspired by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Boal's theater offers a non-traditional approach where dialogue is prompted towards collective problem solving of a given issue. Boal's approach is participatory as it transforms the conventional theater monologue into a dialogue between audience and the stage. For Boal, theater can be a mode of action and a rehearsal for life (Howard, 2004).

Research Positioning

In doing qualitative research, from the beginning to the writing and publishing, the researcher should be encouraged to reflect on his/her assumptions, emotions, perspectives, and expectations (Mruck & Mey, 2007).

This is of particular importance because the “Bahay-bahayan Theater as Play” concept has been an ongoing work of community theater practitioner and cultural creative Gian Carlo de Jesus, who is also my husband. He was influenced by the works and philosophies of Freire and Boal, and mentored by the late UPLB Professor and protest theater pioneer Leo Rimando. Initially called Dulaang Kayumanggi, de Jesus’ theater philosophy emerged and evolved organically from his experiences as director of the Tanghal Sining Kayumanggi of the Los Baños National High School, and his work in directing community plays in Laguna, Abra, Mindoro, Negros Oriental, Palawan, among other sites.

According to de Jesus (personal communication, April 17, 2018), as inspired by the work of British director Peter Brook, it may not be a coincidence that the words “theater” and “play” are often used interchangeably to refer to performances. Although in theater parlance, play is referred to as the written texts crafted by the playwrights intended for theatrical production, the use of the word “play” may find a different articulation when we look at it from the Filipino language. Theater, when translated to Filipino, is either *teatro*, *dula*, or *dula-dulaan*. “Dula” is a Visayan term which means “play.” For de Jesus, the kind of play that comes closest to

theater is “bahay-bahayan,” or make-believe play, sometimes referred to as pretend play. Thus, in the Bahay-bahayan system and philosophy, theater and play are one and the same. This contention finds support in the words of British director Peter Brook in his book “The Empty Space.” To quote,

In everyday life, ‘if’ is a fiction, in the theatre ‘if’ is an experiment. In everyday life, ‘if’ is an evasion, in the theatre ‘if’ is the truth. When we are persuaded to believe in this truth, then the theatre and life are one. This is a high aim. It sounds like hard work. To play needs much work. But when we experience the work as play, then it is not work any more. A play is play (1996, p. 175).

It is interesting to note that Brook refers to experiencing the work as play which creates an opposition to the conventional notion of work (i.e. rigid, structured, mechanical). When theater is construed as play (as in child’s play or play that activates our imaginative and creative thinking), it has an empowering effect because any “space” can be a stage, and any “what-if” scenario can be a narrative for a plot. In Brook’s opening paragraph in “The Empty Space,” he opines “I CAN take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.” Similarly, when we observe children engage in Bahay-bahayan or make-believe play, a nook, a corner, or any space, can be easily transformed into a school, a playground, a kitchen, or anything that can be conceived by their creative and imaginative minds. Examining the elements that make up this immersive, experiential learning phenomenon where theater, play, and life meet, the Bahay-bahayan system and philosophy came into being.

I served as co-author in the first publication on Bahay-bahayan is the 2017 UPLB Journal article titled "*Ang Bahay-bahayan bilang isang Sistema ng pagtuturong may lapit at lapat sa karanasan ng mga Pilipino.*" This research documented the application of the Bahay-bahayan system in a College English class in the University of the Philippines Los Baños, as well as the perceptions of teachers who underwent a preliminary training on Bahay-bahayan. This study forwarded that Bahay-bahayan is anchored on the interplay of three interrelated elements, the *facimuno*, *kalaro*, and *espasyo*, and activated by the content/narrative/story and the what-if's, aptly called *kwento* at *kunwari*. Bahay-bahayan is about reframing traditional means of engaging audiences. For instance, a facilitator will not merely facilitate, but instead will design learning environments where play induces/activates learning. Any venue may be transformed into a space where the learning experience happens.

The Bahay-bahayan framework had been documented, but from the point of view of teachers. In this particular research, the privileged voices are now the learners who have experienced "theater as play." From the lens of communication as discursive reflection, I open myself to a dialogue with the research participants as we construct meanings through critical reflection. Bahay-bahayan is emergent, and therefore, unfinalized. Through interrogation of what experiencing theater as play really means for the learners themselves, in the process, I also interrogate my assumptions. Craig, citing Habermas and Deetz, asserted that "it recurrently becomes necessary for communicators to articulate, question, and openly discuss their differing assumptions about the

objective world, moral norms, and inner experience" (1999, p. 148).

As a researcher, therefore, I take on the moral responsibility of representing and interpreting the voices of the social actors, that duty which Madison (2005) refers to as positionality. Since a qualitative researcher functions as an instrument for both observation and data collection, my individual perspective and relationship with the subject matter should be noted.

For this reason, I employed Constructivist Grounded Theory as methodology. Charmaz (2006) described grounded theory methods as consisting of "systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories grounded in the data themselves" (p. 2). Constructivist grounded theory has built on the classic grounded theory of Glaser and Strauss in that it emphasizes a critical qualitative inquiry of the data and interrogates the role of the researcher and the research process. Relying on reflexivity, it analyzes language, emergent actions, and meanings, as well as the researcher's and the research participants' worldviews, relationships, and experiences. It views reality as being socially constructed, considers truth conditional, and seeks out diverse research perspectives.

In the classic grounded theory, the discovery of theory emerges from the data, in which the data is considered to be separate from the researcher. Charmaz departs from this positionality, asserting that "We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices" (2006, p. 10). Recognizing that I cannot totally distance myself from the world I study and

the data I collect, I strive for reflexivity by making my stance known as this research is being constructed.

The focus of this study is a Bahay-bahayan immersive historical play about the pre-colonial culture in ancient Pailah, presently the town of Pila in Laguna, Southern Tagalog, Philippines. Titled “Pailah: Ugat ng Lipi,” the play revolves around the story of the Laguna Copperplate, the 900 A.D. inscription found in Lumbang River in Lumban, Laguna. The Laguna Copperplate is a significant historical artifact because it is the earliest known document in the Philippines with a calendar date, hence moving what is known about Philippine history to earlier centuries.

What emerges from the Bahay-bahayan system applied to theater in education in the context of “Pailah” is an immersive play. Immersive theater “is a term that has been popularised in recent years to identify a mode of practice that invites ambulating audiences into a fictive world,” and is typically “constructed out of expansive, multisensory environments” (Bucknall, 2017). In this kind of theater, audiences enter a world and interact with various performance elements such as “actors,” co-players, spaces, stories, and roles. The audiences also experience and co-create the story as it unfolds. As the *kalaro* gets immersed in the world of play inside the world built and designed by the *facimuno* and fellow *kalaro*, their acts of “play” become the educational experiences.

Several studies have been conducted on the potential of theater to empower people. One is that of Harbrecht (2013) which attempted to

understand how forum theater can assist teachers' professional development as they deal with challenging issues. This, however, is predicated on the purposeful and careful adaptation of the theater processes. Harbrecht went on to suggest that a further area for study is understanding how forum theater can be a problem-posing paradigm, instead of being reduced to engaging students in a performance exercise limited to role-play, sans the critical pedagogical intent. Meanwhile, a case study investigating the impact of theater as education in an informal learning context revealed that educationally and socially disadvantaged youth are aided in terms of personal and social development (James, 2005). Although experiences of the youth were accounted, the communication phenomenon arising from the experience of play was not tackled.

Scant critical attention has been paid to investigating the audiences' experiences of the emerging play as it happens, and what social processes take place in the educational experience. This is a gap that this research sought to fill. Since Bahay-bahayan positions theater not only as representation of realities, but as a site and venue for rehearsing social change, the actors' reflexivity is made the focus of this investigation. Reflexivity is described as "being immersed in the continuous flow of action and deriving from experience a logic of action that enables agents to go on" (Banks & Riley, as cited in Miller, 2002, p. 203). This means people have the ability to act as agents, far from the dictates of an inherited social system. In this study, narratives of the players' choices and actions in the midst of dialectical oppositions made through their communicative interactions shall be

unearthed. According to Bakhtin, interactions are influenced by a “larger time-space continuum, in which the immediate context, the past, and anticipated contexts” (Miller, 2002, p. 185) are where dialogues are embedded.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

This study's focus on narratives of reflexivity is deemed timely because present times call for reflective thinking, or inner dialogue, so to speak. Archer (2013) cites Bauman who said “that the contemporary disintegration of entrenched structures both ‘liberates’ people and simultaneously propels them towards ‘individualization’. In turn, this implies much higher demands being placed upon each person’s reflexivity to choreograph his or her own lifecourse – particularly in the context of their ‘disembeddedness’ (Archer, 2013). In particular, the youth tend to be assertive of their personal identity, and driven to contribute to change in the society. But it must also be noted that postmodern notions place value on freedom of choice and rejection of creeds. In a society increasingly becoming fluid, fuzzy, and dynamic, with shifting realities, navigating one’s life course inevitably demands our ability to deliberate, reflect, and consider the entirety of our situations, as we listen to our inner voice and become aware of our identity. This is similar to how Archer (2007) defines reflexivity as “the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa” (p. 4).

The significance of this undertaking is further supported by Balfour (2009) who interrogates the social intentionality of applied theater. He argues that studies on applied theater should not pay lip service to theater's

transformative potential. For Balfour, “the need for change rhetoric, impact assessment and the strain for verifiable measurements in defining applied theater” should no longer be the focus of research. Investigations should be on “theory generating” research to shed light on how theater actually works. Jackson (as cited in Balfour, 2009) suggests that this change in focus can create space “for a more ‘playful’ relationship between practitioners and participants. As a response to this call, this dissertation explored how theater is actually experienced by the players from a lens that views communication as discursive reflection.

Also, a study by Howard (2004) revealed that practitioners may have shown the transformative potential of theater; however, a gap remains on building a theoretical base that may help explain the usefulness and applicability of interactive theater beyond a performance setting. Also, in her study, the focus is on documenting the performer’s growth in their participation in a critical interactive theater. In this particular undertaking, I focused on the experiences, stories, and narratives not only of the participants as actors and facilitators of the play, but also as players.

In addition, this study may contribute to participatory research owing to its exploration of co-creation of stories, reflective social action, collaboration and dialogue, which are considered crucial to participatory research processes. According to Bergold and Thomas (2012), the aim of participatory research is for science and practice to converge, where co-researchers can “step back cognitively from familiar routines, forms of interaction, and power relationships in order to fundamentally question and rethink established

interpretations of situations and strategies.” The authors further emphasized that requisites of participatory research are democracy and having a “safe space” where social actors can feel confident to disclose their opinions and experiences without fear of being at a disadvantage when expressing dissenting views. Contextual explanations that will emerge from this investigation may therefore offer insights to the study of participatory research.

What this study privileges is not an objective view to human experience characteristic of the positivist tradition because the theater and play processes to be investigated are in themselves, striving for dialogic interactions. Thus, the premise of this research is “a dialogic, social constructionist approach to the world” (Mumby, 1997) and “authentic communication, or dialogue, founded on the experience of direct, unmediated contact with others” (Craig, 1999). However, this investigation does not end at understanding. At the core, it problematizes the processes through which social reality is constructed in the communication phenomenon of experiencing theater as play. For this reason, constructivist grounded theory was chosen as methodology.

Using a constructivist grounded theory method, this research sought to understand, from a communication lens, how theater as play is experienced. Using methods designed specifically to capture social processes, the knowledge embodied through the theater as play experiences can be shared and examined. This is aligned with this particular investigation because experiences are embodied in the social actors’ performances during the

immersive play, and various scenes emerge as they play.

As a researcher, I invite the participants to become co-researchers so that multiple voices can be heard. A research that places importance on dialogic encounter necessitates self-reflexivity on the part of both researcher and the researched community. Peters (as cited in Jansen, 2002) asserts that "The motto of communication theory ought to be: Dialogue with the self, dissemination with the other. This is another way of stating the ethical maxim: Treat yourself like an other and the other like a self" (p. 486).

What this study intended to contribute are insights, contextualized explanations, and theoretical knowledge based on the social actors' experiences and narratives. Experience is gaining currency in the age of new media because what we have now is what Henry Jenkins describes as participatory culture - "a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices" (2006, p. 4). Jenkins went on to argue the need for pedagogical interventions on three concerns, namely, the participation gap, the transparency problem, and the ethics challenge. The first one notes that the youth are not given enough opportunities, experiences, skills, and knowledge so they can fully participate in civic action. The second problematizes how the youth can reflect on media's influence on their perceptions. The third is concerned about the breakdown of traditional forms of training and education that can nurture the

youth's roles as community participants.

In this regard, Jenkins emphasized the roles of play, performance, and simulation as few of the new skills that the young should hone. Play is said to be "the capacity to experiment with one's surroundings as a form of problem-solving" while performance refers to "the ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery" and lastly, simulation is "the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 6). Such view underscores the need to perform this grounded theory.

In addition, hopefully, this study may generate insights on the applications of theater in education that views theater not only as a technique, with the theatrical skills serving as mere "bag of tools," for enhancing instructional communication by the teacher, but rather as a discipline evolving a language of its own in realizing the intents of critical pedagogy.

Research Purpose

Habermas asserts that rationality is "constituted through the ability of dialogic partners to engage in communication that is free from coercion and constraint" (as cited in Mumby, 1997). In the same vein, Freire forwards the theory of dialogic action (1970), emphasizing the power of dialogue in raising social actors' critical consciousness, leading to transformation and emancipation. With these serving as anchors, the intent is to make analytic sense of the meanings and actions accorded by the participants to their 'theater as play' experiences.

The Bahay-bahayan design invites actors to engage in participatory processes, activated by play. The players' "performances" may then serve as lens through which the players and actors can make sense of their experiences, reflect on their actions and behaviors, and perhaps, re(shape) their identities.

Thus, this study sought to generate an abstract theoretical understanding of what it means to experience 'theater as play.' Through successive levels of comparative analysis, this constructivist grounded theory centers on the question "How do participants experience the Bahay-bahayan theater as play?"

Specifically, the research sought to answer the "How," "Why," "Under what conditions?," and "With which consequences?" in relation to theater as play experiences. Beliefs, actions, feelings were elicited and made sense of through interweaving, observing, listening and asking in-depth questions, with the aim of achieving a deep description of the entire reality.

Framing this study from the lens of communication as discursive reflection, I sought to connect coded data with theory generation by raising empirical data from the description state to a theoretical one. This is my attempt to contribute to reimagining theater in education for social change. By focusing on social actors' multiple construction of meanings and extending this to the action-reflection-action praxis espoused by Freire, I aim to contribute to the discourse of critical pedagogy.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study investigated the experiences of the actor-players who participated in the immersive historical fiction play “Pailah: Ugat ng Lipi.” This constructivist grounded theory is limited to the actor-players’ experiences during the co-creation of the play, and the actual play itself. The study shall also be limited to six participants in order to have depth and richness of data, which a qualitative research entails.

Also, since this research aims for a dialogic and reflexive stance, the researcher and the researched community shall be co-participants in the interpretation and analysis of data.

Definition of Key Terms

Bahay-bahayan System and Philosophy is a model theorized and applied by Los Baños community theater practitioner Gian Carlo de Jesus. Using this framework, traditional relationships are reframed, such as that of director and teacher to that of *facimuno*; actors and students to that of *kalaro*; stage and classroom to that of imagined and created spaces/learning environments.

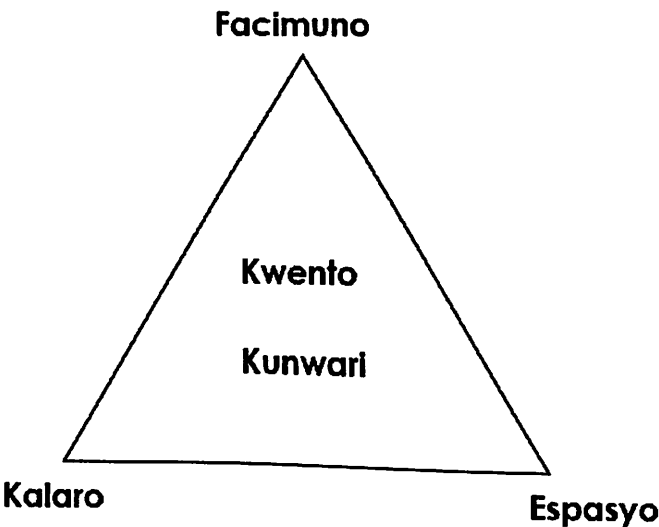


Fig. 1. Bahay-bahayan System and Philosophy (de Jesus, et al., 2017)

Bahay-bahayan Theater is participatory theater created using the Bahay-bahayan system and philosophy.

Critical Pedagogy is a paradigm that espouses education that encourages students to think critically, to analyze social conditions, and to evaluate information—particularly information related to power, identity and representation (Howard, 2004).

Dialogue involves communicative acts in an egalitarian environment aimed at deepening understanding and making positive changes through informed and value-laden action.

Immersive Theater is a kind of theater that invites audiences to experience a fictional world and engage in multisensorial elements, thus departing from the usual conventional theater where audiences passively watch.

Narratives are the “little stories” told by the actors and players as they immerse in the play. There is an emphasis on “little stories” because rather than reified plots (Boje, 2000), this research aspires to make the little narratives heard, even the fragmented stories if these are what will emerge from the participants’ sense-making.

Play in this research may refer to two concepts: 1) the Bahay-bahayan-designed immersive play where theater and play (see second definition) are one; and 2) the acts of creative play where opportunities for new perspectives and transformation emerge (Soloski, as cited in Shepard, 2005).

Positionality is where a researcher takes accountability for his/her research paradigms and his/her moral responsibility in representing and interpreting the subjects' voices (Madison, 2005).

Reflexivity as defined by Ryan (2014) is adopted in this research. Reflexivity means 1) making sense of experience in relation to self, others and contextual conditions; and importantly, 2) reimagining and/or planning future experience for personal and social ability.

Theater in Education is the application and use of theater for education, transformation, social change and development.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When a performance is over, what remains? Fun can be forgotten, but powerful emotion also disappears and good arguments lose their thread. When emotion and argument are harnessed to a wish from the audience to see more clearly into itself—then something in the mind burns. The event scorches on to the memory an outline, a taste, a trace, a smell—a picture. It is the play's central image that remains, its silhouette, and if the elements are rightly blended this silhouette will be its meaning, this shape will be the essence of what it has to say (Brook, 1996, p. 169).

Peter Brook's words on "seeing more clearly into itself" may speak of the power of theater and play to reveal more about ourselves than we can imagine. Examining the etymology of "theater" and "play" tells us that theater is from a Greek word which means "to see, to watch, or to observe," while that of play is from a Sanskrit word which means "the appearance of things" and "play as divine." An analogous term "drama," on the other hand, is also from a Greek word which means "do." From these, it can be gathered that theater, play, and drama converge in the notion of human experiences – that of seeing, appearing, and doing, all of which denote movement or action.

Experiences are said to be powerful teachers. Education theorist David Kolb asserts that the transformation of experience makes up the processes that creates knowledge. John Dewey's work, which Kolb acknowledges to be one of the foundations of experiential learning, states that there are non-reflective and reflective experiences. Those based on habits and dominant

ways of actions are non-reflective. Dewey argues that intelligence and knowledge mediate reflective experiences so people can be freed from the limits and bounds of tradition (Miettinen, 2000). Dewey's theorizing of experiential learning is from a philosophy of pragmatism which considers direct experience as the basis of teaching and learning methods. A different take is offered by Paulo Freire, who espouses a humanist and libertarian pedagogy. For Freire, there should not be a dichotomy between action and reflection. Education is about "consciously activating the subsequent development of experience" which for Freire, is achieved through true dialogue. Since dialogue entails a horizontal relationship, Freire made his point clear – "One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people" (1970, p. 95).

Thus, in this research, the view of communication as discursive reflection serves as lens in constructing a grounded theory based on the meanings ascribed by the participants of their experiences of the Bahay-bahayan participatory and immersive theater. Through Bahay-bahayan's participatory design, the participants experience theater as play. Play, according to Sutton-Smith is "a form of metacommunication far preceding language in evolution because it is also found in animals" (as cited in Salen & Zimmerman, 2006). Despite this contention, play is not often thought of as facilitating "authentic communication" because of the seemingly contradictory nature of pretend play as used in the adult learning context. The notion of play actually has many dimensions and levels.

Play and communication

Defining play is difficult because it is a process, not a thing (Kovatch, 2015). A classic play theory by German philosopher Friedrich Schiller asserts that human beings have a primary impulse to play, similar to how animals are. Schiller argues that the highest form of play is in the balance between the exercise of both imagination and intellect. Schiller theorizes that play has pedagogic value because it is "conducive to the liberation of the human spirit and to man's voluntary submission to self-imposed law" (Hein, 1968).

Since Bahay-bahayan has its origin in theater, I draw support from the work of Viola Spolin, who uses theater game techniques in teaching. Spolin contends that there are at least three levels of playing: 1) participation (fun and games); 2) problem solving (development of physical and mental perceiving tools); and 3) catalytic action (wherein opportunities arise that allow an individual to tap into the intuitive, to become spontaneous, so that breakthroughs and creativity can occur (as cited in Rieber, Smith & Noah, 1998). Taken altogether, these levels seem to be a continuum by which to locate the participants' experiences of theater as play.

As Kovatch defined it, play is indeed "pleasurable, separate from the real world, through imagination or rules, intrinsically motivated and often spontaneous." In organizational research however, applications of play have led to the continuous reframing of play into the seemingly paradoxical concept of serious play. According to Statler, Jacobs, and Heracleous (2011), serious play is reframed "as a practice characterized by the paradox of intentionality (when actors engage deliberately in a fun, intrinsically motivating activity as a means to achieve a serious, extrinsically motivated work objective." With this,

the question now is how do we bridge the world of reality and the world of fantasy. Bateson (2000) noted in his essay "A theory of play and fantasy" that play is metacommunicative, establishing a paradoxical frame where the messages in the play process simultaneously denote that "this is play," and at the same time denote actual, non-play-related events.

Considering these, authentic communication may arise because as Craig (1999) puts it, communicative understanding occurs "once we set aside the dualisms of mind and body, subject and object." This in turn enables direct, unmediated contact with others, which is how authentic communication or dialogue is defined. He cautions us though that this may be a fleeting experience that easily degrades into some form of inauthenticity. Still, play is the one theorized to be capable of placing us in a state of "flow." A theory that describes this and also often used in positive psychology is called the Flow Theory developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Simply put, flow is a mental state of complete absorption in the current experience. Optimal experience manifests as a deep sense of enjoyment.

When we are in a state of flow, the true self (as opposed to the false self) manifests. British psychologist Donald Winnicott calls this play and the sense of being real. To quote from a wiki entry, "Only the true self can be creative and only the true self can feel real." For Winnicott, the True Self is a sense of being alive and real in one's mind and body, having feelings that are spontaneous and unforced. This experience of aliveness is what allows people to be genuinely close to others, and to be creative. The "False Self" is a defense, a kind of mask of behavior that complies with others' expectations." This may imply that adult learning finds greater challenge in

connecting with this true self, and play is the "transitional" object" that can help accomplish this.

Relating this to authentic communication or dialogue, as viewed from the critical communication tradition, Craig (1999) wrote that "authentic communication occurs only in a process of discursive reflection that moves towards a transcendence that can never be fully and finally achieved - but the reflective process itself is progressively emancipatory."

Transformative potential of theater

The reflective process may arise through theater which, according to several studies, has the ability to foster dialogue. In a 2011 case study by Smith and Webb, participatory theater was revealed to be instrumental in helping a Rwandan community resolve personal conflicts and prompt dialogue with local authorities on the issue of land ownership. Not only did the audience members watch their own stories told from the perspective of outsiders, but they also got to play characters in the performances. With this, theater served like a mirror that encouraged the community members to reflect and act on their situation.

Umenyilorah opines that theater does not operate in a vacuum, which implies that theater's relevance depends on its accurate mirroring of the realities in a given socio-historical milieu. In Nigeria, for example, theater for development is conceptualized as "a problem solving, performance-oriented form of art" and "a process used in educating and conscientizing [sic] both the young old and unifying and articulating the community on socio-economic, political, environmental and religions [sic] problems" (2014, p. 3).

In the Philippine context, a manual on development theater was written by Balasoto, Rimando, and Roque in 1979. The manual was premised on the findings that rural theater proved to be effective for family planning communication. The authors drew the conceptual framework of development theater from the definitions of development communication by Nora Quebral. They thus defined development theater as “the purposive manipulation of theater as a medium for transmitting special messages to specific groups of receivers, so that they may consciously and actively participate in the attainment of national development objectives that will contribute to their general well-being and environmental improvement” (Balasoto, Rimando & Roque, 1979, p. 6). This definition departs from the use of theater mainly to entertain audiences and transitions to that of informing, motivating, and changing audiences’ behavior. Similar to what Umenyilorah asserts about theater reflecting the socio-historical conditions of the milieu where it belongs to, the development theater of the 1980s in the Philippines conceives of theater as a vehicle to communicate development ideas. It can be gleaned that from the quoted definition above, as suggested by the use of the words “manipulation,” “medium,” “transmit,” “receivers,” that the communication that transpires in the early years of development theater is measured through the effective use of signs and symbols (the message) from sender to receiver.

According to Craig (1999), the dialectical opposition between constitutive and transmission models of communication can be considered a paradox because the purpose of having a metamodel is to invite interactions among the theories, instead of rejecting one in favor of another. Thus, discussing the communication conceptual frame of the Philippine

development theater in the 90's may prove helpful, such as in keeping us alert of communication distortions in the process of transmission. Coincidentally, one of the authors, the late Leo Rimando, is trained as a scientist, and is also a theater director, which is similar to the dialectical dance of the arts and the sciences. Leo Rimando was also the mentor of Gian Carlo de Jesus in theater, and Rimando was the one who made the assertion that "Teaching is a performance."

Theater in education

The notion of teaching as a performance has been the subject of many studies. Pineau (1994) analyzed the metaphors used to describe the role of teachers, and argued that during those times, teaching as performance serves "as a means of enhancing instructional communication, rather than as a generative metaphor for examining educational experience." The metaphor of teacher as actor and teacher as artist reduces teaching to the use of style and theatricality to induce learners' motivation, instead of respecting the complex learning interactions that can emerge from the educational experiences. This implies that theater in education, when confined to the use of theatrical techniques by teachers who "perform" in an educational setting, remains dehumanizing and therefore problematic. Unfortunately, until today, hearing "Theater for Teachers" workshops still brings up images of teachers being trained in voice, improvisation, stage presence, scripting, timing, among other skills. Although these are much needed, a holistic view to the educational experience, one that encourages dialogue, reflexivity, creativity,

communication, collaboration, is becoming more important, particularly in the 21st century.

More recent applications of theater in education includes that of Landy and Montgomery, who applied the Mantle of the Expert approach to facilitate active construction of solutions among students on issues that affect them. Hageman (2017) noted that the way the approach distributed power between teacher and students allowed opportunities for students to reflect on issues for they are active participants compared with being passive receivers in a lecture. The Mantle of the Expert is a result of over 40 years of practice of UK-based drama educator Dorothy Heathcote. This approach reframes relationships because children are made to take on the roles of experts in an imaginary enterprise. The learners have to work together to carry out tasks that allow them to explore an issue aligned with the curriculum objectives. Aitken (2013) writes that this approach taps on three teaching modalities, namely, "inquiry learning; drama for learning (closely related to drama-in-education, or, as it is sometime called, process drama); and what we might call "expert framing", which involves children being positioned as adult experts" (p. 36).

In the Philippines, theater in education is one of the thrusts of the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA). Founded in 1967 by Cecile Guidote Alvarez, PETA is committed to having a people's theater instrumental in empowering the society through creative and cultural work. PETA succinctly describes what it does in the area of theater in education as this,

working to help teachers become more creative and inspiring in the classroom; to enhance the quality of education, especially in our public schools, through the arts and the theater; to work with the youth to help produce a new generation of Filipinos endowed with a limitless sense of imagination, pride of place, love for country, and a sensitivity to care for fellow Filipinos and fellow humans; to generate a grounded, rooted, comprehensive theater arts programs in schools that is Filipino in perspective and universalist in dimension (PETA website, n.d.).

Emphasizing the need for a grounded and rooted theater program, PETA remains to be a leading movement in applying theater for education and social change. In the university town of Los Banos, Laguna, also declared a science and nature city, a homegrown theater system and philosophy emerged. Rooted from the experiences of a community theater practitioner who had to be resourceful, creative, and resilient in order to keep a struggling theater group alive in the midst of challenges like insufficiency in funds, lack of institutional support, issues in commitment among the youth members, the Bahay-bahayan system and philosophy came to the fore.

Bahay-bahayan system and philosophy

Gian Carlo de Jesus, a cultural worker and community theater practitioner, developed this approach premised on the idea that it is no coincidence that the words for theater and play are synonymous. Theater is also called “play” while the Filipino counterpart is called “dula” which is a Cebuano word for “play.” It can be observed that a child’s play comes closest to the art of theatre as it involves several similar creative processes, particularly role-playing. But upon close examination, he realized that nothing

comes closer to theatre than the game of “playing house” or what is called “Bahay-bahayan.”

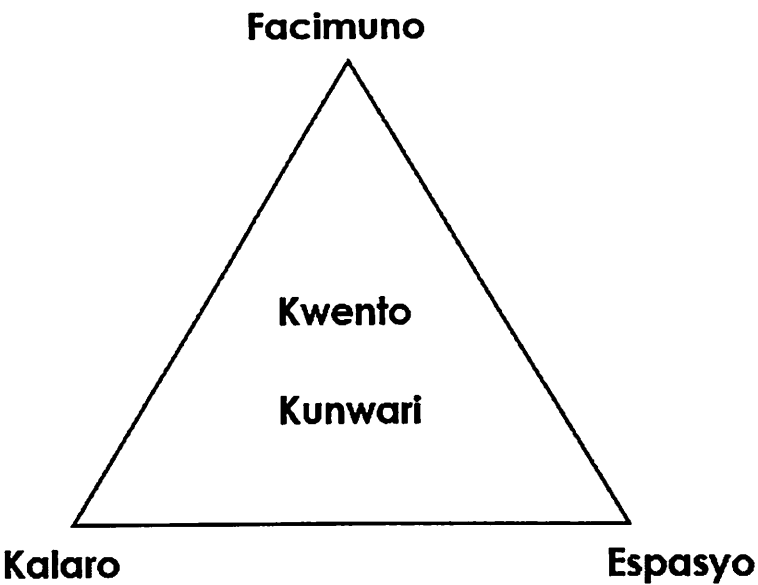
The act of playing Bahay-bahayan begins with a creative impulse. A child sees any space, or any object such as a box, a string, an empty cup, and the child feels an inclination to play. A scene unfolds, and suddenly the space is transformed into a restaurant or into a school. The make-believe play is a space that the child inhabits, and with the power of imagination, the child leads the scenes. The invitation to enter the make-believe world comes not only through explicit invitation, but more often than not, with an action suggestive of what the playmate should do. In other words, the roles are revealed through the play. In the acts of play, the imagined becomes real in the minds of the children. German educator Friedrich Froebel described play to be “the purest, most spiritual activity of man at this stage, and, at the same time, typical of human life as a whole – of the inner hidden natural life in man and all things. It gives therefore, joy, freedom, contentment, inner and outer rest, peace with the world. It holds the sources of all that is good” (as cited in Sniegoski, 1994). This implies that play is an educational experience for children.

In the case of Bahay-bahayan as play, what are present are the director (child/ren who begin/s the play); actors (children who engage in the created play); setting (any imagined space); props and costume (materials and objects present in the area); and since the scenes unfold through the interactions, the “script” emerges too. What the children have is a premise or

the context of the make-believe play, and this can take them as far as their imagination allows.

The article “*Bahay-bahayan bilang isang system ng pagtuturong may lapit at lapat sa karanasan ng mga Pilipino*” is the first publication detailing the system and philosophy of Bahay-bahayan, its origin in theater, and its application in a teacher’s workshop and in the classroom. De Jesus et al. (2017) presented this figure showing the interrelated elements of *facimuno*, *kalaro*, and *espasyo*, and the role of *kwento* and *kunwari*.

Fig. 1. *Bahay-bahayan* system and philosophy



Theoretical Basis

Having discussed Bahay-bahayan’s assumptions of knowledge as co-constructed and activated by play, the theoretical basis shall now be discussed.

Bahay-bahayan is a distillation of various theater disciplines. As much as it draws from the values of Bahay-bahayan as "make-believe play," the system and philosophy also find theoretical support from theater scholars. French theater director Antonin Artaud, noted for his work "The Theatre and its Double," contends that the fixed forms of literary masterpieces no longer appeal to the audiences because they are no longer responsive to the needs of the time. Applied in theater, he proposed an avant-garde theater form called Theatre of Cruelty where the audiences are assaulted, not physically nor emotionally, but rather through the senses for he believes that it is through the senses that people think first. Bahay-bahayan draws from Artaud's suggestion that a play should not just be a staged performance in front of a passive audience. Instead, a play allows us to feel intense emotions and experiences that we may be unprepared for, but calls for a response. As stated by Artaud, "we abolish the stage and the auditorium and replace them by a single site without partition or barrier of any kind, which will become the theatre of the action" (1958, p. 96).

Another influence is the work of Polish theater director and theorist Jerzy Grotowski who proposed a theater of poverty. For Grotowski, when theater is stripped of the superfluous elements, it is revealed that theater is still theater even without make-up, costumes, performance area, and even lighting and sound effects. What is essential is the relationship between actor and spectator and their "perceptual 'live' communion" (Grotowski, 2002, p. 19). The values of minimalism and resourcefulness are aligned to Grotowski's call to embrace a theater of poverty, as opposed to "rich theater" which Grotowski describes as the contemporary theater "rich in flaws" (p. 19). This is a critique

to theater's use of hybrid assimilated elements to equal that of film and television, which are entirely different media. Grotowski strongly asserts that, "The acceptance of poverty in theatre, stripped of all that is not essential to it, revealed to us not only the backbone of the medium, but also the deep riches which lie in the very nature of art-form." This is worth noting considering that the Philippines is a developing country; hence, spending too much on pompous and grandiose costumes, props, and set may not be realistic and practical.

Bahay-bahayan also believes in an infinite number of possible audience-spectator relationships just like Grotowski. However, for Grotowski, theater can be defined as what takes place between spectator and actor, and all other things are supplementary. For Bahay-bahayan, the spectator is no more because he/she becomes a *kalero* (co-player). Also, in Bahay-bahayan, a third element – the *espasyo* (space), is necessary, and not just supplementary.

The work and philosophy of German theater director Bertolt Brecht is also influential to Bahay-bahayan. Brecht's epic theater is a critique to a realist form of theater that Brecht argues to have the tendency to pacify the audiences. Because of Brecht's Marxist influence, he aimed for a social activist theater that intends to invite spectators to analyze beyond the theater space, and make changes in their own realities. Similar with Artaud and Grotowski, Brecht believes that theater is not mere entertainment. Brecht's epic theater though is didactic and is known to espouse the "alienation effect" or the use of elements and techniques to let the audiences know that what they are watching is not reality itself, but an enactment.

For Brecht, the appeal should be on logic and reason, and not on feelings alone. Benjamin (1998) explains epic theater as this: "Epic theatre does not reproduce conditions; rather, it discloses, it uncovers them. This uncovering of the conditions is effected by interrupting the dramatic processes; but such interruption does not act as a stimulant; it has an organizing function. It brings the action to a standstill in mid-course and thereby compels the spectator to take up a position towards the action, and the actor to take up a position towards his part" (p. 100). Bahay-bahayan is influenced by Brecht's notion of reframing relationships and of breaking the invisible "fourth wall" or the wall separating the audiences and the actors.

These, along with Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed and Peter Brook's "A play is play," serve as influences to the Bahay-bahayan system and philosophy.

Bahay-bahayan Theater

Applied in theater and drawing inspiration from Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed, the Bahay-bahayan approach is for the actors to engage the audiences by breaking the so-called "fourth wall." It aims to elicit the rich creativity innate among audiences so that they will not remain passive receivers. Thus, in Bahay-bahayan theater, audiences are called "*kalaro*" and the director is called "*facimuno*" (a play on the words facilitator and pasimuno (the one who starts the play) and with the variant "*facimuknow*" (the one who starts the play and is someone knowledgeable on the subject matter). The third element is the *espasyo*, which is also considered the third teacher because the co-constructed space is where the learning interactions are

activated.

The first *Bahay-bahayan* play, an adaptation of Thornton Wilder's "Our Town" was staged in 2015 in a barangay basketball court, that was transformed into Los Baños Grove in the imagination of the *kalaro*. Expensive props and set design were no longer needed because the play respects the *kalaro*'s ability to imagine and visualize. Since the setting is now Grove, the *kalaro* gradually found themselves responding to the *facimunos* and slowly being immersed in Los Banos life during the 90's. In the said performance, the *kalaro* had a shared sense of history as they tapped into a collective memory.

As the level of participation deepened, so did the agency of the *kalaro*. In the case of the site-specific immersive play "Tonneru Sorosoro," the *kalaro* experienced a day in the Japanese war period circa 1945 in a local town in Batangas City. Instead of the conventional theater approach, Bahay-bahayan was used for three objectives: 1) to elicit stories from the community itself so that local history is preserved and there will be a greater chance that the community shall have a sense of ownership of the tourism project; 2) to develop the youth groups' confidence in "performing" despite the lack of formal theater training; 3) to co-construct an immersive play out of the gathered stories with the community residents using local talents and locally sourced materials and resources.

The experiences of the *kalaro* were interesting because instead of learning about the town's local history through museum visits or class discussions, they experienced what it was like to live during the war. In the "Tonneru Sorosoro" experience, the interrelated elements of *facimuno*, *kalaro*, *espasyo*, activated by *kwento* and *kunwari*, were in effect.

***Bahay-bahayan* applied in teaching**

If such multisensorial engagement can be done in theater, then the classroom can also be a venue for play and experiential learning. The teacher becomes a *facimuno* as the one who facilitates learning and designs the learning environment. The students become the *kalaro* or those who engage in inquiry, exploration, discovery, and knowledge co-construction. The classroom becomes *espasyo* or spaces that will make the theme and context of learning alive in the imagination; thereby making each lesson a constructivist process. The curriculum objectives become the *kwento* as teaching-learning experiences become purposive plays designed to meet the learning objectives. The theme becomes the “*kunwari*” – a world of limitless possibilities, which sets the context of real-world, authentic learning.

De Jesus et al. (2017) described that *Bahay-bahayan* is anchored on experiential and constructivist learning. When applied in a College English class in the University of the Philippines Los Baños, it was revealed that using the *Bahay-bahayan* approach improved the learners’ engagement and motivation, and provided opportunities for collaborative learning. One example cited is a particular lesson on paragraph development. Using the interrelated elements of *kalaro*, *facimuno*, *espasyo*, *kwento* and *kunwari*, the lesson design became interactive, inclusive, and participatory. The *kwento* is the learning outcomes based on curricular objectives. The *kunwari* was drawn from the theme of “Indigenous Peoples Month” celebration as it was October then. The *facimuno* then made use of available resources to design the learning environment. This includes using texts on Macli-ing Dulag and his heroism, inviting the Filipiniana Dance Troupe to showcase and start

conversations on indigenous dances, introducing the Baybayin system of writing, and listening to the sharing of a cultural worker colleague on the plight of the lumads. The learning outcomes were therefore contextualized in a rich and festive celebration of the indigenous peoples. The *kalaro* engaged in conversations, wrote paragraphs individually and collaboratively, negotiated with each other, and actively constructed their own learning.

This suggests that reframing the teacher-student relationships from the traditional hierarchical one often found in lecture-discussions to that of *facimuno-kalaro*, with careful consideration of space and the role of play, led to a different learning experience.

***Bahay-bahayan* applied in training**

With its philosophy and framework that was prototyped in theater and then in pedagogy, *Bahay-bahayan* was also applied in organizational training. In training, the paradox is that when participatory methods are facilitated by “outsiders” or the so-called experts, the participants will more likely operate within the given realities. Being the muted groups for the longest time, they have been socialized into thinking, behaving, and acting in certain ways. Because *Bahay-bahayan*, inspired by Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, is participatory, it is respectful of every person’s critical capacity to analyze reality.

In the case of the Mangrove Paddle Boat Association, one of the people’s organizations in the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park to be trained on the topic of UNESCO regulations on sustainable tourism, it was revealed that organizational conflicts and lack of group cohesion will

inhibit them from learning as a group. Hence, the document-centric training expected of the trainers (i.e. modules on sustainability regulations, zoning, signages, communication plan, etc.) had to be grounded on the group's realities. Using the *Bahay-bahayan*, the workshop was designed to be context- and culture-based. Consistent with the *Bahay-bahayan* framework of *facimuno*, *kalaro*, and *espasyo*, the trainee-trainer relationship was reframed, and the training place was transformed into a space where the participants can learn constructively. The Mangrove boaters found themselves "acting out" roles of family members, building their houses out of found materials in the Sabang forest and seashore, receiving "mock" UNESCO grants, planning their tourism projects (and actually executing it), and preparing for the "mock" arrival of the UNDP officials.

What appears to be acts of play eventually revealed the group's factions and divisive tendencies. It was also through play that the participants themselves verbalized what their group needs. To quote the eldest in the group, "*Madami nang pumunta dito para mag-training, pero ngayon ko lang naintindihan 'to.'*" (Many have come here to train us, but it is only now that I begin to understand this).

Overall, *Bahay-bahayan* emphasizes the power of play. David Bohm (1996) asserts that dialogue is playful in a sense that people must be willing to suspend presuppositions and prejudices, that is, play with new ideas, as they strive towards a common meaning. He observed that our natural ability to play, learn, and explore diminishes as soon as we become too conscious of our roles. When we observe children playing *bahay-bahayan*, they reveal truths about their values, their personalities, their behavior, their very culture. The

act of playing seems to bring us closer to our true selves because when we play, we are not characters or actors who have to subscribe to social norms.

This research thus focused on the meanings that can be constructed from the *kalaro*'s experiences of play in the context of the immersive *Bahay-bahayan* play "*Pailah: Ugat ng Lipi*."

Dialogue and reflexivity

Theater, with the cognitive and visceral experiences that it gives, may help prompt dialogue and reflection. According to Bakhtin, dialogue "is a multi-layered process that constantly unfolds throughout time and possesses virtually no generic characteristics" (Kim, 2004, p. 55). Being multi-layered, it respects multiple voices and different worldviews. To understand dialogue, Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia, which refers to the co-existence of numerous voices, should be understood. For Bakhtin, communication participants bring with them a world view with its own meanings and values. If the interactions between or among the different worldviews are mutual and reciprocal, these will eventually influence or condition one another. New meanings will then emerge. However, this is predicated on the communication participants' openness and willingness to suspend judgment and willingness to accommodate worldviews different from their own. This respect for multiple meanings therefore arises through dialogues between differing world views and voices (Kim, 2004).

Similarly, Habermas (1984) argues that participants, capable of language and action, constructs dialogue in a way that understanding is reached based on validity claims and not power claims. For Habermas,

rationality is "constituted through the ability of dialogic partners to engage in communication that is free from coercion and constraint" (as cited in Mumby, 1997). This implies that the way reality is constructed is through social action, rather than through independent mental processes.

A study on dialogue revealed that dialogic communication helps organizational members to level traditional power differences by empowering all communication participants to share their perspectives, experiences, and contributions (Holopainen, 2010). In the area of social work, multiple perspectives are also recognized, thus dialogue and reflection are integral to organizing. According to Shepard (2005), postmodern social work practice is most potent when its intention is to listen to life stories, understand and engage in these differences, and recognize that there are countless narratives coming from diverse communities and cultures.

Another study on reflective dialogue in the context of classrooms revealed that it is creativity, more than explicit reasoning, that plays a greater role in generating productive dialogues (Wegerif, 2007). It was further observed that the level and extent of creativity found in classroom dialogues is promoted through educational design. Wegerif also calls for approaches that foster understanding to help educators incorporate creativity and dialogue in learning.

Dialogues spring from deep reflection. According to Ryan (2014), reflection "is an intensely personal undertaking, yet a conscious awareness can prompt deep learning about our relationship with the world and the people around us" (p.7). Being both an individual and a social process, reflection may lead people to interrogate how their own personal understandings are

mediated by dominant worldviews. In this regard, Ryan argues that what can be used as lens to understand such dynamics is that of Margaret Archer's theories of reflexivity.

Archer (2007) defines reflexivity as "the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa" (p. 4). Archer further presents these modes of reflexivity: "1) Communicative reflexives: Those whose internal conversations require completion and confirmation by others before resulting in courses of action; 2) Autonomous reflexives: Those who sustain self-contained internal conversations, leading directly to action; 3) Meta-reflexives: Those who are critically reflexive about their own internal conversations and critical about effective action in society; 4) Fractured reflexives: Those whose internal conversations intensify their distress and disorientation rather than leading to purposeful courses of action" (p. 93). These modes are present in people depending on the contexts and situations, but Archer argues that an individual has a dominant mode. Thus, understanding our reflexive processes is crucial in developing self-awareness.

What this implies, in the context of this particular study, is that reflection may be a response to social actors' experiences of a performance, and such reflection may prompt action at a later time.

Stories and narratives

Storytelling is theorized to be "the most basic and universal of all human activities" (Miller, 2002, p. 84). Walter Fisher contends that people make sense of their relationships and social interactions through a narrative mode. They also base their decision making within such narrative framework.

To quote Fisher, people “experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends” (as cited in Miller, p. 85). In comparison with a paradigm that views people as essentially rational, in the narrative paradigm, people are viewed as essentially storytellers. Rationality arises through the coherence and fidelity of the stories told. In this investigation, stories of the players are considered the “text” because these are viewed to be their interpretations of some aspects of their experiences.

Engaging and understanding stories different from yours is akin to engaging in a dialogue. For Freire, a dialogue between the storyteller and the listener can be framed as a mode of practice called popular education. As cited in Shepard (2005), Freire asserts that giving players avenues to tell their stories serves these purposes: “it allows group members to learn about each other’s histories; 2) it allows different members to narrate their own stories on their own; and 3) it offers a playful outlet for group development and cohesion” (p. 65).

In a similar vein, Mitchelle and Egudo (2003) forward that life stories are socially constructed, in a sense that stories are exchanged among people and stories are oral. Walter Ong emphasizes the need to find distinct ways to introduce the telling of story in diverse contexts and situations because “narrative originality” depends less on making up new stories. Rather, it lodges more into managing interactions with audiences at the time of the telling of stories. Ong further argues that in oral cultures, audiences “must be brought to respond, often vigorously” (2002, p. 52). Thus, when actors see themselves in the act of seeing, or observe themselves in the act of becoming,

in what Augusto Boal calls "metaxis," which means existing in two different worlds at once (Linds, 2002), the storytelling that emerges become rich and dynamic.

Overall, the literature review reveals that many studies have been conducted on the potential of theater as agent of social transformation. However, a gap remains on audiences' experiences of theater as "play," and how this can be investigated from a lens that views communication as discursive reflection. Also, existing literature on dialogic processes of learning and reflexivity implies a need for a middle range grounded theory describing the social processes emerging from theater as play experiences. Considering that communication through dialogue is a generative and multi-layered process, which according to Bakhtin, has virtually no generic characteristics because dialogue and reflexivity constantly unfolds, investigating the multiple realities taking shape through communication is therefore an important contribution to knowledge construction.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This grounded theory engaged in a systematic collection and analysis of qualitative data to come up with findings that are grounded in the participants' narratives of their experiences in the immersive play "*Pailah: Ugat ng Lipi*." From a lens that views communication as discursive reflection, this grounded theory aspired for reflexivity in an attempt to obtain a theoretical understanding of what it means to experience theater as play. Using methods designed specifically to capture social processes, the knowledge embodied through the theater as play experiences can be rendered explicit.

According to Charmaz (2006), the hallmarks of sound grounded theory analysis include the constant comparative method, theoretical sampling, and theoretical saturation along with memo writing and abstraction of conceptual ideas, which lead to theory generation.

Charmaz (p. 187) defined the constant comparative method as "a method of analysis that generates successively more abstract concepts through inductive processes of comparing data with data, data with category, category with category and category with concept." Throughout the analytic process in this study, constant comparative analyses were used to: (a) compare different people's beliefs, actions, and experiences, (b) compare data from the same individuals with themselves at different points in time, (c) compare incident with incident, (d) compare codes with categories, (e)

compare categories with other categories, and (f) compare categories with memos.

Specifically, the experiences of those with theater and those with no theater training were compared. Also, the experiences of teachers or adults and students were compared. Constant comparison was also used when analyzing the experiences of the same participants in the pre-production phase and in the actual play.

The play experiences that were studied in this grounded theory involve both the process of constructing the play among the Pailah cast, and the process of opening the play to be experienced by the public, or the so-called 'audience-players.'

Research Design

Focused on experiences of play, which are generative, spontaneous, and in flux, a qualitative research design was employed. Qualitative research is rooted in philosophies asserting that there are multiple realities, and that ways of knowing are subjective, situated, and contextual (Merrigan & Huston, 2004).

The study was approached from an interpretive-critical paradigm in qualitative communication research. This paradigm is deemed suited for this investigation owing to its focus on dialogic methods, and its attempt to contribute to empowering the social actors "by providing them with new resources for thinking, feeling, and acting" as explained by Lindlof and Taylor (2011, p. 11). Lindlof and Taylor further note that one of the ways by which

critical theory intersects with qualitative methods is that critical theory meshes with qualitative research “by its embrace of overlapping interpretivist premises – for example, that social action could be viewed as a “text” amenable to both description and judgment” (2011).

From a framework of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia, this study is anchored on a premise that individuals possess their own world view, and multiple voices are considered in dialogic interactions. Bakhtin further theorizes that multiple meanings generated through communicative interactions may happen only if utterances are “un-finalized or centrifugal and willing to accommodate one another” (as cited in Kim, 2004). Heteroglossia, or multiple meanings, is described to be “the creative elaboration as a result of dialogical interaction between differing world views and voices” (Kim, 2004, p. 55).

In line with this, grounded theory was employed because this is analogous to Bakhtin's notion of communication based on continuously unfolding dialogic interactions. Charmaz (2006) asserts that grounded theory methods adhere to systematic, yet flexible guidelines for gathering and analyzing data. It therefore provides room for rigorous and analytic sense-making, while being open to subjective meanings and emergent processes.

Research Method

The constructivist grounded theory process as detailed by Charmaz (2006) was employed. Its main goal is an in-depth study of the phenomenon of experiencing theater as play as it occurs in real life. In so doing,

participants' behaviour, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, are interpreted from a social constructionist perspective.

Central to the process of grounded theory is concurrently collecting, coding, and analyzing data. Through memoing and constant comparison, I raised the empirical data from the description level to a theoretical understanding.

I first immersed in the research setting, then through purposeful sampling, I identified participants with intimate knowledge of the play experiences. As soon as I entered the field, data collection commenced, alongside data analysis. I kept memos which served as preliminary analytic notes about any ideas that occur. The focus group discussion and narrative interviews were transcribed. From here, I did initial coding, which entailed attaching labels to data segments to describe what each segment is about. These codes guided me on possible areas to explore further. I then ventured into focused coding where line-by-line codes are elevated to a higher level once empirical data is tested against them. Finally, I looked out for in-vivo codes, or the codes that are taken from the research participants' own language.

What enables the capture of social representation processes such as feelings, images, and actions, is narrative. Czarniawska (2010) writes that narrative is a form of knowledge, a form of social life, and a form of communication. Boje (2000) argues that traditional narrative methods require a plot and a coherence. He opines that this view presents a crisis in a sense

that narrative methods do not address what to do with “non-linear, almost living storytelling that is fragmented, polyphonic (many voiced) and collectively produced” (p. 1). Since this particular investigation is inclined to emergent knowledge co-construction, it respects stories that flow, emerge, and not at all static.

According to Bajc (2012), theoretically interesting social activity can be identified using Peircean abduction. Bajc argues that highly contextual research gives the researcher opportunities to develop and adjust data collection and analysis to specific contexts and social situations. To quote from Bajc (2012),

Data analysis begins neither with inductive nor deductive reasoning. By initially disassociating the data from their context, specific theoretical debates, and the experience of data collection in the field, the ethnographer is able to play with the data freely and let this process generate a surprising discovery. This discovery is then articulated through a dialog among insight, contextualized empirical evidence, and theoretical knowledge. Leaving open the possibilities of insight and discovery, abductive ethnography is a strategy of unforeclosed possibilities.

Thus, the data, namely, participant observation, narrative interviews, focus group discussion, and video elicitation, collected through an iterative process, served as sources of the successive levels of constant comparison. Consistent with grounded theory, thick description helped make clear the emergent meanings, and this process continued until theoretical saturation was achieved.

Charmaz (2008) describes grounded theory as starting with inductive logic and later moving into abductive reasoning. This way, I became cognizant of the emergent empirical findings, while also accounting for surprising findings in the collected data. The process tapped into imaginative interpretations and checked these against observed data, which through successive levels of interpretations, later arrived at the most plausible interpretation.

Setting of the Study

The setting of this study is the immersive historical fiction play "*Pailah: Ugat ng Lipi*." A school with a panoramic view of Mount Banahaw and set in nature, Colegio Monterei de Pila Child Development Inc. serves as locale of the study. Popularly called "CMP," the school's educational approach is inspired by the philosophies and works of Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner. Its founder, Edna Monreal, is an advocate of holistic education and believes that academic learning must be balanced with life skills and strong values formation.

"*Pailah*" served as venue for the theater as play experiences among the research participants. Being immersive and collaborative, the play is not the conventional proscenium type of theater where audiences take their respective seats to watch as the actors perform in front of them. Instead, the audiences take on roles and engage in tasks akin to a live role-playing game.

Participants of the Study

Being wide in scope and permeating the social experience, the participants of this study need not be too many.

Also, since qualitative research is after richness of data and depth of experiences, six participants took part in the capturing of social experiences and representations. In order to understand and investigate the players' experiences, knowledge, and worldviews, the participants are teachers and students who experienced and co-facilitated the *Bahay-bahayan* theater as play. They are the ones who can tell their stories best.

Data Sources

Participant observation was conducted in natural settings so that the play experiences were more accurately noted. Since *Bahay-bahayan* and its philosophy of theater as play places social actors in alternate realities (in the spirit of play), the act of experiencing the "play" is considered the natural setting because in such environment, patterns and behaviours are revealed, hence making the social processes emerge.

Focus group discussion and narrative interviews were also conducted. Chase explains that narratives do not only describe what happened, but also enable participants to express emotions, thoughts, and interpretations (as cited in Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). In other words, it is not only the stories that are captured, but also people's understanding of who they are. This is aligned with the reflexive orientation of this research. Narrative inquiry, being

concerned with the study of entire stories, rather than with eliciting certain kinds of material, is therefore most suited in this investigation.

The narrative interviews are aided by video elicitation. Since play has an emergent quality, it is layered and saturated with interpretation. Video elicitation was done by prompting discussion and reflection and stimulating recall during the interviews and focus groups. I showed the participants videos of the play experiences, and they narrated what happened, how they felt, and acted in certain sequences. We also paused the video when they had comments, so they could further elaborate on select scenes.

Ethical Considerations

Measures were taken to ensure that informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy of the research participants are safeguarded. Since this research is after contextual explanation of human experiences, informing the participants of what the research is about and all aspects of the study that enable them to make a decision for participating voluntarily is an ethical requirement. Thus, informed consent was first obtained. The significance of the research and its contribution to existing knowledge, and to the participants as well, were thoroughly explained. In addition, the participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of their participation.

Also, since the research used photo and video documentation, consent forms were gathered.

Data analysis and interpretations

Charmaz (2006) espoused the use of constant comparison method, and this involved going back and forth to data collection and analysis. The initial codes, that became focused codes, then yielded concepts that relate to the same phenomenon. These similar concepts were elevated to categories that have dimensions and properties.

Analysis through comparisons was done by listing all possible meanings, choosing concepts that appear significant, and validating against empirical data. A few of the field notes I kept landed as entries in my memo, and my memos represented how my understanding of the phenomenon being studied changed and evolved through time. I kept notes both on my concrete observations, as well as methodological notes specific to who to talk to or what to probe on, together with my hunches, interpretations, and hypothesis. Since constructivist grounded theory is fluid, I treated the memos analytically, and this led me to define categories through their empirical properties. Finally, when theoretical saturation was achieved, a middle range theory linking the abstract concepts emerged from the data.

In addition, this grounded theory intended for plausible interpretations through triangulating data using participant observations, focus group discussions, and narrative interviews aided by video elicitation. Through this method, interpretations were compared across more than one data source or data collection approach. Overall, as primary research instrument, I kept a questioning, reflective, and dialogic stance.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

With the spontaneous nature of play, the communicative practices that emerge with it form a significant resource of implicit knowledge. Its theoretical underpinnings have not been codified. Using a constructivist grounded theory method, this research sought to understand, from a communication lens, how theater as play is experienced. Using methods designed specifically to capture social processes, the knowledge embodied through the theater as play experiences can be investigated and shared.

Charmaz (2006, p. 187) defined the constant comparative method as “a method of analysis that generates successively more abstract concepts through inductive processes of comparing data with data, data with category, category with category and category with concept.” Throughout the analytic process in this study, constant comparative analyses were used to: (a) compare different people's beliefs, actions, and experiences, (b) compare data from the same individuals with themselves at different points in time, (c) compare incident with incident, (d) compare codes with categories, (e) compare categories with other categories, and (f) compare categories with memos.

Specifically, the experiences of those with theater and those with no theater training were compared. Also, the experiences of teachers and students were compared. Constant comparison was also used when

analyzing the experiences of the same participants in the pre-production phase and in the actual play.

The play experiences that were studied in this grounded theory involve both the process of constructing the play among the Pailah cast, and the process of opening the play to be experienced by the public, or the so-called 'audience-players.' The privileged voice in this discourse are the actor-players, who are called *facimunos* in *Bahay-bahayan* parlance. The *facimunos* are the characters who facilitate the story world, such as the chieftain, the *babaylans* or the priestesses, the warriors, noblemen, the servants, and the blacksmiths. On the other hand, the audience-players, who are called *kalaro* (players) in *Bahay-bahayan*, include the students, parents, and guests who were invited to experience the play. They are invited to assume roles (nobles, priestesses, warriors, servants, blacksmiths) and to fulfill tasks consistent with their roles.

Before delving on the social processes detailing the players' experiences, an overview of what happened during the co-construction of the play among the director, student, and teacher players is presented through photos in the table below.

Table 1. Key activities in the pre-production phase

	
Director introduces himself to the student actors	Students get to know each other and choose their Pailah name
	
Students were grouped into Balais and constructed their Balai name	Each Balai transforms a space into their own home
	
Balai members decorate their houses using materials they can source around	Balai members dress up as how they visualize their roles should look like



Balai members do various tasks depending on their roles



Balai members try out variations of drum beat signals



Balai members get familiar with the different drum beat signals



Balai members try out different variations of music for key scenes in the play



Balai members try out different steps for the journey walk



Balai members make an inventory of available costumes



Balai members make an inventory of available props



Balai members learn about the Laguna Copperplate and what is written on it



Balai members learn more about the history of Pila as they create the origin story of their own Balai



Balai members learn more about the origin of Pailah by performing tasks and rituals in a Bahay-bahayan manner



Balai members role playing the origin story that they thought of for their Balai



Teacher actors joined the play



Student and teacher actors iterate story scenes in the play



Part of the Pailah setting co-constructed by teachers and student using available spaces and materials



The first group picture of the student cast of Pailah: Ugat ng Lipi (Note that the costumes were chosen by them. After doing research into pre-colonial culture, they modified their costumes having realized the difference between pre-colonial and colonial Philippine clothing.)



Second group photo of the Pailah cast. Most members are wearing costumes, accessories, and props more appropriate to depict pre-colonial Philippines.



Students and teacher actors facilitated the iteration of the play among themselves



Student and teacher actors facilitated the first iteration of the play among invited audiences or *kalaro*

In the same vein, the series of playful experiences that the ‘audiences’ or ‘players’ had gone through in the immersive play is presented through photos in the table below.

Table 2. Key activities in the actual performance inside the immersive play

	
Facimunos invite audiences/players to join the <i>Paglalakbay</i> from Paggalangan to Pinagbayanan (parking lot to school premises)	Facimunos welcome everyone to Pailah and narrates why they had to journey from their former home to this home
	
Audiences enter the world of Pailah, and meets the chieftain of ancient Pailah, Datu Jayadewa, and the key characters	Facimunos present a Creation myth, and audiences are invited to play bit roles (saling-pusa/salingket)



Audiences silently witness the Babaylans performing ritual



Audiences, now turning into players, get to know the social roles in pre-colonial times



Players find their respective balais and (names of which are written in their tickets) and designate roles for each member



Players go to their physical dwellings all around the performance area



Balai members decorate their houses using materials they can source anywhere



Balai members demonstrate norms in ancient Pailah, like kneeling when they pass by the shrine



Balai members perform gestures of respect towards fellow society members



Lady Angkatan arrives to say that the Chieftain of Tondo requests Pailah Chieftain Datu Jayadewa to help resolve the debt case of her family.



Datu Jayadewa agrees to decide on the matter, with the help of his council



Chieftain calls the players in the tribal hall and gives tasks and corresponding rules to each role



Players who play nobility roles decide on the Lady Angkatan debt case



Players playing priestesses' roles learn and dance the Babaylan ritual



Player playing apprentice to the priestesses learn the harvest ritual dance



Players playing the warrior roles make weapons, spears, and other tools for battle and defense



Players playing the blacksmith roles make clay pots and earthenwares



Players playing head servant roles learned and wrote Baybayin



Players playing lower level servant roles made accessories



Chieftain calls players and asks them to present what they learned or made



Rewards of gold are given to those who perform their tasks well



Players are called to announce the Chieftain's decision on the Lady Angkatan debt case, and the Laguna Copperplate documenting the decree is presented



Lady Angkatan presents her daughter as wife to Datu Jayadewa. They perform a courtship dance ritual.



Chieftain announces that the ritual of marking the land as their new home (*Pagtatarak*) will be held together with the wedding. Babaylans lead the ritual.



A warring tribe claims for the hand of the lady, and players prepare to engage in a battle of wit and strength against the Bakunawa tribe.



Players learn about the game rules and how to prevail over the Bakunawa tribe.



Players engage in games against the Bakunawa tribe (arm wrestling, knowledge on medicinal plants, and riddles).



Pailah wins and the wedding of Datu Jayadewa and the lady is held, as all Pailah community members join the celebration



As the Pailah community celebrates, they witness the arrival of the Spaniards, signalling the next phase of history.

Through the grounded theory method, these are the social processes revealed to be at work as participants experienced theater as play.

Pagpapasigla (Activating)

On the first day of pre-production, the students who would make up the cast of Pailah were gathered. Instead of an audition where talent in acting would be demonstrated, a Bahay-bahayan style of playing was introduced. Student C recounted his experience:

Naaalala ko po is yung pinag-grupo-grupo po kami noon, tapos pinaghiwa-hiwalay yung mga magkaka-close sa school para maki-halobilo sa iba. Parang ginawa po kami na dating tao tapos pinaranas po sa amin kung ano po yong mapi-feel namin doon sa play.

(I remember we were grouped then, and those who were close to each other in school were distributed to different groups so we get to socialize. We were made to act like people from ancient times, and we were made to experience how we would

feel while in the play.)

Student participants come from different grade levels, with ages ranging from 8 to 14. Some are members of the school's official theater group, while some have no performance experience except for classroom plays. The director declared that no special talent is needed to join the play. What he deems important though, is openness to play like a child and willingness to explore and learn.

As the children went into their respective groups, they were asked to think of a family name. In the play, each group would be one balai. Balai, which means dwelling or house, is derived from a Malay word for house or hall. It is considered as the non-Hispanized type of domestic dwelling found in Southeast Asian countries. At first, the Balai members were shy and were hesitant in offering ideas for the Balai name. The director gave them a prompt, suggesting than they think of an adjective that best describes them. Balai names that they came up with were "*Matalino*," "*Malakas*," "*Marangal*," "*Mautak*," at "*Madiskarte*."

Once in formation, the director called each of the Balai so they can shout their Balai names, with accompanying action. At the first round, the voices were not as loud and firm, and the gestures were small. When the director challenged them, saying that the most active Balai will be given rewards, the students practiced their actions and delivery. Another round of Balai names roll call resulted in louder and firmer voice, and more synchronized and bigger gestures.

Plate 1. Actor-facilitators introduce their balai names through actions



Activating entails introducing the participants to the playful processes through simple and easy to follow tasks. Inviting them to form groups and play with ideas by creating their pretend Balai names, and increasing the level of complexity of the challenges activate the play mode.

Once the students had a Balai name for their group, they were addressed as a collective using such name. The next task was constructing their homes akin to the *bahay-bahayan* way of playing. The challenge was to convert a designated space in the room into their official balai or home. I witnessed the students reacting in different ways. Some surveyed the space, and visualized the location of key areas. They were gesturing using their hands how the space layout will go. Others immediately went around the classroom and the adjoining classrooms to look for materials they can use. Students used materials from table cloths to bamboo poles, decors on teacher's tables, and existing costumes from the theater group.

Plate 2. Actor-facilitators create their homes using found materials



Plate 3. Actor-facilitators dress up using available materials



Activating also happened during the actual play performance. Participants entered the performance area anticipating to be seated. However, seats and theater curtains proved unnecessary in the play “*Pailah: Ugat ng Lipi*.” Upon arrival, the children and their parents appeared surprised that the play actually begins at the parking lot. Surprise was a feeling mutually shared by the participants the first time they stepped into the world of Pailah. Student

C shared, “*Nagulat po sila na ganoon pala ang play na gagawin na gaganap din po sila kasi ang nakasanayan po nilang play ay manood lang po sila at titingnan nila kung ano ang magaganap. Nagulat sila na gaganap din po pala kami ng biglaan po.*” (The players were surprised that the play turned out to be something that made them act out roles because they are used to plays where they just watch the scenes. They were surprised that they were also the actors on the spot.)

Plate 4. Players begin their participation in the play through the journey walk



At this point, the players are activated by the diverse multisensorial stimuli they experience as the play begins. Activating is the process by which players are first introduced into the storyworld through initial interactions with the *facimunos*, along with the the sights, sounds, smell, taste, and feel in the play space.

A “storyworld” refers to the shared universe within which the settings, characters, events, and actions of one or more narratives exist. In this case, the storyworld is that of Pailah (now Pila in Laguna, Philippines). The story revolves around the exodus of ancient Pailah residents from Pinagbayanan to Paggalangan due to flooding in their previous home. The actions centers on the social and cultural tasks done by the community as they resettle in the new town, and the judicial responsibility of Datu Jayadewa who was asked by the leader of Tondo to decide on the debt incurred by noblewoman Lady Angkatan. This part of the story is based on the ancient inscription in the Laguna Copperplate. In the making of the play, the students who would become the cast and characters in the actual play engaged in *Bahay-bahayan*, instead of formal, structured rehearsals.

Activation also happens when the players are invited by the *facimunos* to do simple tasks as a way of introducing them to the world of play. At the beginning, players were invited to carry pots, woven baskets, and coconut husks, while some were asked to help hold a long train of blue fabric. The players were startled at the invitation, with some of them laughing, enjoying, and looking amused. Some had baffled expressions. They just went through the motions, but seemed clueless as to what was happening.

In *Bahay-bahayan*, players who begin by playing small tasks like these can be called *saling-pusa*, *salimpusa* or *salingket*. By doing simple, harmless tasks, they are activated and initiated into the playworld without intruding into their personal space. Maggay (2002) describes *salimpusa* as persons who are not yet part of a group, but are given ways to be included so they will

not be out of place. Maggay attributes this to the Filipinos' culture of inclusivity. In the *Bahay-bahayan* play, everyone is a *kalaro*, yet the transition from the "actual" world and the "play" world is bridged by indicative ways and actions that playfully activate the play mode.

Plate 5. Players join the journey walk



At the beat of the drums, the *babaylans* carrying clay pots with smoke coming out of the pots led the journey. With the actors leading the way, the audiences started walking too. At this point, they have no knowledge yet what that journey meant. It was their senses which were activated. Student C said, "*First time ko pong sumali sa ganon, yung may ganap. Naguguluhan po ako kung anong gagawin ko, kung saan ako pupunta, kung ano bang dapat kong gawin.*" (It was my first time to join something like that, where I have a role. I got confused as to what I was about to do, where to go, or what I should do.)

Plate 6. *Babaylans* lead the journey



A similar reaction was felt by Tr. C who expressed her hesitation, “*Sabi ko, ano ba talagang kahihinatnan nito? Sabi ko, siguro naman magiging okay din ang lahat kasi nung sinabing kasali daw yung mga teachers, sabi ko pati ba ako sasali din?*” (I told myself, where will this really lead to? I told myself, maybe everything will turn out okay because when they said teachers are part of the play, I thought, will I also be part of the play?)

At the beginning of activation, players begin to see that the play they are going to experience is different from their idea of a conventional theater. Tr. B, who has a theater background, expressed that she thought participating in the play would be tiring and exhausting. In her previous theater experience, she experienced having had to memorize lines, and rehearse over and over again to be able to portray her role convincingly. But in Pailah, she noticed that the play is a different experience. “*Una, may kaba, takot, kasi hindi naman ako pamilyar dun. Hindi scripted. Yun pala, makikisali ako.*” (At first, I

felt nervous, fearful, because I am not familiar with that. It's not scripted. Then it turned out, I am part of that play.) In the activating phase, the players felt mixed emotions arising from the uncertainties.

Pagtatauli (Reacting)

Confusion, apprehension, nervousness, excitement are some of the emotions felt by the players at the beginning of the play. As they continue to enter the play area, they react to the stimuli around them. Reacting is characterized by the initial responses of players upon entry in the play, which is described to be an uncomfortable and unfamiliar situation. When players are game and playful, they react by accepting the invitation to play. When they are not yet ready, they express it by refusing to participate, or through defensive actions.

Plate 7. *Babaylans* performing a ritual at the beginning of the play



To illustrate, the players watched as the *babaylans* scattered grains, salt, and water all around as a form of offering. The players then listened to the creation story as told by the priestesses. As one *facimuno* described how the world shook, and the sky got separated from the land, the other *facimunos* went to the audiences to invite them to help depict the creation story being told.

Plate 8. Players help in depicting the creation story



Some children gamely went, but still looked so confused. They then joined the others in waving their arms as if they were water. Some of the audiences did not move when they were invited and so the *facimunos* went to invite someone else. The initial reaction of almost all the players was curiosity, since the unfolding events seemed to make them pay more attention to what was happening.

Reacting happens when the players showed their spontaneous and diverse reactions to the initial activation. Some reacted to the invitation by not

participating yet, and that is already a participation. Student C shared that he got confused at the beginning of the play because it was his first time to be in that kind of play, and he just went along. Some are less tolerant, such as in the case of Tr. A who admitted that she felt negatively about the play at the beginning. She shared:

Tinanong po ako ni Sir R--, "Okay ka lang ba? Ano ang nararamdaman mo?" "Sir, pagod po ako at hindi po ako natutuwa sa ginagawa ko. Yon po yung sagot ko sa kanila." Hindi po ako nageenjoy, ayaw ko ng ganitong activity.

(Sir R asked me, "Are you okay? How do you feel?" "Sir, I'm tired and I am not happy with what I am doing." That was my reply. I am not enjoying; I do not like this activity.)

In reacting, all kinds of reactions are valid, in the same way that all stories are valid. From curiosity that propels players to know more, to more defensive reactions like expressing dislike for what was happening, these reactions are part of the participants' sense-making.

Pagmamasid (Observing)

The players listened as one *facimuno* holding an ancient-looking scroll officially welcomed them into the world of Pailah, narrating how the gods favor their journey from their previous home into their new home. The big stone structure was said to be the dwelling of the gods, and that is where the god led them to build their community. The *facimuno* went on reading from the scroll all the rules, symbols, and meanings of the drumbeat signals in the world of Pailah.

Plate 9. Players listen to the story and rules in Pailah



The players were then asked to go to their designated balais, which was written at the back of their tickets. The Balai names are written in Baybayin, with the accompanying Filipino translation. The next instruction is the designation of roles. At this point, I heard some of them say, *"Ikaw daw ang panday..."* *"Sinong gustong maging babaylan?"* *"O, kunwari, ikaw na."* *Teacher, ano po ang maginoo? Eh yun pong aliping namamahay?"* (Pretend you're the blacksmith..." "Who wants to play priestess?" "Oh, let's pretend it's you." "Teacher, what is a nobleman? What about the the slave called namamahay?") Players continued to ask and tried to figure out how to go along in the play. The *facimunos*, on the other hand, are sensing and observing the reactions of the players. Student C shared that he saw the players surveying the environment/situation first, and they tried to familiarize themselves with the surroundings.

Plate 10. Players find their respective *balais*



Observing happens when the players take notice of their surroundings. Since they are uncertain as to what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, they observe what is happening around them. This is also the point where there is gradual recognition and acceptance that the play is different from the traditional plays. Since they are part of the play, they are now observing the possible scenarios so they will know what to do. Student C recounted, “*Parang nakita ko po sa kanila is tinitingnan po muna nila ang paligid kung ano po yong pasikot sikot. Baka may mali po silang mapuntahan, baka po mapahamak sila o makulong dahil may kulungan po eh. Natakot po sila na baka makulong.*” (What I noticed was they look at the surroundings, the in and out of the place. They might go to restricted places, or they might get in trouble or even in prison.)

Student C further said that the players appeared hesitant to talk to the

actors at first because they are still sensing how the interactions will go. Student K had a similar observation noting that the players do not want to part from each other. For instance, when one is sent to prison, the groupmates will immediately bail the person out so they are all together. They do not want to be away from each other because they might come in harm's way.

Tr. K explained how, as *facimuno*, she observed the reactions of the players.

"Mapi-feel mo naman sa reaksiyon ng bata. May nakita nga ako na parang paiyak na. Kami yung gabay tapos naglalakad kami, dumaan kami don sa kulungan. May nakita kaming isang bata, nagsosolo syang nakakulong. Pagtingin po namin nanginginig na yung bata. Sabi ko "Anong naging kasalanan mo, bakit ka nakulong?" Hindi nya daw alam. After a while, pinakawalan na rin.

(You will feel it based on the students' reactions. I even saw one who seems to be about to cry. We were the guides then and as we were walking, we passed by the prison area. We saw one child, in prison, alone. When we looked closely, he was shaking. I asked him, "What was your offense? Why did you end up in prison?" He said he does not know. After a while, he was set free.)

Tr. E said that as *facimunos*, they actively sense and observe their *kalaro* and what is happening around them.

Pakiramdaman mo talaga para alam mo how to interact with the audience. Halimbawa, pag tingin ko po, nawawala yung isa sa focus, siya po yung lalapitan ko. Sa kanya po ako nakikipag-eye to eye contact. Pinaparamdam ko sa kanya na 'O, you're part of the play.' Observe mo yung facial expressions, body language. Nagmamatyag-matyag po siya, paikot-ikot po ang mata nya. Parang nakatingin din po sa iba, kasi syempre, bago din po sa kanila, kaya aware ka dapat.

(You really need to sense things so you know how to interact with the audience. For example, when I think one is losing his focus, he is the one I will approach. He is the one I keep eye

contact with. I let him feel that “Oh, you’re part of the play.” You have to observe facial expressions, body language. He is observing, his eyes are noticeably actively scanning [the environment]. They seem to be looking at others, because, of course, it is something new, so you have to be aware.)

Tr. E’s description details how observing is done through reading the non-verbal communication of co-players, and making sense of their reactions through “pakiramdaman.” Pakiramdaman is a Filipino term which means “to sharpen one’s senses directed toward something; to listen for something” (<https://www.tagaloglessons.com/words/pakiramdaman.php>).

Plate 11. Players discussing the details of the debt case



Paggaya (Imitating)

As the players observe and sense the actions and the people around them, they start imitating what others are doing. Notably, as the town’s crier read the rules in the play, some players were imitating the movements as they were demonstrated by the actors. One rule states that each time the players

pass by the *dambana*, or the holy shrine, they should bow and place their right fist on their left chest, as a show of reverence to the gods.

Plate 12. Players show the gesture of respect



As a grandmother and her grandson went around the play area, they stopped first and looked at what others were doing in front of the shrine. Then, the grandmother said, “*Magbigay-galang daw, yuyuko tayo dun,*” (We have to show respect, so we bow there) pointing to the *dambana*. Imitating what others had done, the players did the same gesture, and then proceeded to doing their tasks. This is akin to play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith’s (2006) contention that mammals have developed a form of play that serves as an adaptive response to uncertainties, and that is imitation. Imitation is said to lessen potential conflict in unfamiliar scenarios.

Plate 13. Players find their dwellings



Tr. K had an interesting observation on why she imitated others at the beginning of the play. She said: *“Hindi ko naisip na iba yung gagawin ko, siguro kasi hindi naman ako pamilyar dun. Susunod ka muna, at gagaya. ‘Pag natantya mo na ang mga ganap, go with the flow na.”* (It didn't really occur to me to do something else because I am not familiar with the place. You will first obey, and imitate. Once you appraise what's going on, you go with the flow.)

What kept her engaged in her tasks is curiosity and seeing others do the same. In her own words, *“Bukod sa fact na lahat gumagawa na din, may effect din na ‘ay ginagawa nito, gagawin ko din, so may gaya effect.”* (Aside from the fact that others are doing the tasks, there's an effect of imitating because you see others doing it, so you do the same.)

Pagsubok (Testing)

As the players navigate the performance space, they become familiar with how the play world works, and they begin testing what certain actions will lead to. They seem to try out actions, and see how these will be received in the play world. To illustrate, in Pailah, some of the players know that the chieftain is authority as he is the one that gives the orders.

Plate 14. Pailah Chieftain “Jayadewa” gives orders



Tr. E recounts that he saw children trying to find another route to evade the chieftain who, according to the children, looked fearsome as he walked together with the warriors. Tr. E then approached the children to tell them that the chieftain is kind and just, so there is no reason to avoid him. With this, the children went ahead and greeted the chieftain by gesturing the show of respect. When the chieftain greeted back, they smiled, yet with their eyes still cast down, as if showing their sustained deference to the *datu* (chieftain).

Plate 15. Players show respect and deference to Chief “Jayadewa”



Still, others who have not fully entered the world of play behave in their usual, structured ways, and this results to a form of testing. Tr. P related an incident.

May dalawang maharot na tawa ng tawa. Sabi ko sige ubusin nyo yung tawa nyo. Pero 'wag kayong tatawa kapag may kawal tsaka kapag may datu. Siguro hindi pa sila involved na involved don sa sitwasyon. Andon na si Datu, tapos 'di n'ya [students] mapigilan yung tawa nya, tumawa sya, tapos nagulat sya, silang dalawa, pinahuli sila ng datu. Naisip nila na “Ay seryoso.” Kasi akala nila kahit tumawa sila, joke lang. Tapos ayon parang nadala sila.

(There were two naughty children. I told them, go ahead and laugh all you can. But stop laughing when you see the warriors and the chieftain. It might be because they are not yet that involved in the situation. Then the chieftain came, and the child can't control his laughter. He laughed, and he was suprised, both of them got surprises when they were made captive upon the chieftain's order. They might have thought, “This is serious.” Because initially, they thought that even if they laughed, it's just a joke. Then that happened, and so they knew better.)

Testing refers to the processes where actors and players figure out different ways of acting in the play world. Yet, the emphasis here is on the cues and signals they get as a result of the testing. How their co-actors and co-players react to their acts of 'testing' are revealed to shape or influence their behavior as they go along the play.

Testing may also be deliberate acts of seeing how 'true' or 'real' the play world is. Tr. B recounts that she heard children saying that the punishment of being sent to prison must be a bluff. The players thought that this would not actually happen in the play. Her story goes:

"Hindi naman daw po totoo yung mga kulong kulong kaya dun po sa dambana, hindi sila naluhod. Eh, nakita po ng isang bantay. Hinuli sila. Kasi nung bago sila dumaan sa dambana, nasa likuran nila ako. Nag-uusap ang dalawang bata na hindi naman totoong ikukulong ka. Sabi eh, san daw ba tayo ikukulong? Pwede ba tayo ikulong nyan? Kaya nung nahuli sila, "ah, parang totoo pala yung mga sinasabi nila dito sa loob ng Pailah."

(Some think that being imprisoned [in the play] is not true, so when they passed by the shrine, they did not kneel. But one guard saw them, and captured them. Because before they approach the shrine, I was just behind them. Two children were talking that the punishment could not possibly be true. They said, "where will they imprison us? Can we really be held captive?" So when they were caught, they thought, "so, what they're saying here inside Pailah may actually be true.")

Having entered a storyworld where the rules are different, the players test how certain actions and decisions will be received by the actor-facilitators. In this kind of testing, it is the *facimunos* themselves who are also being tested because they had to be aware of the players' reactions, and they had to perform consistent with their roles and with the storyworld.

When asked about the reactions of the players, Tr. B shared:

Nung hinawakan na sila ng bantay, syempre natakot sila kasi hindi nila alam kung anong gagawin. Pero, ayun, parang alam naman nila na hindi talaga sila sasaktan, kaya parang nakangiti naman sila. Yung parang natutuwa na, ah huhulihin na kami, huhulihin na talaga kami.

(When a guard held them, of course, they got scared because they didn't know what to do. But it seemed that they know they will not really get hurt, so they were smiling. They look as if amused with the thought that they will be caught, that they are really going to get caught.)

When players test how real the play world is, it is the *facimunos'* responses that are primarily being tested. Tr. E shared an instance where the players are parents and also employees of their municipality. They asked him why they are being asked to role play and do different tasks when they are just audiences. Tr. E recounts, "*Kami naman daw po ang artista, at audiences lang naman daw po sila, so why do they have to participate or act?* (They're thinking we are actually the actors, and they are just audiences, so why do they have to participate or act?) Tr. E clarifies though that the questions appear to be out of curiosity since the play is really different from what they are used to. In response, Tr. E shared, "*So, ang naging atake po namin is, mas naging solid po kami sa character namin. Ito po yung pinaka-challenging na paniwalaan kami, lalo na adults.*" (So, our approach was, we became more solid in portraying our characters. Being convincing and believable is the most challenging, particularly for adults.)

Paglubog (Immersing)

If, in testing, the players are slowly being integrated in the world of play, in the process of immersing, they now begin to leave the ‘actual’ world behind as they respond to the rules, the sound signals, the tasks, the actors and co-players in a manner that is different from how they first arrived in the play. Tr. K noted that as the players interact more, they assume their roles gradually. One of the first notable changes is the way they speak. “*Ang mga lenguahe po namin ay Tagalog na Tagalog, malalalim na Tagalog*” (The language that we used was Tagalog, deep Tagalog), she remarked. One player was heard saying “*Hindi ganyan ang tamang pagbibigay-galang. Para lamang iyan sa Pinunong Jeyadewa at sa banal na dambana.*” (That’s not how you show proper respect. That gesture is only for Chief Jayadewa and for the holy shrine).

Plate 16. Players respond to the drum beats signalling for them to go to the tribal hall



Sustaining the immersive quality of the experience is driven by the *facimunos* who help facilitate the play. The *facimunos* playing various characters not only help the players fulfill their social and cultural tasks, but also help sustain that belief in the play world.

The players who play apprentices to the priestess role were tasked to learn a harvest ritual dance. Those who chose to be warriors were tasked to make weapons, spears, and other tools for battles and defense. Those who became servants went with the other head servants and were taught the Filipino ancient script *baybayin*, while the lower level servants went on to make accessories. Those who became blacksmiths went with the other potters to make clay pots. Finally, the nobles proceeded to the tribal hall to discuss and settle the debt case of Lady Angkatan, a story derived from what is written in the 9th century inscription Laguna Copperplate.

Plate 17. The Laguna Copperplate is shown



When a player is immersed in the play world, the stark changes are the way they speak, the way they gesture to one another, such as bowing to each other as a form of greeting, kneeling when they pass by the holy shrine, and responding to the sound signals. This immersion becomes sustained with the help of the actors that inhabit the play world. For instance, an amusing story was shared by Tr. M.

...may mga gustong mag CR dun sa pottery namin. Ang sabi ay "Ma'am, pa CR po." Sabi ko, "Hindi ko alam ang iyong winawari." Sabi "Ma'am, ihi po," sabi ko "Sandali lamang, nandoon ang palikuran." Tapos may dumaan na kawal, sabi ko "Ihatid mo nga sila sa palikuran." Ayun, nag-bow yung mga bata.

(...there were people in our pottery station, who wanted to go to the CR (comfort room). They said, "Ma'am, I need to pee." I replied, "Kindly wait, the lavatory is there." Then a warrior passed by, and I told him, "Accompany them to the lavatory." And so, the children bowed.)

Immersing happens when the players are transitioning between the actual world (their present selves) and the play world (their self that emerges in their interactions with the other players).

A term popularised recently, immersive theater is "a mode of practice that invites ambulating audiences into a fictive world," and is typically "constructed out of expansive, multisensory environments" (Bucknall, 2017). Since Bahay-bahayan theater is immersive, audiences enter a world and interact with various performance elements such as "actors," co-players, the space, setting, stories, and roles.

However, in the process of immersing as part of the emergent social processes that players experience, the emphasis is on the transition to the here and now. Erasga describes it succinctly as this:

Kapag nakikiramdam ang isang Filipino, ang daloy ng kaniyang paghuhusga ay sa "dito at ngayon" (here and now) at hindi sa kasalukuyan at lalong hindi sa malayong hinaharap.

(When Filipinos sense, the flow of his judgment is in the "here and now," and not in the present, and more so, not in the distant future.)

Immersing entails continued observing and sensing. But once a person is immersed, he/she inhabits the new world, and assumes the role he/she is playing. Student A shared, "*Alam mo po na nasa Pailah na talaga sila 'pag hindi na nila napapansin yung phones nila, nag--iiba ang kilos, naka-chin-up na kunwari pag mataas ang katungkulan, mas nagpapakita ng paggalang.*" (You'll know that the players are really inside Pailah when you observe them not noticing their phones, their movements change, and if you see their chins up as if they're occupying high positions, and when they show respectable manners.)

Student C supports this sharing that he was quite surprised at how realistic his 'acting' was because he really felt that he belonged to ancient times. For him, "*Dalang dala kami, kaya noong naglalaro na, nadala din namin ang mga manlalaro. Parang totoong totoo yung mundong yun kahit play lang sya.*" (We were so into the play, that's why when we were in the actual play, we also carried with us the players. It seemed that the world we were in was real even though it's only a play).

Tr. P described how immersed the players were,

Tinignan ko po talaga kung susunod. Sumunod po talaga, as in lahat. Naisip ko na kaya ganon sila ka-involved kasi feel na feel po nila na lumang Pailah, yung mga puno yung mga kubo-kubo natin. Lahat po in character, kaya feel na feel po nila. Tapos napansin n'yo po nung umulan, wala pong tumayo. Kasi sobrang engaged po sila, at baka magalit po ang datu. [laughter] Tapos may bumulong saakin, 'Ma'am umuulan na po, tapos ino-observe ko may tatayo kaya? Kasi medyo malakas e. May ilan lang siguro, mga dalawa or tatlo.

(I observed if they (the players) will follow. And they really did follow, as in everyone. I thought the reason why they were so involved is because they really feel they were in ancient Pailah, the trees, the nipa huts. Everyone was in character, that's why they really felt it. And did you notice that when it started raining, no one stood up to leave. Because they were very much engaged. They might be thinking the chieftain might be angry (laughter). Then someone whispered to me, "Ma'am, it's raining, then I observed, will anybody stand? Because the rain became slightly stronger. There were only a handful (who took cover), maybe two or three.)

Plate 18. Players perform tasks in Pailah



British anthropologist Tim Ingold, as cited in Shearing (2015), contends that audiences are no longer just observing, but are immersed when:

[r]ather than thinking of ourselves only as observers, picking our way around the objects lying about on the ground of a ready-formed world, we must imagine ourselves in the first place as participants, each immersed with the whole of our being in the currents of a world-in-information.

Ingold's description alludes to mindfulness or being present in the moment as one experiences immersion. When the participants were asked about what they think about the passing of time while they were playing, they had interesting points of view. Tr. B said, "*Sa totoo lang, hindi ko namamalayan ang paglipas ng oras. Hindi ko rin ramdam ang pagod. Nung una, may kaba, pero nung tumagal na, ang saya saya. Ewan ko ba. Pag-uwi ko sa bahay, tsaka ko ramdam ang pagod.* (To be honest, I didn't notice the passing of time. I also didn't feel the tiredness. At first, I felt nervous, but as time passed, it was so fun. I don't know really. When I went home, that's when the tiredness kicked in.)

For Student C, time passes quickly. To quote, "*Sa umpisa, pagod pero nung tumagal na, enjoy na kaming lahat, parang ambilis ng oras.*" (At first, it was tiring, but eventually, we were really enjoying. It's as if time passes so quickly.) Tr. E had the same experience. He said that his tiredness was physical, and he emphasized that this was "partnered with fulfillment." For Tr. E,

Ambilis ng oras. Hindi ko na napansin na nagdidilim na pala, o na pang-ilang runs or pang-ilang ulit na pala namin 'to. Siguro po part na rin yun nung enjoyment, and yung parang

naging totally part ka na nung Pailah. Bumilis na ang takbo ng oras, takbo ng minuto.

(Time was so fast. I didn't even notice that it was getting darker, or that we were already in our nth run. Maybe part of this is enjoyment, and the idea that you are really becoming as if you're totally part of Pailah. The passing of time became quicker, the passing of minutes.)

What is being described by the players is the idea of collective joy, which according to Edith Turner, is the experience of “communitas.” For Turner, communitas emerges when action and awareness become one. As people do enjoyable tasks together, they flow and they perform without the need for deliberate thinking (2012).

When asked about at what point in the play they felt that they are already part of Pailah, there was a consensus that it was when they began doing their respective tasks (designing their balais, making accessories, learning Baybayin, performing the harvest dance, learning the *Babaylan* ritual, crafting weapons, making clay pots, and deliberating on the Laguna Copperplate debt case). While doing these, they continue to repeatedly show the gestures of respect each time they pass by the holy shrine, and each time they encounter people of different social ranks.

Plate 19. Players design their dwellings



Pagtugon (Responding)

Responding happens when a player has fully immersed in the play world, and is ‘response-able’ as they move in and out of that world. Responding is in contrast with reacting in a sense that it involves more thoughtful and active thinking, feeling, and willing. Being in the here and now, the player continues to navigate the world of play with the belief that he is the role he is playing.

For instance, the player who is part of the warrior clan tasked to make weapons and other tools for defense surveyed the area and picked up branches and twigs. As he found one long branch, he said “*Ito, pang long*

sword.” (This one is for long sword.) Another player said, “*Hindi ba masyadong malambot yan?*” (*Isn’t that a bit too flimsy?* to which, the first player answered, “*Tama lang. Tingnan mo.*” (*This is just right. Look at it.*) The players inspected what they found, and then went around to find more materials.

I followed them around as they created the long sword and other tools that they later presented to the Chieftain. When they were called by the Chieftain, they approached the tribal hall carrying their swords. I felt the seriousness of purpose of these players. They were not smiling or joking around. Instead, they projected a more serious bearing, with their postures and walk a bit different from the usual manners and actions of students.

Plate 20. Players survey the area for materials they can use for their weapons and tools



Tr. R who facilitated the group of warriors related how his interactions during the play went,

Sabi ko nga po sa kanila na kumuha sila ng kagamitan sa paligid tapos yon po ang gagawing sibat at patulisin at lagyan ng dahon at ng palamuti. Ayon, nagsipag po ang mga bata. Sinabi ko din po sa mga bata na ipagpatuloy nila ang kanilang kasipagan. Ang dami nga po nilang nagawa at nakakatuwa nga po. Yon naman po sa pangalawang run sa Padua, ang dami po nilang nagawa, may espada, tabak at shield at pana na din at sa panghuli, may maso na din pong kasama at madami po silang nagawa at napaka creative po nila.

(I told them that they can source materials around, and that's what they can use to craft spears and they can sharpen it and place leaves and other designs. There, and the children did it diligently. I also told them that they continue their diligence. They made so many items and it was delightful. During the second run, they made various items, like swords, machete, shields, bow and arrows, and even mallet. There created many items, and they were so creative.)

Working with minimal guidance, the players navigate the play world and respond to the emerging scenes as they happen. For the *facimunos*, responding is demonstrated with the way they handled different scenarios unfolding in the play.

Kapag nakita ko na ang kalaro ko ay game na game, at nage-enjoy, makikisabay din ako. Pero dun sa nakwento kong bata na mukhang takot na takot dahil nga kinulong siya ng kawal, tapos taga-ibang school pa sya, sinabihan ko na talaga yung mga kawal na, 'Pakawalan na yan.' Yung manner ng pagsasabi ko, yung nasa play pa din.

(When I see the players are so into the game and enjoying, I pace with them. But in the story I shared about a child looking frightened because he was captured by the warriors, and to think that this child is from a different school, I really made it a point to tell the warriors, "Release him." The manner by which I said it is consistent with the interactions in the play.)

The account above narrated by Tr. K illustrates how they continuously sense the players' responses, and adjusts their behaviors and decisions. This way, they manage to do their responsibilities as teachers and guides, who are conscious that overall, they are not just there to play, but also to ensure that the performance space is a safe and well-curated environment. A close look into one video clip reveals a teacher adjusting her position to keep the children at a safe distance at that moment when the Pailah Chieftain was about to thrust a bolo knife into the ground as a symbol of the establishment of their new settlement.

Plate 21. Players witness the Chieftain performing the “*Pagtatarak*,” marking the establishment of their new settlement



Being responsive means being aware and present in the moment, experienced as the simultaneous ‘going with the flow’ and ‘thinking of the best course of action’ at a given moment. Tr. E has this to share:

Para kasing naging spontaneous na lang yung dating ng play. Kasi hindi naman pare-pareho ang mga players, hindi naman pare-parehas ang mga nagiging reaksiyon, o yung..uhm, sabihin nating mga reflexes nila. May mga audience o participants po na sobrang active, meron din namang participants na medyo wala sa mood, kaya kailangan pa natin i-uplift. Sabihin na nating hindi naging technical yung kilos namin sa play. Mas go with the flow, kung anong nangyayari.

(It really seems that the play just became spontaneous. Because the players are not really the same, their reactions are also not the same, and we can say, their reflexes too. There are audiences or participants who are overly active, and there are those who were a bit not in the mood, so we still need to uplift them. Let's just say that our actions in the play did not become technical. It's more of go with flow, with what emerges.)

Responding also pertains to the course of actions participants take when scenes are entirely unexpected. An in vivo code emerged from the data, describing the emergence of different scenarios throughout the play. Referred to by one participant as “pop-up” scenes (*iglap*), these are playful interactions that spontaneously happen. Scenes like this can arise when a *facimuno* suddenly injects a quest or an additional layer to the existing quests when he/she finds that the players are ready for more challenge. In an instant, players respond.

An example is the surprised reaction of the merchants when they were tasked to choose the best potteries and weapons from among the works of the players. This was not part of the previous iterations. When a pop-up action like this comes up, the players engage in a spontaneous dialogue. Some are quick to think, while some are initially startled and respond to the emerging scene by taking cue from his/her co-player.

Plate 22. Players barter their clay potteries to the foreign merchants



In another pop-up scene, as Datu Jayadewa and Lady Angkatan roamed around Pailah, they stopped in one Balai where baybayin was being taught. Baybayin is the ancient script of the Filipinos. Tr. M was surprised to hear the conversation of the chieftain and the royal lady as they passed by. Tr. M overheard the lady saying, "*Ganito n'yo pala pinag-aaralan ang pagsulat. Napakahusay.*" (So, this is how you learn writing. Remarkable.) The chieftain replied, "*Oo, at marami ka pang makikitang husay.*" (Yes, and you will see more talent.) These communication interactions were neither written as scripts nor were rehearsed. These are authentic responses to the unfolding scenes as they happen.

The actor playing the chieftain shares,

Kusa na siyang pumapasok sa isip ko. Yong hindi na po iisipin sa gabi kasi po sa gabi derecho pahinga na lang po gawa pagod na po. Pagdating po ng play, pumapasok na lang yong character ko. Kapag nag-start na yong play, nararamdaman ko po na hari ako.

(It's as if ideas just flow into my mind. Like I did not have to think hard about it during the night, because I went straight to resting since I was already tired by then. But during the play itself, my character kicks in. When the play starts, I feel I am a King.)

Tr. E who played a maguinoo or nobleman also shared his experience in the balai where all the noblemen were tasked to hear the details of a debt settlement case, and offer their proposed verdict later on. After Tr. E laid out the details of the case, consistent with what was written in the Laguna Copperplate, he posed just one question for the noblemen, "Should we pardon or punish Lady Angkatan for her debts?" The players had many opinions, with most of them saying that Lady Angkatan should be set free because her debts were not entirely hers. Some said she should pay because a debt is a debt, and should be settled. In one surprising turn, Tr. E said that the group of maguinoo decided to hold a formal parliamentary procedure. First, they tried to picture out the case as they sought to understand the context. Tr. E observed that the group attempted to come up with a decision by considering different opinions. Players made a formal procedure as if they were part of a jury. They used the show of hands approach to indicate agreement to a decision, and the majority wins. In the end, the chieftain is the deciding authority, and everyone respected his decision.

Plate 23. Players become aware of the debt case to be settled, and they discuss their decision



In the communication interactions, only the story of Angkatan and the details of her debts were written as script. The rest of the conversations are pop-up scenes, making each player responsible for the communication. Reflecting on what happened, Tr. E said that he did not do much in prodding the players to decide. They were already in character, and were serious about their tasks.

Plate 24. Student playing nobleman presents the group's decision to the Chieftain regarding the debt case



Pop-up scenes may also happen when players take proactive roles in the unfolding story, such as when they attempt to free a slave from prison. These are not part of the game mechanics, but since it was the players themselves who thought of this, it organically makes audiences active contributors to the play's iteration.

Another important insight into Responding as a social process is this perspective shared by Tr. K:

Kasi kapag nagkaroon naman ng responsibility ang isang tao, may kusang palo na yan e. Nawawala lang 'yong kusang palo sa responsibilidad kung umpisa pa lang wala ka ng tiwala. 'Yan po yong observation ko doon sa mga bata noong time na yon.

(Because when an individual assumes responsibility, he can will himself to act decisively. What makes someone lose this is when, at the onset, you don't trust the person. That was my observation of the children at that time.

The phrase '*kusang palo*', when translated to English, means spontaneous. However, spontaneity alone does not capture the Filipino term '*palo*' which connotes forceful or decisive action. Thus, taken together as a phrase, '*kusang palo*' as characteristic of responsibility implies spontaneous and decisive acts of initiative. Tr. K asserts that this kind of response is curtailed if trust is not present. This also implies that allowing the participants to explore, make sense of their experiences, and construct their learning leads to responsive action.

Pagsasakatawan (Embodying)

Over time, the belief that they are part of ancient Pailah, as facilitated by the *facimunos*, and sustained through the players' and *facimunos*' dialogic interactions, led to embodiment. They are no longer distant from the playful experiences since they have transitioned from being observers to being immersed participants. When I think of embodiment, I think of the phrase "*Be in your body*" and what that really means. I suppose the body and mind are aligned in the 'here and now' mentioned by Erasga (2015) in relation to *pakiramdaman*. Embodiment is when the awareness manifests into movement. In the same manner, by performing the ritual bowing and gestures of respect, by attentively listening to the drum signals and going to the tribal hall when your signal is heard, by uttering formal Filipino words and phrases, the movements lead to deepening knowledge of the play world, and such knowledge, in turn, shapes the movements.

What Tr. K finds as remarkable about his colleague's performance in the play is aligned with this. She narrated:

Ang galing ni Sir E---, pag nadaan kami, hindi nya nakakalimutan na magbigay-pugay. Kahit na ginagawa n'ya yong duty nya sa role, may iba pa ding responsibility na kailangan gawin dahil nga siguro andoon sya sa play. Kagaya noong dumaan kami, alam nyang babaylan, nagbibigay-pugay.

(Sir E is remarkable. When we pass by, he does not forget to gesture respect. Although he's doing his duty for his role, he knows there are other responsibilities that needs to be done. Maybe because he is inside the play. Like that time when we passed by, he was aware that we are priestesses so he showed respect.)

When a player is immersed in the play world, he embodies the character, and acts as if he is the role he is playing. The embodiment is physicalized, like how Student A described the players as taking on a stance like that of real nobility. The posture changed, with the chin up, and bowing to others as show of respect. Also, embodying involves listening and responding, which Tr. B witnessed among the players. *"Pag narinig nila ang hudyat, takbuhan na agad. Hindi na kailangan pang sabihan,"* (Upon hearing the signal, they immediately ran. They did not need to be told.) referring to the players' responses to the drum beats. In varied combinations and rhythm, the drum beats signal invitation from the chieftain who enact the Pailah rules and announcements.

Plate 25. Players respond to the sound signals and show the gestures of respect as they pass by the Holy Shrine



Similarly, Tr. E said that he was able to observe the adult players who were asking him earlier why they had to perform, instead of just watch. He saw them in the nearby station where they had to learn the *babaylan* ritual. He recounted:

Ah, bigay na bigay sila sa sayaw. Seryoso ang mga mukha, seryoso silang nag-iritwal. Game na game, nakakatuwa kasi parang bumalik sa pagiging bata, enjoy lang. Yung iba na napunta sa baybayin, yung station sa baybayin, ayos lang sila kahit uling ang gamit. Walang arte.

(Ah, they were so into the dance. They had serious looks on their faces, and they were serious when they performed the ritual. They were so game, and it's fun because they look like they became child-like again. Just enjoying. Those who went to the ancient script lesson, the station where they learn baybayin, they did not mind even if they were made to use charcoal as ink. No qualms at all.)

Plate 26. Players paying close attention to the Baybayin lesson



Plate 27. Players learning the *Babaylan* ritual dance



According to Shearer (2015), embodied modes of engagement involve giving the audiences freedom to navigate the performance space and engaging them in a multisensorial experience. He further cited Moran who

contends that the body is not an isolated object. In understanding the body's response, therefore, it should always be in context, or against a background. In this case, the rich and complex environment and the emerging dialogic interactions contribute to immersing the players, and in this immersive space, their bodies exist.

Merleau-Ponty (2002) asserts: "Thought and expression, then, are simultaneously constituted, when our cultural store, is put at the service, of this unknown law, as our body suddenly lends itself to some new gesture in the formation of habit" (p. 213). Referring to body as expression, Merleau-Ponty contends that it is the natural setting of thoughts and perception. What players think and perceive is expressed through the body, and the process is constitutive.

Pag-angkin (Owning)

In theater, when one hears the phrase "He/she owned the stage," this often refers to playing a role with full confidence and playing using one's full range of abilities. In this immersive play, owning is described as playing seriously, driven by one's sense of belief in the storyworld. As a result, one's thoughts, feelings, and actions are aligned, thus giving off a 'solid' and believable performance.

When asked what made them engage the audiences in a believable manner, Student K described it this way:

Siguro po dahil sine-seryoso.. hindi naman po yung seryosong seryoso. Kumbaga po ine-enjoy lang namin yung ginagawa namin. Ipinapakita namin na kaming kalaro nila ay nasa unang panahon talaga. Yung ipinapakita po naming ugali, pagkilos, ay yung nasa

unang panahon talaga. Kaya po parang sinasabayan din nila, at nage-enjoy din sila sa mga pangyayari.

(Maybe it's because we take it seriously. Not really overly serious. It's just that we enjoy what we are doing. We show them that we, their co-players, are really in the olden times. The traits, the actions and movements that we show is as if we are really living in ancient times. That's why they seem to pick up on it, and they also enjoy what's happening.)

This echoes the raw statement made by an actor-facilitator who said that participating in the play did not really entail skill or even experience in acting. To repeat the quote, *"Tumambay lang naman po ako dun. (I was simply hanging out there.) [laughter] Tamang laro lang." (Just the right kind of play)*. This suggests that owning arises when one is playing well.

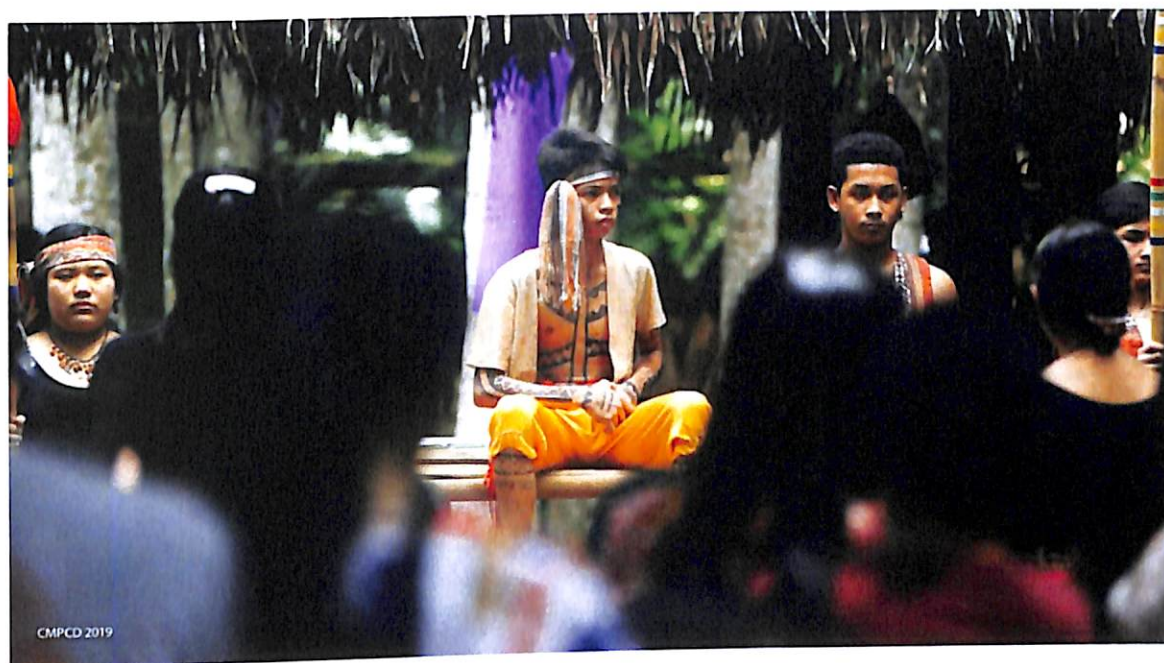
What does it mean to play well? Student K said that he was able to perform his role well, while guiding the *kalaro*, through a combination of strategizing and letting things flow. He said that he practiced lines consistent with his role as a nobleman; and at the same time, he is surprised at the way that we was consistently speaking Filipino conversationally in scenes that would come up. He attributes this to being used to that style of speaking, which happened during the days they rehearsed for Pailah. At this point, he also expressed the difference between rehearsing in a traditional play and rehearsing in a role-playing game type of play like Pailah. In a traditional play, actors need to rehearse, memorize lines, perform specific actions, and deliver these at the right timing. In Pailah, each rehearsal is different, in the same way that each actual play is different. When asked about what the different experiences lead to, he shared:

"Mas nagiging masaya na po kami habang ginagawa namin ang role namin, at unti unti po namin nalalabas yung mas maganda pong gawin o itinatama namin yung pagkakamali namin sa unang rehearsal."

(We become happier as we assume our roles, and slowly, we bring out what can make [the play] better or we are able to correct our lapses in the previous rehearsal.

Part of his strategy also is to watch a few Filipino telenovela clips on youtube depicting pre-colonial Philippines to better acquaint himself with the role. He notes though, that when he is inside the play, assuming the role is effortless because of the belief that he is indeed, inside that world. He said, *"Kapag alam mo ang kwento, at naniniwala ka, nagpapadala ka, enjoy mo lang at laro lang. Walang pressure."* (When you know the story, and you believe, you let things flow, you just enjoy and play. There's no pressure.) He reiterated too that when he is doing traditional plays, the pressure is there because he has to deliver lines in front of people, and they would know if he commits a mistake. In the theater as play, he did not feel nervous nor worried about committing mistake because he was just "playing."

Plate 28. Chieftain overseeing the performance



At the same time, he said that he actively thinks of the things that he should do, such as when he wants the players to feel alert of their surroundings. He changes his approach based on the players' actions and behaviours through "pakiramdaman." He reiterates:

libahin lang po ng konti. Kapag hindi mo inisip kung ano dapat gawin, hindi rin mararamdaman ng kalaro na nasa loob sila ng laro. Nag-iiba-iba kasi yung kailangang gawin. Minsan iba yung laro, kaya mag-iiba ka rin. Kapag naman tumuloy ka lang, maiiwan at maiiwan lang din sila. Makikiramdam ka, sasabayan mo sila [kalaro].

(You just change a few things. If you don't think about what you'll do, the players will not really feel that they are inside the play. The actions you need to take also keeps on changing. Sometimes, the play is different, so you will also change. If you just continue with what you're doing, they end up being left behind. You sense what's going on, and you go along with them [players].)

These experiences suggest that a sense of ownership arises when the belief in the story world has been forged through the continuous communication interactions. Once the belief is there, players become adaptive and flexible as their actions and behaviors become increasingly reflexive. The ability to step in and out of the play world (as themselves and as their roles) helped them navigate their performances. When they strategize and deliberately decide on specific courses of actions that will facilitate the players' richness of play experiences, they take on the actor-facilitator role, the main purpose of which is to move the story forward. When they let things flow and allow themselves to be led by belief, enjoying the moment, and just having fun, they turn out surprised and amazed at how effortless and remarkable they were at playing. Ownership therefore manifests as leading and being led.

I observed such leadership in several instances where actor-facilitators solved problems on their own, instead of going to the director or the stage manager. It seems that everyone stepped on the role of stage managers as they personally tended to their costumes, props, and sets. In a particular scene, one *babaylan*/priestess lost her earthenware that was supposed to be used in the ritual, and she scoured the area to look for another one. When an actor playing the role of a slave noticed that her costume still needed a cloth accent because the other slaves were donning that piece, she also took the initiative of finding a piece of cloth and made her costume herself. For the make-up, there was no need to get make-up artists. The students did this on their own, with some help from their classmates. The priestesses' make-up

and costume were a result of the students' own research, and their own imaginings. The tattoos were also the students' own design, inspired by their schema of what pre-colonial Filipino warriors looked like.

Plate 29. *Babaylans* in their costumes, make up and accessories



One teacher remarked that she cannot recall any stressful moment in her participation in the play. Since the school had all the resources needed for the play, the players were able to improvise. When a teacher needed salt for the priestess ritual, they just sourced from the canteen. The same goes for rice, the clay pot, and the water. The teachers also took responsibility for making the gold currency. Together with students, they collected aptly-shaped pebbles from the vicinity, and covered these with gold papers from the craft store. One participant even said that the next time they do the play, she will also make silver coins to distinguish between gold awarded by the Chieftain for tasks done well, and silver for trading with merchants.

Plate 30. *Babaylans* performing a ritual of offering



Pagpapadayon (Lingering)

In the narratives of experiences shared by the participants, another social process emerged. Their coming together in dialogue, and acting together upon their environment within an immersive experience led to a “lingering” effect.

Lingering is experienced as the carrying over of actions and relationships in the play even after the play has ended. Tr. B describes it this way.

Pati po sa room, dala dala po. “Katahimikan.” [spoken in a clear, authoritative voice] Tatahimik din, pati mga matatanda at yung mga nadaan sa hall, tumatahimik din. Parang hindi pa sila maka move on. Pati yong napasukan ko na klase kanina, may mga guardia pa at yung mga lenggwahe, hindi pa sila maka-move on.

(Even in our classrooms, we brought it [the play]. “Silence.” [spoken in a clear, authoritative voice] Everyone grew quiet, even the adults, and those passing through the hall. It’s like they cannot move on yet. Even the class that I went to earlier, there were guards and they even spoke the language. They cannot move on yet.)

Tr. K related that the week after the play, she saw a student walking towards the stone wall which served as the holy shrine in the play. The student looked serious and was not laughing, and then knelt in front of the stone wall. Tr. K said, “*Para po dun sa bata, totoo pala ang dambana.*” (*For the children, the holy shrine turned out to be real.*) Tr. K also saw children drumming to the rhythm of the drum signals in the play. The music was still on their minds.

Plate 31. Players show respect to the *dambana* or the Holy Shrine



As I was chatting with the teachers days after the play, I casually asked them how they are, and one teacher who played the role of *babaylan* said, “*Feeling ko po, may kapangyarihan pa rin ako!*” (I actually feel I have magical powers until now!), followed by a sudden change in posture as if carrying a regal bearing. Another teacher shared that in her class where the student playing the chieftain role was part of, she was told, “*Inuutusan ka ng Datu na ‘wag nang mag-lesson ngayon,*” (You are being commanded by the Chief not to hold class today), which made the class burst into laughter. She also laughed, and replied “*Tapos na ang play. Tumigil na kayo.*” (The play is done. You have to stop).

Student K related that when they see their *co-facimunos* in school, they continuously refer to each other by their Pailah names. Also, playing the role of Chieftain in the play, he noticed that when he walks in the school corridors, he can still feel the respect of the students. Some of the children still bow when he pass by them in the corridor.

Plate 32. Student playing chieftain was shown respect even after the play

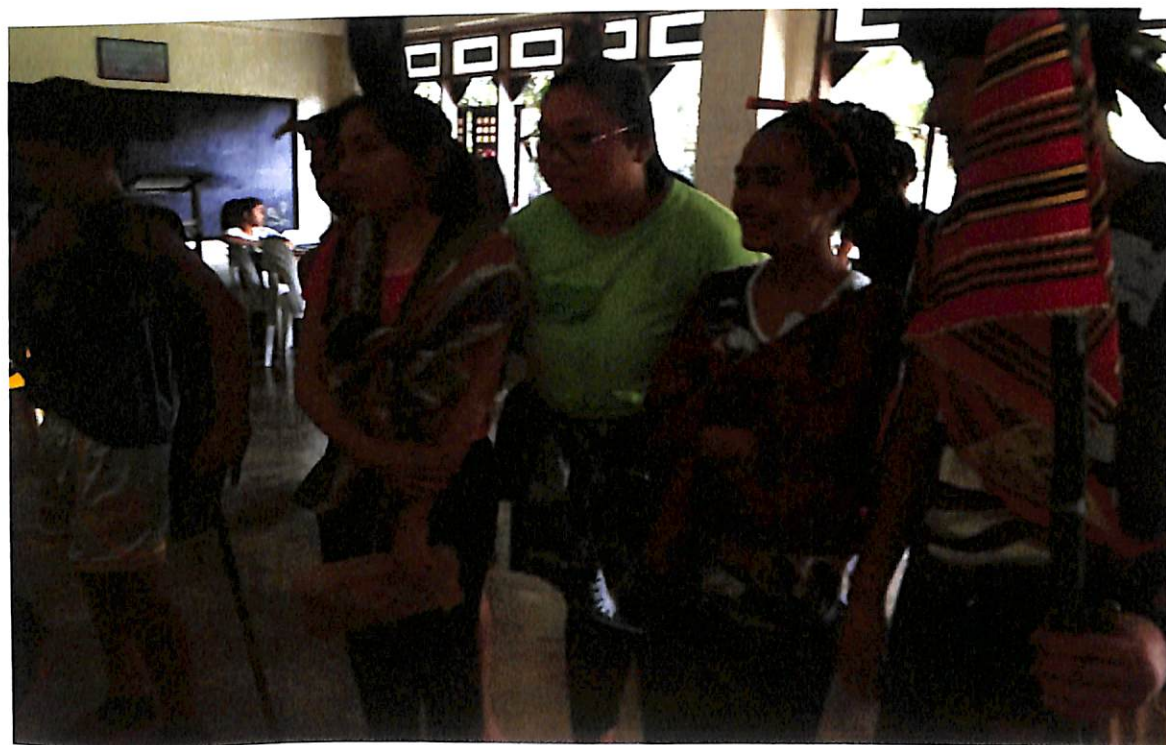


Lingering manifests as feelings of still being in the ancient times, and acting as though they were still in the play. What carried over are the acts of bowing, speaking in formal Filipino, kneeling in front of the shrine, and relating to one another based on their social positions in the play. Also, lingering is in the form of sustained friendships formed in the play. Student C shared,

Habang ginagawa po namin ang dula, naging magkaka-close pa po kami lalo at naging magkaibigan kahit magkakaiba po kami ng grade level at may kanya kanya po kaming grupo sa bawat grade level at hindi nagkaka-halobilo. Pero noong nagkaroon na po ng play doon na po kami naging magka-close lahat.

(While we were doing the play, we became closer to each other and we became friends even if we come from different grade levels. We had our own our own set of friends, and we didn't really mingle before. But when the play happened, that was when we all became close.)

Plate 33. Actor facilitators doing tasks together



What he said next is worth noting,

Nahirapan na po kaming mag-adjust kasi magka-klase na po kami na hindi na play ang magaganap. Kasi balik na po kami sa dating ginagawa as student po.

(It became difficult for us to adjust because we were about to go back to class, and we will no longer be doing the play. Because we were about to return to what we used to do as students.)

Lingering, in this case, resulted in a challenge to transition again to the actual world. This may also have important implications as to the notion of play in education. Turner opined that the words "work" and "play" have multivocal meanings. Prior to the industrial societies, work is not "work" as we know it. Turner forwarded that in the cultural activities of earlier societies, "work and play are intricately inter-calibrated" (1982, p. 32). Parallel to this are the notions of going to school, perceived as "work," and playing, perceived as "not serious work." What the participant said about returning to classes as where the play ends because they have to go back to what they usually do as students, indicates a separation of work and play in education. In the Pailah experience, the actor-players were immersed in the storyworld and despite being inside the world of play, their interactions were natural and tension-free, according to Tr. E.

In the playful experiences, two overarching processes permeated the playful experiences. One is *Pakikiramdam* (Sensing), and the other is *Pagbabanyuhay* (Transforming).

PAKIKIRAMDAM (SENSING)

Erasga (2015) views pakiramdaman as entailing the use of the five senses, and drawing from one's own experiences to make sense of the cues gathered by the senses. Erasga further opines:

Ang "paki" sa salitang pakiramdaman ay naghuhudyat ng presensya ng ibang tao sa pagsasaayos ng sarili. Hindi lang dapat tingnan bilang panghihimasok, katumbas din ito ng pagpapasintabi o kilos na may pagpapaalam o kilos na may sangkap ng pagsuyo.

(The word "paki" in the word "pakiramdamam" signals the presence of another person in one's ordering of self. This should not only be seen as intrusion, but also as an equivalent of giving due respect or an action that requests permission or an action that has an element of gentle persuasion.)

This emphasis on relationship spells the distinction between observing and sensing. Observing is *pagmamasid*, while sensing is *pakikiramdam*. Sensing is carried out by relating with others or the Kapwa, and leads to sense-making, while observing is a more scientific way of obtaining data (Erasga, 2015).

Pakikiramdam or sensing is revealed to be an action that permutes the playful experiences because it was expressed to be the mode by which participants engaged with each other from the beginning until the end. As they first got activated upon entry in the playworld, as they read their co-players' behaviours, as they figured out the rules, norms, and social roles in the fictive world of Pailah, as they observed their natural environment, as they read the cues and signals when testing certain actions, as they inhabited the story world, as they responded at an instant to emergent and unexpected scenes,

as they embody behaviours shaped by the communication interactions, and as they owned the roles they played - they were all using their senses and striving to be attuned to their co-players.

Plate 34. Players attentively listening to the Chieftain's pronouncements



This is aligned with the notion of *pakikiramdam* in Matarognon's work (1987). Here, she describes *pakikiramdam* as “a covert individual process by which a person tries to feel and understand the feelings and intentions of another” (p. 470). This kind of sensing, aptly described by an actor as “*makikiramdam ka, sasabayan mo sila*” (you sense what's going on, and you go along with them), is also characteristic of Bakhtin's heteroglossia where communicative interactions are seen to happen only if utterances are “un-finalized or centrifugal and willing to accommodate one another” (as cited in Kim, 2011). In the process, multiple meanings arise, described to be “the creative elaboration as a result of dialogical interaction between differing world

views and voices” (Kim, 2011, p. 55). Multiple voices take flight in a seemingly leading and yielding communicative dance.

Matarognon (1987) forwards that *pakikiramdam* involves tentative, exploratory and improvisatory behavior” (p. 471). In the absence of a line-by-line script, hard-set props and setting, well-defined roles and rules, the free-flowing conversations happening in different scenes invited the players and facilitators to rely more on their senses or their *pandama*. In the process, they exercised their creative freedom to improvise. In the process, as well, intuition precedes intellect.

Plate 35. *Facimunos* deciding on the players' captivity



Pakikiramdam therefore operates on the willingness and openness to lead and be led, and to constitute each other's meaning-making. Traversing the ambiguities in the communication interactions, participants engage in thoughtful tuning in to each other's responses. In the acts of playing,

responses spring from intuition and affect, more than from calculated planning and structured reasoning.

Maggay (2002) asserts that ambiguities and uncertainties in the communication interactions are addressed by Filipinos through *pahiwatig* or insinuation. This type of indirect communication arises from the high-context culture that Filipinos have. Our indigenous way of interpersonal communication done through *pahiwatig* takes the form of verbal, non-verbal, and a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication. In non-verbal communication, meaning-making significantly relies on the way the communication participants make use of space, gestures and actions, and their perception of time. In the play, I observed that the more immersed the players were in "Pailah," the more attuned they were to each other's thoughts, feelings, and actions.

With reference to time, Maggay (2002) further asserts that how people perceive time is often a latent aspect of communication, yet very crucial. When communication participants have different notions of time, conflicts may happen. Maggay further described two perceptions of time - one is an indigenous view based on the natural flow of things, while the other is a colonial influence based on the mechanical passage of time. In the play, the initial hesitation of the teacher-facilitators can be attributed to their subscription to the conventional notion of time as chronological and sequential. In their mind, it is nearly impossible to accomplish the play in half a month, and with their limited time because of various academic responsibilities. Such view changed when they later experienced theater as child's play, instead of theater

as rehearsed performance. Going back to Tr. B's remark, "*hindi ko namamalayan ang paglipas ng oras. Hindi ko rin ramdam ang pagod. Nung una, may kaba, pero nung tumagal na, ang saya saya...*" Again, Tr. B referred to being fully present in the moment, as if she is flowing with time.

PAGBABANYUHAY (TRANSFORMING)

What constitutes transformation? Aligned with the notion that knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984), the participants in Pailah related direct experiences that prompted them to act not based on their habits and dominant ways of actions. For John Dewey, there are non-reflective and reflective experiences. He further argues that intelligence and knowledge mediate reflective experiences so people can be freed from the limits and bounds of tradition (Miettinen, 2000).

Student A shares that the transformed space itself made her act differently. To quote,

Gamay na naman namin yung lugar na yun kasi araw-araw kami andun. School namin yun eh. Pero nung nag-play na, para bang nasa ibang mundo kami. Kasi ako mismo, ang makikita mo, sinaunang gamit, mga balai, may baybayin, sandata, kaya ayun, nag-iba din yung pamamaraan ko, yung kilos ko, pagsasalita, mas kailangan na gumalang.

(We are used to the place because we are there everyday. It's our school. But when the play happened, it's as if we are in a different world. Even I myself, what you'll see are belongings from the past, native dwellings, the ancient script, armament, and so my ways and my actions also changed, the way I spoke had to be respectful.)

Her direct experience of the space changed, and this was prompted by the transformed use and purpose of the space. What once was a school area was transformed into ancient Pailah, and being in that play world led to changes in her actions and behaviors.

Plate 36. Players witness the wedding of the Chieftain and the daughter of Lady Angkatan



In the case of Tr. B, she has direct experience of how conventional theater works and so when she entered Pailah, her views transformed.

Medyo nanibago po ako kasi iba yung way. Kasi kasali yung mga manonood doon sa mismong play. Kami po ay nasanay lang na interaction lang, pero hindi kasama. So kinabahan po ko. Paano yun sasama? Baka hindi magsamahan kapag may ipapagawa na ganito.

(I kind of find it new for me because it shows a different way. The audiences are part of the play itself. We are used to just interactions [with audiences], but not really bringing them inside. So, I was nervous. How will they participate? They might not participate if we ask them to do something.)

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Tr. B further shared that based on her experiences in college, it was challenging to make audiences participate, even for the adult audiences. As actors, when they ask audiences to do something, audiences usually hesitate and were unresponsive. Expecting to encounter the same response from the audiences, she was nervous at first. Much to her surprise, the players in Pailah were all active and participative. She noted how they knelt, they bowed, and followed the sound signals. One player even asked her if they actually do kneel when passing by the shrine even when there is no play. In amusement, she replied, "Yes, sometimes we do that." The way Tr. B smiled as if she knew something that the others did not know captures quite well the power wielded by those who facilitate the play world. She felt the power to create scenarios through imagination and to bring co-players in a learning journey.

Dewey's theorizing of experiential learning is from a philosophy of pragmatism which considers direct experience as the basis of teaching and learning methods. A different take is offered by Paulo Freire, who espouses a humanist and libertarian pedagogy. For Freire, there should not be a dichotomy between action and reflection. Education is about "consciously activating the subsequent development of experience" which for Freire, is achieved through true dialogue. Since dialogue entails a horizontal relationship, Freire made his point clear – "One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people" (1970, p. 95).

If dialogue presupposes equality among participants, then the relationships that emerged in the play can be said to be transformative.

Student C said that when playing with adults, particularly parents, he did not feel any pressure.

Yung mga magulang, kahit po mas matanda sila sa amin, is parang magsing-edad lang po, parang ano, parang mas mataas pa din ang lebel namin sa kanila kasi po may posisyon kami dun sa laro, tapos sila ay naglalaro lang. So, kahit po magkakaibang edad kami, sa laro, parang mas mataas ang katayuan namin sa buhay. Sinasakyan naman nila, at ine-enjoy nila yung mga pinapagawa namin.

(As for the parents, even if they are older than us, they seem to act like we are of the same age. It seems like we are even at a higher level than them because we have social positions in the play, while they are just players. So even if we are of different ages, in the play, it's as if we have higher social status. They seem to be fine with it, and they enjoy doing the tasks we give them.)

Plate 37. Players, including adults, show respect to the Chieftain as they present their works



In terms of performing with other *facimunos* who have no theater background, Student K, who serves as the President of the school theater group, shares: "*Kahit hindi ka myembro ng teatro, o wala kang experience, kayang kaya mo makisabay.*" (Even if you are not a member of a theater group, or even without experience, you can go along well). Another student with no theater background affirmed this, saying "*Hindi naman po kailangan na magaling ka sa acting. Tumambay lang naman po ako dun. [laughter] Tamang laro lang.*" (Being really good in acting is not really needed. I was simply hanging out there. [laughter] Just the right kind of play).

For Tr. E, this is what he finds remarkable in his Pailah experience - the authenticity of the interactions. In his own words,

When we say theater play, I used to think of, uhm, closed space, and limited lamang sya sa stage o sa four corners of the room or sabihin nating, isang arena. So, bago para sa 'kin yung setting, o yung mismong atake ng play. Dito, naramdaman po talaga nila yung ambiance, yung theme, yung setting, kasi mas authentic. Pati walang tensyon katulad sa traditional na theater. Kasi hindi mo kelangan memorize yung lines. Natural lang, spontaneous.

(When we say theater play, I used to think of, uhm, closed space, and limited to a stage or to the four corners of the room, or should we say, an arena. So, the setting or the main approach of this play is new for me. Here, we really felt the ambiance, the theme, the setting, because it is more authentic. Also, there's no tension like what you find in traditional theater. Because you do not need to memorize lines. It's just natural, spontaneous.)

That authenticity and spontaneity is also experienced by Tr. K who share that she did not feel nervous nor anxious. "*Feel na feel ko yung role ko bilang babaylan. I can do whatever I want.*" (I really felt real in doing my role as priestess. I can do whatever I want).

Plate 38. Actor-faciliators converse about adjustments they will do in the play



To present an organized scheme of how transforming unfolded as a social process, I borrow Liu's Stages of Critical Reflection (2015). Originally, this framework is used to analyze teacher's reflections, aimed at transformative learning. From a four-stage framework by Brookfield in 1987, Liu added a fifth stage so that reflection does not become an end in itself. Aligned with Freire's notion of praxis, the reflective discourse must lead to social action for transformative learning to unfold.

Table 3. Stages of critical reflection in Tr. B's experiences

Stage	Explanation	Player Experiences (Tr. B)
Assumption analyses	Trying to identify their assumptions	Sharing her previous experiences that participating in a play is tiring, and at times, burdensome because of the need to repeat. Some actors are also shy, thinking that they will act in solo in a drama.
Contextual awareness	Realizing that their assumptions are socially and personally created	Being surprised to know that when audiences are made part of the play, it becomes enjoyable as they did not feel the tiredness and they did not notice time passing
Imaginative speculation	Explores ways of thinking and living alternative to current ways of thinking and living	Realizing that even her students who are shy and quiet actually have exceptional talents when they perform tasks and roles in the play.
Reflective scepticism	Developing a critical cast of mind to doubt the claims made for the universal validity or truth of an idea, practice or institution	Factoring in the differences in the level of readiness of the players when it comes to the quality of experience. Noting that when a player is game and ready, the play just flows. Observed the effect of player differences in the "Riddle" station where players who were highly competitive turned the riddle game into a debate.
Reflection-based actions	Taking actions to change or improve practice	Reflects on the deeper meaning of "Experience is the best teacher" <i>For explicit actions, none articulated</i>

Table 4. Stages of critical reflection in Tr. K's experiences

Stage	Explanation	Player Experiences (Tr. K)
Assumption analyses	Trying to identify their assumptions	Stating that she had no idea what an immersive play is Admitting that with the limited time and the other school activities they have in the calendar, she thought that making a play would be far from possible Noting that preparing for school activities take time. A simple dance presentation alone can change days before the program.
Contextual awareness	Realizing that their assumptions are socially and personally created	Feeling pleasantly surprised that the children are contributing to the play Realizing that a theater production can actually be stress-free Realizing that theater can be co-created, and since all ideas are welcome, there's a motivating factor to contribute
Imaginative speculation	Explores ways of thinking and living alternative to current ways of thinking and living	Realizing that there is a way to make people participate without the need for rewards nor punishment Interrogating what she knows about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
Reflective scepticism	Developing a critical cast of mind to doubt the claims made for the universal validity or truth of an idea, practice or institution	Noting that her personality is being game in anything and eager to play, but she cannot say if that is true for others who may be more shy or reserved Posing an inquiry about the potential of immersive plays in war-inflicted places
Reflection-based actions	Taking actions to change or improve practice	Expressing that in her four years of teaching, she had a spark of hope that she can lead people through inspired action Reflecting on how a production can be stress-free and can make participants have a sense of ownership of their respective roles Visualizing her course of action as a manager where she taps people's intrinsic motivation through trust, sincerity, openness, enjoyment, leading to shared vision

Table 5. Stages of critical reflection in Tr. R's experiences

Stage	Explanation	Player Experiences (Tr. R)
Assumption analyses	Trying to identify their assumptions	Assuming that joining the play would be stressful because actors have to memorize lines Feeling the need to go to his patron saint and ask for help
Contextual awareness	Realizing that their assumptions are socially and personally created	Realizing that memorization of lines is not really needed, unlike in conventional plays Realizing that joining the production is fun and easy because you will just play along
Imaginative speculation	Explores ways of thinking and living to alternative current ways of thinking and living	Exploring the difference of reading about History and actually experiencing History Noting that experiencing History adds color to the past and makes one appreciate our stories more
Reflective scepticism	Developing a critical cast of mind to doubt the claims made for the universal validity or truth of an idea, practice or institution	Critically reflecting why he did not develop much interest in pre-colonial History Interrogating why our teaching of Philippine History has more emphasis on the Spanish era, with more images, and movies of that time
Reflection-based actions	Taking actions to change or improve practice	Reading more on the History of their town and intending to research more on Pre-colonial Philippines

Table 6. Stages of critical reflection in Tr. H's experiences

Stage	Explanation	Player Experiences (Tr. H)
Assumption analyses	Trying to identify their assumptions	Admitting to feeling confused and lost at the beginning of the play because of the lack of structure
Contextual awareness	Realizing that their assumptions are socially and personally created	Realizing that the play is enjoyable, spontaneous, and an educational experience
Imaginative speculation	Explores ways of thinking and living to alternative current ways of thinking and living	Interrogating the way we are taught History when we were children where we were forced to memorize dates and people, which seem far from our realities Discovering that there is another approach to learning History, which is easier to understand and without the need to read voluminous books
Reflective scepticism	Developing a critical cast of mind to doubt the claims made for the universal validity or truth of an idea, practice or institution	Critically reflecting on how he was born and raised in Pila, yet he does not know much about their history and his ancestors
Reflection-based actions	Taking actions to change or improve practice	Researching on the history of Pila, and finding out that the story of Jayadewa is real, and that their ancestors were originally from Pinagbayanan, and found a new settlement in Paggalangan. Relating the past and present, noting that there was an old church in their place in Paggalangan, in which, at present, only half of the church tower can be seen

Table 7. Stages of critical reflection in Student K's experiences

Stage	Explanation	Player Experiences (Student K)
Assumption analyses	Trying to identify their assumptions	Referring to his experiences of how a play is supposed to be planned, rehearsed, and lines memorized
Contextual awareness	Realizing that their assumptions are socially and personally created	Realizing that the more he tried to memorize lines, the more nervous he became Realizing that when the belief is there, the dialogue just happened and his actions were spontaneous
Imaginative speculation	Explores ways of thinking and living to alternative current ways of thinking and living	Discovering that his friends who did not like role plays revealed their talents and overcame their shyness
Reflective scepticism	Developing a critical cast of mind to doubt the claims made for the universal validity or truth of an idea, practice or institution	Naming imagination as key factor in gaining knowledge
Reflection-based actions	Taking actions to change or improve practice	Extending his imaginings to making another immersive play on Pailah history, identifying an abandoned place near their school as venue Relaxing his approach as leader of the school theater group through "serious fun"

Table 8. Stages of critical reflection in Student C's experiences

Stage	Explanation	Player Experiences (Student C)
Assumption analyses	Trying to identify their assumptions	Perceiving theater as tedious and exhausting because of long hours of practice Assuming that it is difficult to convince the adults to participate in the play
Contextual awareness	Realizing that their assumptions are socially and personally created	Opening himself up to the new experience despite doubts because of the lack of theater experience Realizing that doing the play is fun, and physical tiredness is felt only after the play
Imaginative speculation	Explores ways of thinking and living alternative to current ways of thinking and living	Realizing that a play can be accomplished collaboratively and spontaneously because they contributed through writing songs, improvising lines, and adding challenges when needed
Reflective scepticism	Developing a critical cast of mind to doubt the claims made for the universal validity or truth of an idea, practice or institution	Discovering that even someone with no theater background can perform convincingly Asserting that if others can, he can too
Reflection-based actions	Taking actions to change or improve practice	Continuously adjusting based on the unfolding scenes

Framed from Freire's Theory of Dialogic Action (1970), communication interactions in the form of dialogue are not enough. Social actors must act together, critically reflect, and transform their realities through further action and reflection.

Overall, the narratives of the participants revealed social processes arising from experiencing theater as play. Each process is mutually supportive and constitutive of another. Craig (1999) describes communication as a

constitutive process when meanings produce and reproduce shared meaning in a reflexive way. In the context of this study, the participants entered the play, and were surprised at its difference with conventional theater. They were then activated by the different stimuli that engaged their senses. The simple tasks, the way the actors related to them, led to reacting, and through imitating the actors and co-players, they were able to transition into immersing. In some cases, observing led to testing, and the meanings they construct from the other players' responses to their acts of testing, influenced their responses. Craig further cited Deetz who pushed for "an emerging communication perspective that focuses on describing how the inner world, outer world, social relations, and means of expression are reciprocally constituted with the interactional process as its own best explanation" (1999, p. 126).

Drawing from Victor Turner's work on the ritual process, the play experienced by the actor-facilitators and the players is akin to a society, a microcosm for that matter, which has structure and antistructure. For Turner, society comes into being through a dialectical historical relationship between the established rules, roles, norms, referred to as the "structure" and those experiences in culture which is outside, in between, and below structure, referred to as "antistructure." When the 'audiences' entered the Pailah storyworld, they found an altogether different society with different rules, roles, and norms. Being greeted in pure Filipino language, although expected considering that we are Filipinos, is something that the players found surprising. Witnessing and eventually learning the gesture of respect in the Pailah storyworld is something that the players found strange at first. They observed

and later, imitated the gesture. As they gain deeper grounding in the culture of Pailah, they later embodied their roles, fulfilling their tasks, showing reverence to the shrine and respect to their fellow Paileños, even without being told. At the beginning, they were reacting to the stimuli; towards the end, they were responding to the experiences of the culture in the storyworld that they have come to own.

Although spoken in jest, Tr. K's remark is revealing of the desire of educators to truly engage their learners.

Ano ba ang kundisyon na ginawa sa kanila para sa isang tunog lang ng tambol sunod agad sila? Utos lang ng datu, gagawin agad nila. Sana ganun din kami sundin ng mga bata. Sana datu tayo para sundin tayo ng mga bata. Magbibihis pang datu tayo para sundin. [laughter].

(What kind of conditioning were done to them [the players] so much so that they obey in one beat of the drum? The chieftain orders something, they do it immediately. I wish the kids also obey us like that. I wish we're chieftains too so the kids obey us too. We can dress up like a chieftain so they would obey us. [laughter])

In making sense of the generated codes and categories, Victor Turner's Theory of Social Drama may be used as framework. Turner (1980) asserts that a social drama is a story that has discernible beginning, middle, end. Processual and characterized by spontaneity in experience, social drama has four phases, namely, **breach, crisis, redress, and either reintegration or recognition of schism**. In his works, Turner lengthily described social dramas in various contexts, such as in the struggle for village leadership, in the power struggle between church and state, in political scandals, among

other sites of conflict. When there are conflicts and division of interests, it first manifests as breach. The breach is all about challenging the status quo. Once expressed, it cannot be ignored as the tension rises, which eventually leads to crisis.

Turner describes crisis as "a momentous juncture or turning point in the relations between components of a social field - at which seeming peace becomes overt conflict and covert antagonisms become visible" (1980, p. 150). In the ensuing crisis, similarities and differences in interests are revealed, and crisis happens in many levels. The process is surprising as pretenses in relationships get revealed. Turner's apt description is "...the limits of consensus are reached and realized; real power emerges from behind the facade of authority" (p. 151).

The next phase is redress, characterized by efforts to set right the initial breach and eventual crisis. Turner describes redress as diverse adjustive mechanisms, influenced by factors such as how deep and significant the breach is, how socially inclusive the crisis is, the nature of the social participants experiencing the breach, and how autonomous the group is in relation to the wider social system. These mechanisms may be as simple as personal advice to formal and legal arbitration, and even to public performance.

The social drama will have reached its final phase, which may either be reintegration of the conflicted group or in case of irreconcilable tensions, may lead to separation or what Turner calls "schism."

Victor Turner's Social Drama has significant implications to social and cultural performances because it articulates the processes of change. He describes his model as agonistic or polemical not just because societal systems are characterized by conflicts and contradictions. The crucial factor in his model "lies between indeterminacy and all modes of determination" (p. 157). Describing indeterminacy as being in the subjunctive mood, he refers to a space for reimagining possibilities amid the uncertainties. To quote, "It is all that may be, might be, could be, perhaps even should be" (p. 157). Framing social reality as indeterminate is in a way framing uncertainties as open spaces for transformation. Emphasizing the redress phase where the "fixing" of the initial breach and crisis happens, social actors make sense of their experiences as they assign meanings to events and relationships. As they reflect, and act upon such reflections, reflexive narratives emerge.

In the Pailah experience, the social drama began when the breach happened. The status quo or the norm in theater is for participants to go to the audience area and be seated so they can watch the play being presented on stage. Conventionally, theater features what Bertolt Brecht calls the "fourth wall," or the invisible wall separating the actors and the audiences. Parallel to this, from the perspective of education, Freire describes this as the "banking education" where the students become passive receivers of information. Conventional classrooms are still designed in such a way that teachers are in front and the students are neatly seated in rows and columns. Breach happens when the fourth wall is broken leading to a shared space; or when the classroom ceases to be a bank, and becomes a co-constructed market of

ideas and experiences.

From the perspective of the actor-facilitators, on the other hand, their introduction to the breach is in the form of ambiguities as to how they will perform their roles as actors. Conventionally, theater productions have scripts, rehearsals, set design, and choreography. In the theater as play experience though, these are not well-defined. This led to feelings of confusion, hesitation, agitation, even stress and anxiety. Remarks like "Where is this leading to?," "Am I really going to be part of this?" and reactions like seeking the help of one's patron saint or keeping to oneself the strong dislike for what was about to happen are all indicative that the breach has begun. Reactions to the breach are diverse. Some were totally surprised and did not immediately engage in the playful interactions, while some simply observed and imitated people's interactions as the scenes unfolded.

In Turner's Social Drama, the incident of breach may either be deliberate and intended actions to challenge the norms, or it may also arise from heated conflicts. In "Pailah," the design of participatory and immersive theater is, in itself, a provocation that leads to the next phase - crisis.

The eventful actions comprised of a series of activating, reacting and observing, imitating and testing led to the mounting crisis, which manifested in different stories and meanings for the participants. The adults who experienced Pailah, for example, were asked to fulfill tasks such as kneeling to the chieftain and bowing to nobility, although they are fully aware that these members of the nobility are actually mere students in the 'real' world. An adult

who is unable to temporarily suspend judgment, or leave his notions of seniority and respect will more likely experience crisis in the form of resistance. This is strongly echoed by Student K who maintained that playful interactions will lead to enjoyment and engagement when one takes the play seriously. Otherwise, a player will not feel the thrill and excitement. What one feels instead is a mounting crisis of whether to go with the flow or stop altogether. When the play feels like it is imposing or commanding certain actions that may appear absurd, the participant feels discomfort and resistance.

Turner's description of crisis as that point where the disagreements and misalignment get revealed is also present in the Pailah experience. A teacher who admitted to feeling tired and exhausted because of the series of activities they had at school, at first, considered her participation in the immersive play as unwelcome. For her, it is something she had to do even if she does not want to.

A stark observation as well is a comment received from a town heritage advocate who opined that the immersive play did not accurately capture the timelines of their town history. Her basis are the historical accounts written in books. In her mind, a crisis gets revealed with regard to the accuracy of facts and validity of the accounts being depicted in the immersive play. Although the director of the play did not claim historical accuracy; nonetheless, the play resulted in dissonance in the mind of one participant because she was coming from a frame of formal, written historical accounts.

To bridge the crisis to the final phase, which is either reintegration or schism, one goes through the redress. These are mechanisms employed to adjust to the initial breach and then mounting crisis. For the teacher who initially viewed the immersive play as unwelcome, her redressive mechanism was to express her thoughts and feelings to her friends. She also pushed herself to participate owing to her sense of duty as a teacher. Similarly, for the student actor who was worried and anxious at the idea of performing in front of an audience because in his mind, he is not a theater person, redress came in the form of asking help from friends and in observing, sensing, and imitating how roles are performed by his peers.

These redressive actions led to reintegration of the participants in the world of play. The teacher who disliked the idea of participating in the play later found herself immensely enjoying in the play, to the point that she joked that she was even willing to miss a church service just to go to the play. The student who started off lacking in confidence because of lack of theater experience eventually played the role of a high priest who facilitated important rituals in the play. He was also able to guide his teachers who came to join the play as actor-facilitators much later than the students did. Turner said that when such reintegration happens, there would inevitably be changes in interactions and relationships.

On the other hand, if the breach went on because the redressive mechanisms did not work, crisis continues, thus leading to schism. In schism, the differences in perspectives did not get reconciled, and the new roles and statuses did not get accommodated, resulting in parting of ways. In other

words, there is no mutual and reciprocal communication.

Viewing this from Bakhtin's heteroglossia, the multiple meanings arising from the communication of interactants with different worldviews will lead to mutual meaning-making when the parties are willing to accommodate one another. Having unfinalized worldview is therefore crucial for dialogue to happen. Otherwise, schism happens.

In the case of Pailah, there were a few parents who chose not to enter the storyworld. One parent was leaning on a tree near the school canteen, and she was watching the students and the actors walking and doing tasks in the play. I overheard her telling the canteen owner that she does not understand what was happening in the play. The canteen owner quickly replied, "*Kailangan ho sumali kayo sa loob para maintindihan 'nyo yung kwento.*" (You need to join and be inside the play so you would understand the story.)

Plate 39. *Facimunos* and players showing different facial expressions



I heard another parent asking a fellow parent if the stores are real and if they can actually buy food from the stores where the merchants are. The other parent jokingly replied, "*Baka ginto ang pambili diyan. Wala akong ginto.*" (Maybe gold is used to buy from there. I don't have gold). The two fathers laughed and watched in amusement as the players went on with their respective tasks. These adults were invited to be part of the play, to take on roles in ancient Pailah, and to play with their children. Nevertheless, they did not get the chance to be fully integrated in the storyworld because they did not open up to the breach, the crisis, and the redressive mechanisms that followed. Nevertheless, they showed interest in the ongoing play, watching intently especially when group of children were given tasks by the chieftain, and as these children returned to show the chieftain what they accomplished. One grandfather in particular, was sitting under the shade of a tree, and his gaze followed the merchants bartering silk, accessories, gold, and food.

Plate 40. Players buying food from merchants in the play



A similar dialectic was observed from the responses of the teacher facilitators during the first run of the play. The director explicitly said that seats for the audiences are not needed because there are no audiences. Everyone is invited to be players. However, some of the teacher facilitators thought it best to place a few benches for the parents who would like to be seated. The director agreed to a few benches in consideration of the more senior participants, such as the grandmothers and grandfathers who accompanied their grandchildren to the play. However, the number of benches the teachers placed in the area is more than just a few. Because of this, almost all participants of the play can be accommodated by the available seats. Although the students were highly engaged in the play, some parents chose to stay on their seats.

After that first run, it was the teachers themselves who noted that the availability of the seats discouraged others from fully participating in the play. One even commented, "*Dapat nga kasi lahat kasali. Tanggalin na lang natin ang ibang upuan para mag-ikot ikot talaga sila dito sa area.*" (Everyone should be part of the play. Let's just remove some of the chairs so people will really roam around the area.) Having this kind of communication where differing views allow room to accommodate one another is a dialogic encounter.

Plate 41. Players gathered around the tribal hall



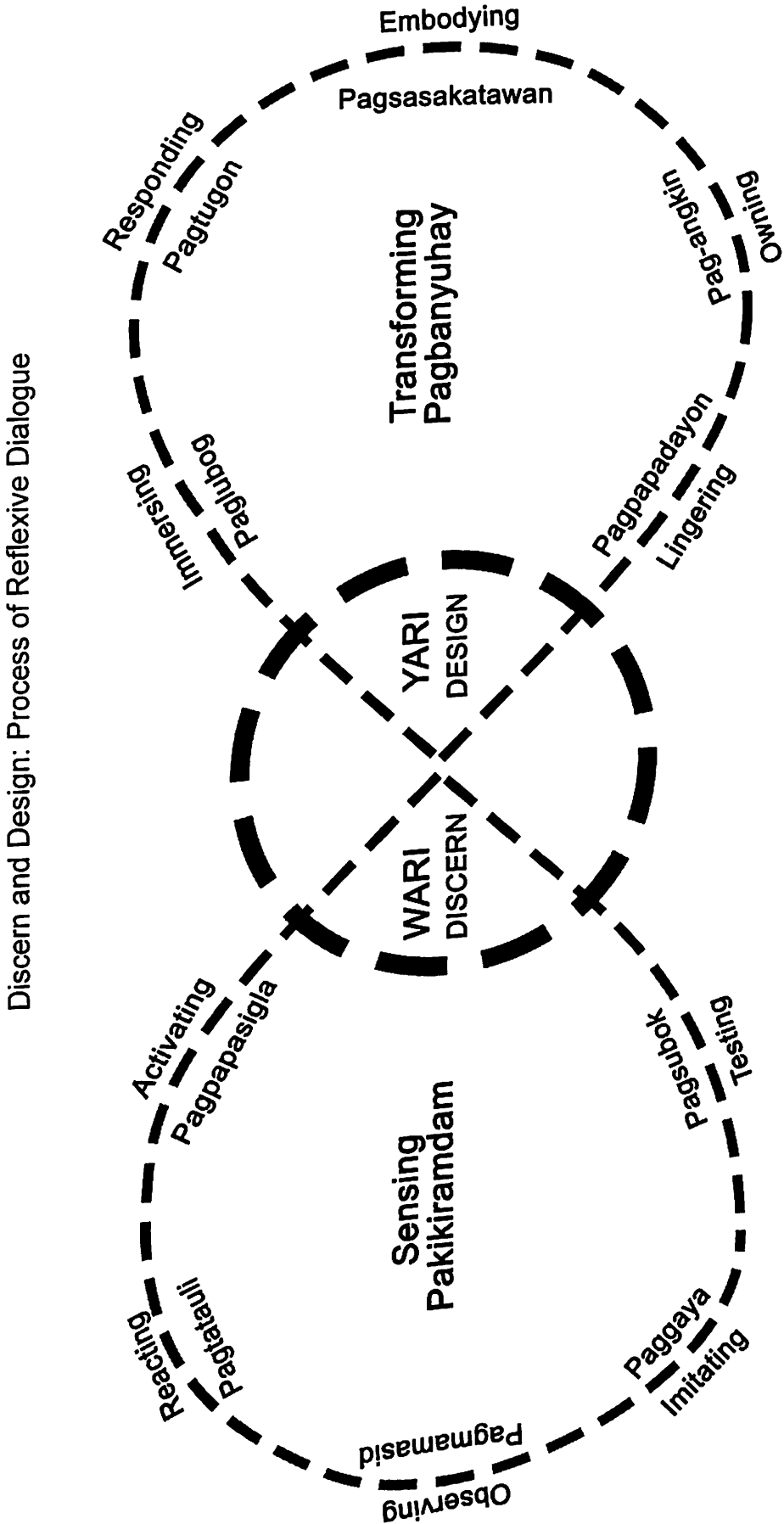
A review of Victor Turner's theory of social drama forwards that unlike the dramaturgical theories by Burke and Goffman, Turner's theory on drama is more processual and dynamic. Hence, it affords us ways to explore the emergence of patterns even "in the seeming chaos of successive situations" (Boje, 2000). Boje further asserts that the postmodern theatre concepts of Turner, in particular, are indeterminacy, liminality, and fragmentation.

Turner's theory of social drama is one focused on disharmonic social processes because there is always a disruption of the status quo. As defined by Turner himself, social drama is "an eruption from the level surface of ongoing social life, with its interactions, transactions, reciprocities, its customs making for regular, orderly sequences of behavior" (p. 196, Turner, 1985). Such eruption leading to crisis becomes a series of processual acts that escalate in the crisis, and germinate in the redressive phase.

The redressive phase is also considered the reflexive phase because this is where individuals and society draw meaning from the dynamic actions and performances going on, where their identities interpenetrate, and where infinite variations in performances form a prism of light. As Turner powerfully describes it, "Each performance becomes a record, a means of explanation" (1985, p. 301).

In light of the codes and categories that emerged from this constructivist grounded theory, this middle range theory is proposed.

Figure 2. Wari at Yari: Proseso ng Pakikipag-dayalogo



In the Pailah experience, the storyworld is activated through dynamic social interactions which immediately disrupt ongoing relationships, including that of actors and audiences, actors and fellow actors, audiences and fellow audiences, actors and space, and audiences and space. In the communication interactions that emerge, an overarching concept is the “What-ifs” or the system of possibilities of meanings and imaginings drawn by the communication participants from their experiences and dialogic encounters.

WARI : Making sense of the uncertain

“Wari” is a word recurrently used by both players and actors in the play. It appears alongside “Kung” which is a Filipino word for “If.” *Kunwari* or *kung wawariin* is used to introduce a thought that connotes an estimation, a suggestion, and an opinion for consideration. For instance, when groups were asked to designate roles to the individual members of a balai or dwelling, a student from one group posed the question “*Sinong gustong maging babaylan?*” (Who wants to be a priestess/shaman?) The question was followed by “*O, kunwari, ikaw na.*” (Oh, let’s pretend it’s you). The statement is not a direct command, but rather, an idea that others may consider, yet it is very powerful in terms of engaging the co-players because it does not bear the responsibility of taking on a task. Instead, it sends an open and playful invitation to participate.

The term “*Kunwari*” is loosely translated to “pretend” or “pretense” in English. However, when I closely reflected on the meaning of the word as how it was used by the actors and players in the Pailah experience, “*kunwari*” has

more to do with imagining and discerning through sensing and intuition. One scene that I witnessed made an impression on me. I immediately wrote about it in my journal, which later appeared as a memo. In this particular event, the actors were leading the players to their designated balais/dwellings. They were attentively listening to the drum beats serving as sound codes. A child accidentally stepped on a coconut shell and tripped. One actor-facilitator helped her and had her leg raised so she can take a look if the child got injured. The actor helping the child said, "*Kunwari, nurse mo ako. Pero actually, okay lang, practice, kasi magdo-doktor naman talaga ako.*" (Let's pretend I'm your nurse. But actually, it's okay, for practice, because I really plan on becoming a doctor.)

In what transpired, the actor was not pretending, in a sense that pretense means making an idea or thing appear as something which it is not. When the actor said "*Kunwari, nurse mo ako,*" she is stepping into a role that she really imagines herself doing in the future. In the process, she also demonstrated her notion of what it means to be a doctor or what doctors do. *Pagwawari* may actually translate to the act of imagining. When an individual imagines, he/she taps images and ideas that are not explicitly accessible to one's senses. Instead, it comes from within. This is why imagination is closely related to creativity.

Three days before the actual play performance, and preparations were underway, a student organization who has training on first aid was tapped to help on health and safety during the play. Student volunteers came prepared, expecting that they will be on standby in case any medical emergency

happens. They were surprised when they learned that they will do their responsibilities, while also playing the roles of Chinese and Vietnamese traders. The medic team was also invited to be part of the play. I again noted the now becoming familiar look of initial hesitation and shyness upon the first invitation to play. Nevertheless, the vibrant atmosphere of the Pailah world, which was becoming more and more colorful as the performance dates got nearer, appeared too inviting and so the traders got into their roles quite fast.

Plate 42. Actor-facilitators playing the foreign merchant roles welcome the arrival of the players



I heard the traders talking to each other, improvising about their roles and characterization. One said, "*Ikaw raw ang Vietnamese, magsalita ka Vietnamese, then ita-translate ko naman kunwari.*" (You play Vietnamese, as if you speak Vietnamese, and let's pretend I'll translate it). This was followed by laughter, and a series of accents that they tried out to see which one really fits.

Again, in the way the actor-facilitators used the word "*Kunwari*," they are not merely pretending to be someone they are not. Instead, they are imagining what it could have been like to be foreign traders during the ancient times.

While immersed in a role, actors are making sense of their environment, and the actions of their co-players shape and influence their responses and actions. At the same time, their own actions and decisions contribute to the unfolding scenes. It was therefore the *pagwawari* which enabled the actors and players to make sense of the uncertain.

Pagwawari also has an intuitive quality because the participants had to act from instinctive feeling, rather than deliberate reasoning. When players tried to describe how they were able to give solid performances, they said it just flowed. This is propelled by the knowledge and feeling that diverse ideas were welcome, and that they were free to create and improvise.

Using the lens of Victor Turner's Social Drama, the breach and crisis is where ambiguities and uncertainties are introduced. In these ambiguities, the actors and the players have no fixed codes as to how to enact their performances. In contrast, when an individual auditions for a conventional theater production, he/she will attend a casting call, do line reading, and show his/her acting range or ability. He/she knows that preparing for a role requires getting into the character, memorizing lines and rehearsing blocking with co-actors. In the Pailah experience, these ordering rules and customs are not present; hence, uncertainties arise.

In the words of Turner, "Indeterminacy, is, so to speak, in the subjunctive mood, since it is that which is not yet settled, concluded, and known. It is that may be, might be, could be, perhaps even should be" (1980, p. 157). Emphasizing the fluid and the emergent, the actors and the players engaged in the processes of reflexive dialogue to reimagine what it was like to live in ancient Pailah and to experience the rich culture of our ancestors. The subjunctive mood invites actors and players to imagine possibilities. The subjunctive mood expresses something desired or imagined. In the process of expressing such, they discern what could be better courses of actions.

As remarked by Tr. K, she was careful not to overstep on the creation process of the children. Sharing a context of the school, she said that children come from different socio-economic backgrounds, and they also have foreign students. As a teacher, she wanted to give the opportunity for the students to explore ideas among themselves since they are the actors and actresses, and the main cast. As she herself experienced how the immersive play took shape, she remarked that the atmosphere was very encouraging because everyone was included, and one can offer ideas and suggestions without fear of being judged or committing mistakes.

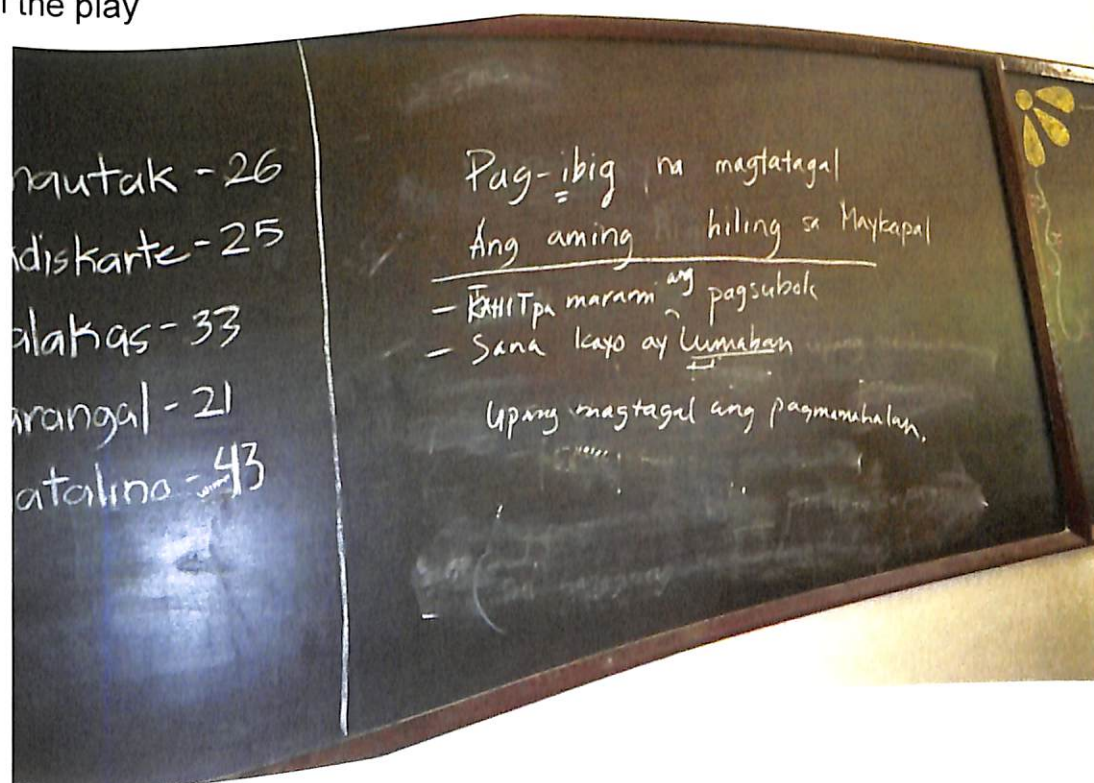
Tr. K further stated:

...natuwa po talaga ako na 'yong mga bata, nakapag-create ng tula, kanta. Pati yong mga pangalan nila na pinagsama, sobrang na-amaze talaga ako. Mas na-appreciate mo 'yong details ng play kasi galing 'yon sa mga bata. Naisip ko nong time na 'yon na ito ay tatatak sa kanilang isipan. Hindi sya structured at walang pressure sa bata kasi po in the first place, sa kanila nagmula.

(I was really delighted because the children were able to create poems, songs. Even their names in the play which is a combination [of syllables from their real name], I was really amazed. You will appreciate the details of the play more because these came from the children themselves. What I thought of at that time is that this [the experience] will be etched on their minds. It is not structured and there's no pressure among the children, because in the first place, it sprang from them.)

The phrase "*sa kanila nagmula*" (it emanated from them) suggests an organic process of collaborative creation, or co-creation, so to speak. Wari prompted the actors and players to tap into their intuitions as they get into character, and to navigate the uncertainties by providing a safe space where they can improvise.

Plate 43. Lyrics contributed by the actor-facilitators to the wedding song used in the play



Student C's experience is likewise a story of *pagwawari*. Admittedly shy, he recounts his parents' reaction upon seeing him play a role in an immersive play.

Namangha po sila sa akin, kasi alam po nila na mahiyain ako at hindi nakiki-halobilo sa iba. Ang bahay po namin ay along the highway kaya wala po akong nakakahalobilo. Palagi lang po ako nasa bahay namin. Kaya noong napanood po nila, sabi nila na kaya mo palang magkaroon ng confidence sa sarili at lakas ng loob sumali sa play. Sabi ko po, "Ma, hindi po ako nahirapan kasi tinutulungan ako ng kasamahan ko para makasabay sa kanila sa role.

(They were amazed at my performance, because they know me as shy and does not mingle with others. Our house is located along the highway so I do not get to socialize. I always stay at home. That's why when they watched me, they said I can actually have confidence in myself and guts to be part of a play. What I said was, "Ma, I did not find it difficult because my co-players helped me to be in the same pace as them in portraying our roles.)

He further shared that when the time for rehearsing comes, he just let himself go with the flow. Even if he was feeling nervous at times, he soon realized that each time he stepped into his role, he became used to it, and as time passed, he no longer felt shy. He said that the interactions he had with fellow actors and players helped him become believable in portraying his role. In his own words, *"nagbibigayan po ng iba't ibang ideas para mapalabas namin na nasa unang panahon kami. Mas napaganda pa po namin noong nagbigayan kami ng ideas at napaayos pa 'yong play at yong bonding sa isa't-isa."* (There was an exchange of diverse ideas so we can really depict that we were in the olden times. We were able to make the play better when we shared ideas and even our bonding with each other got better).

This brings to mind the idea of *communitas* where unique individuals experience unity as one group. Edith Turner described that *communitas* lead to experiences of “quick understanding, easy mutual help, and long-term ties with others (2012, p. 18).

Plate 44. Actor-facilitators playing the *babaylan* roles performing a ritual



Emphasis on the processes of becoming, rather than being, grew more pronounced as the play underwent several iterations. I noticed that each performance led to richer scenes and more nuanced performances. For the actors playing *aliping namamahay* (lower-class servant) who started off with just a name and a role, they visibly transformed in the play having changed their costumes from simple to intricate. Skirts, cloth accents and head pieces were their first version of costumes. The costumes and their Pailah names then influenced them to act differently from how they usually act as students. Addressing each other in their Pailah names, their language changed

accordingly. Gesturing signs of respect and aligning with the rules/norms in the storyworld, they used polite, formal expressions like “*Paumanhin*,” “*Magandang umaga, Ginoo*,” “*Magbigay-pugay sa Datu*,” among others. (“I apologize,” “Good morning, gentleman,” “Hail the Chieftain.”)

Plate 45. Actor-facilitators who play the roles of lower-class servants



Plate 46. Actor-facilitators who play the roles of apprentice *babaylans*



Plate 47. Actor-facilitators who play the roles of warriors



I also discovered that these children organically developed their own play within the play. This usually happens when they are on a break, seated on tree stumps, or on the branches of trees. As they wait for their particular scene in the play, they start their small talk while observing the other players doing their own task. I then noticed that they began challenging each other as to who can climb faster and higher. Their play is filled with giggles and laughter, and of course, sweat-inducing physical activities.

Plate 48. Actor-facilitators playing on their own (those at the back) while it was not yet their turn



One recurring game I observed is the race they do each time they are called by the chieftain as signalled by the drumbeats. It appears that they have another layer of play where they will walk briskly or even run to the chieftain's direction, and the fastest to arrive is the winner. A child whose role in the play is a servant suddenly blurted out to her playmates "O, *kayo na ang alipin ngayon!*" (It's now your turn to become servants!) after winning a race. In the process, the child expressed her understanding of how social hierarchy works without the need to have an adult explicitly ask her. Also, this suggests that *Pagwawari* emphasizes a space of potentiality where the given realities can be challenged to give way to a reimagining of alternate realities.

Plate 49. Actor-facilitators playing their own play during the breaks



Victor Turner offered this succinct insight:

'If' acts as a lever - to lift us out of the world of actuality into the realm of the imagination." "The realm of the imagination corresponds to the realm where images of heterogeneous pasts jostle with images of heterogeneous presents and are worked into alternative patterns by the shaping wills of authors, directors, actors, and onlookers, one of which will finally emerge as the most satisfactory 'as if' expression for assigning meaning in the contemporary relation between social dynamics and its interpretative double, the theater

Beginning an utterance with the word *Kunwari* moves the communication from monologue to dialogue because the meaning is unfinalized. It is open to the shaping of each other's thoughts through the ensuing meanings that will be put forth. Even without directly uttering the word *Kunwari*, the continuous reframing of ideas and relationships may happen through indirect *pagwawari*. Statements like "*Ikaw raw ang Vietnamese, magsalita ka Vietnamese,*" and

"Ikaw daw ang panday..." did not directly use the term *Kunwari*. Instead, they made use of the words "raw" and "daw." If "raw" and "daw" are translated into English, the closest would be "they say," "he/she said," "reportedly," "supposedly."

Mella (2014) states that the Filipino words *daw/raw* function as a particle expressing that message conveyed in a sentence is secondhand. I then thought about why these words are commonly used when children play or imagine themselves playing another role. Beginning the play premise with a sentence like *"Ikaw daw ang nanay, ako ang anak,"* or *"Dito raw ang palasyo ko,"* suggests that the actor's message is from someone else, and not directly his/hers. To whom in particular, players do not actually ask. I thought that this open space also opens up a discourse of possibilities where one can lead and be led without fear of committing mistakes or disturbing the status quo. Hence, *pagwawari* is a movement that begins internally, and gets channeled into action when players and/or communication participants will it into reality, or in Filipino, *pagyayari*.

This may also be related to Filipinos' communication style of being indirect, described by Virgilio Enriquez as serving us in various ways. As cited in Pua (2006), indirectness serves us well in "reflecting concern for the feelings of others to avoid the other person losing face or getting embarrassed if directly confronted with negativity, conforming with the norm of humility and modesty by not directly recognizing one's own ability and achievements, and so on" (p. 110). As the participants play, they demonstrate being attuned to the feelings of others through *Pakikiramdam*. They use indirect words, instead of

commanding words, as if their actions and behaviours are not theirs alone.

YARI - Co-designing through Performance

Yari is a Filipino word which refers to something made or done. Related terms in Filipino are "*gawa*" at "*likha*." *Yari* is a shared, dialogic act because what one thinks, feels, wills shape and are shaped by the Other.

Emphasizing the processual and intuitive nature of play, along with *Wari*, another core category that emerged from the grounded theory method is *Yari*. *Wari* and *Yari* are both characterized by three attributes - actively creating belief, supporting the belief, and enacting the belief.

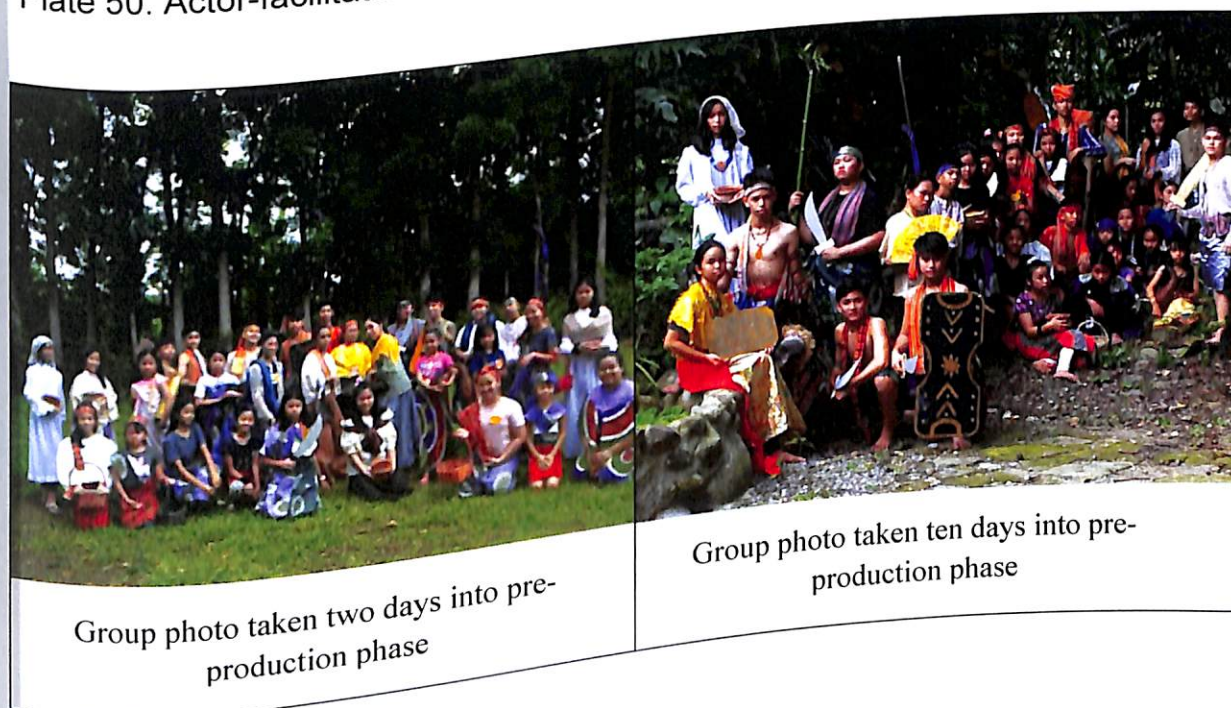
Actively creating belief. Processual and continuously in flux, the performances in the play act on one another. In all of the narratives shared, there is a mutual expression of enriched experiences as one plays. The experiences get enriched if the belief is activated in the first place.

Pagpapasigla or activating is described as the part where 'audiences' are invited into the world of play through playful, simple, and easy to do tasks, diverse multisensorial stimuli, and initial interactions with the *facimunos*. From the "actual" world, the audiences are invited to play inside the "storyworld." Some readily enter the "pretend" world, while others took a while before suspending their disbelief. Through *pagwawari* and *pagyayari*, belief is activated with the help of the setting, the players, and the tasks, amid the communication interactions.

In conventional plays, set design, lighting, music, costumes, and props

enhance the believability of the scenes. In the immersive play, the said elements are likewise present, and the main difference is that these were co-designed through iterative performances. Through the iterative performances, the belief that was initially activated becomes embodied, such as what is evident in the photos below. The photo on the left shows the players two days into the pre-production phase where they are just beginning to be familiar with the norms, behavior, language inside the Pailah world. This unfamiliarity shows in their first choices of costumes, for example. They still cannot distinguish pre-colonial and colonial Philippine clothing. After immersing in the storyworld of Pailah, it is not only the clothing that changed, but also their stance, the way they speak, act, and relate to each other.

Plate 50. Actor-facilitators and changes in their clothing and demeanor



Another difference is that these performances happen in a space, rather than in a set. Set usually refers to the act of putting or laying something in a fixed or specified place of position; whereas space or *puwang* in Filipino,

refers to an area which is free or unoccupied. By holding the immersive play in a natural environment, instead of in an auditorium, for example, more senses are activated. Otherwise, the immersive play will not be as immersive. The word “set” connotes determinacy, while “space” connotes “possibility.”

Plate 51. The facade of the Pailah storyworld



Supporting the belief. Immersed in the world of Pailah, the *facimunos* and players began to support that seed of belief that prompts them to act in accordance to how a Pailah member would act. Student K shares,

Kapag naniwala kayong nasa loob kayo ng Pailah, magiging masaya po sa pakiramdam, kahit po sa ibang tao. Kasi kung biniro-biro lang nila, parang niloloko, wala pong thrill. Hindi mo maramdaman na nasa game ka pala. Isip mo po na parang inuutusan ka lang, ganon lang yon.

(When you are inside Pailah, it becomes a happy feeling, even for others. Because if they'll just joke around, as if making fun, the thrill won't be there. You won't feel that you are actually in a game. You'll think that you're just being commanded to do things.)

What Student K shared is revealing because it alludes to the paradox of the need to be serious when playing and on the other hand, missing out on the fun of play when one is “playing around.” This resonates with the idea of *KunwarilKunyari* as not mere pretension, but in actuality, discerning and doing.

By undergoing the processes of activating, reacting, observing, imitating, and testing, a participant transitions from audience to player. Initial hesitations, stress, and discomfort with the uncertainties are indicative of the breach, which then elicit redressive behaviours. As players engaged in more tasks, and interacted with more characters in the Pailah world, there is mounting crisis. Their responses as they became more immersed lead either to reintegration or schism. To put it simply, the players may continue immersing or may begin withdrawing from the play entirely.

Enacting the belief. From the Pailah experience, most of the audiences chose to support and enact the seed of belief that was initially created. In the words of Student K,

Dalang dala kami, kaya noong naglalaro na, nadala din namin ang mga manlalaro. Parang totoo yung mundong yun kahit play lang sya.

(We were so into the play, that's why when we were in the actual play, we also carried with us the players. It seemed that the world we were in was real even though it's only a play.)

Student K was describing his experiences playing during the pre-production phase, conventionally called “rehearsal.” By inviting them to co-

create the Pailah civilization, the belief that was activated and supported, now becomes enacted.

Pagdating po ng play, pumapasok na lang yong character ko. Kapag nag-start na 'yong play, nararamdaman ko po na hari. Kelangan hari at pumapasok na din sa isip na walang English o anumang lenggwahe, puro Filipino na talaga.

(As the play happens, my character enters. As the play started, I have the feeling that I am king. I should be king, and in my mind, there is neither English nor any other language. Should really be pure Filipino.)

When I asked where this enacted belief is coming from, Student K said that playing during the workshop facilitated this. He said,

Yong sinabi ko po na pagpalawak ng imagination, ang laki pong tulong pagdating sa pagsasalita, nakakatanggal po ng hiya at nakakataas po ng self-confidence na makapagsalita sa harap ng madaming tao.

(What I said about widening my imagination helped me a lot when it comes to speaking, overcoming my shyness, and in boosting my self-confidence in speaking in front of many people.)

For him, this belief creates a state of flow where he did not need to think much of his words and actions. He enacts the character as if he is the character.

Hinayaan ko na lang siyang mag-flow po kasi 'pag pinaghandaan sya or sinasaulo mo ang lines, parang mas lalo mo pong makakalimutan. Parang inaadlib na lang po ang bawat lines na sasabihin. Kapag sinaulo po kasi lalo mo pong iisipin ang dapat sabihin na lalo pong makakalimutan.

(I just allowed it to flow because when you prepare for it or when you memorize lines, all the more that you tend to forget. As if you're just doing ad lib for each line you will deliver. Because when you memorize, the more you think about what you are supposed to say, and the more you forget.)

Tr. K shares her personal take on playing her role.

Ako naman, bilang babaylan na din po ko, na-immersed ako hanggang sa character. Siguro ako beside sa character, personality ko na din kasi game naman ako kahit saan at sabik din naman ako sa laro, so eto na eh, it's my moment. So sige go, na makikita n'yo naman sa pictures.

(In my case, as I am also a *babaylan*, I got immersed in the character. Besides the character, maybe because it's also my personality to be game to anything, and I am also eager to play, so this is it, it's my moment. So it's a go for me, and it shows in the pictures.)

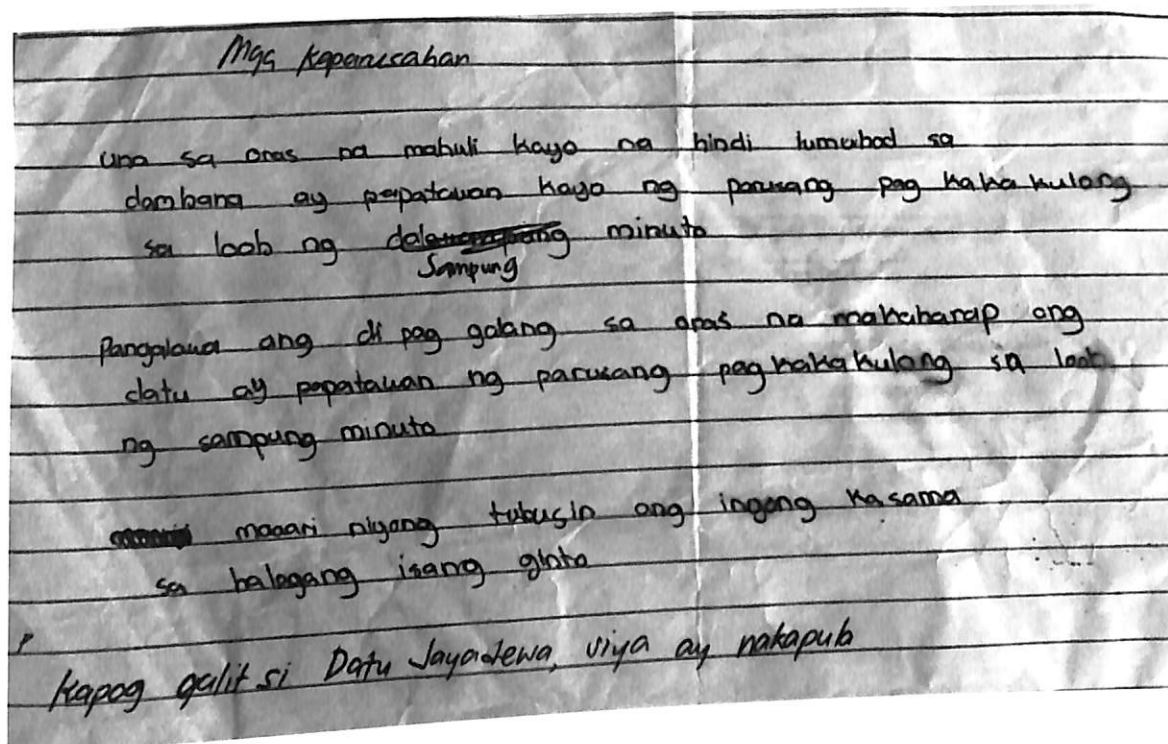
Plate 52. Actor-facilitators immersed in their roles



Apart from the language, behaviour, and spontaneous responses of the players who allowed themselves to be led by enacted belief, the co-created songs, poems, rules and games were also testament to the *Pagyayari*. An example is the list of penalties crafted by the chieftain and his warriors to those who will not abide by the rules inside Pailah. I observed that the warriors would readily adjust the number of minutes in captivity of those who were caught. They can sense based on the events happening around them if it is time to set

captives free. Such flexibility is at play in most of the spontaneous decision-making that the players were free to make. They did not go to the director to seek approval first. It seems that intuitive decision-making emerged in the Bahay-bahayan theater as play.

Plate 53. *Facimunos* coming up with their own penalties for offenses done



There was a scene where the drummers missed their cue, and the children instantaneously began humming to the beat of the Pailah theme. Using their voices, the sound grew louder by the second, and when the drummers heard this, they realized that it was their turn to beat. I observed how immersing in the storyworld can bring the participants a heightened sense of awareness of what should be happening in the play. Although they were not holding any script, they were aware of the music playing in different scenes. They act on their own accord, and this is part of *Pagyayari*.

Plate 54. *Facimunos* that serve as drummers in the play give the signals using drumbeats



Supporting the concept of *Pagyayari* is the performance of rituals by the players playing the role of *babaylans* or priestesses. Their costumes, painted faces, and the earthenwares with smoked that they are carrying helped plant the seed of belief. Such belief was supported by the respect they receive from other players. Each time they pass by, people bow as a gesture of respect. When they perform their rituals, everyone becomes quiet as if something sacred, solemn, and special is taking place. Hence, the players embody the role of nobility and power. As stated by one player, he can still feel his *Babaylan* powers even after the play ended.

Plate 55. A ritual being performed in front of the Holy Shrine



Overall, *wari and yari* aligns with Victor Turner's description of theater as ritual. To quote, "The theater is a kind of living, constantly changing ritual, which is congruent with the nature of a turbulent society which can be characterized more by becoming than being." Reframing theater as play emphasizes co-construction and co-creation, of intuition and action. By inviting audiences to imagine themselves playing roles in a storyworld with an altogether different sets of rules, norms, customs, beliefs, and ways of being, the play elicits deeply embedded values and belief systems revealing of who

the players are beyond their persona. The spontaneous responses, of whether to challenge the rules of the game or to abide by it to ensure safety and security, of whether to explore layers of the storyworld or dismiss these as mere child's play, of whether to collaborate and harmonize with co-players or to compete with them driven by thoughts of winning, of whether to welcome challenges or to withdraw from these because of initial discomfort amidst the uncertainties or lack of confidence in one's abilities, abound in the play.

Experiencing theater as play means exploring potentialities and possibilities because meaning is not given by the playwright nor the director primarily. Multiple meanings arise in the experiences because meanings are constituted by each other. The social processes that emerged in the players' experiences of "Pailah: Ugat ng Lipi" attest to what Craig (1999) said - communication as a constitutive process when meanings produce and reproduce shared meaning in a reflexive way.

When audiences watch a play, they know and feel, and clap for the actors after the show. When audiences immerse in a play, they know, feel, and do, and everyone claps for each other as they celebrate the processes of becoming that they experienced as a community of players.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Play can be everywhere and nowhere, imitate anything or be identified with nothing...play is the supreme bricoleur of frail, transient constructions...the wheel of play reveals to us the possibility of changing our goals and therefore, the restructuring of what our culture states to be reality.

(Turner, 1983, pp. 233-34)

This study sought to generate an abstract theoretical understanding of what it means to experience 'theater as play.' Through successive levels of comparative analysis, this constructivist grounded theory focused on the question "How do participants experience the Bahay-bahayan theater as play?" The immersive theater in focus is "*Pailah: Ugat ng Lip*" which invited audiences to experience the culture in pre-colonial Philippines, specifically in Pila, Laguna, set within the story of the Laguna Copperplate.

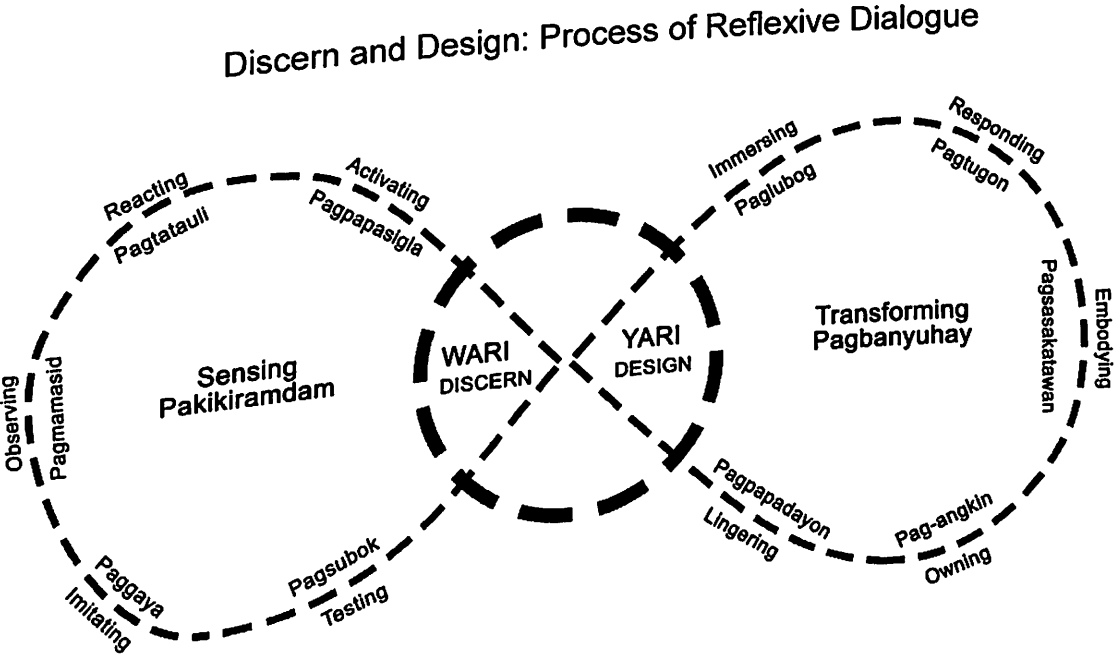
In an attempt to construct this grounded theory, I engaged in the world of play inhabited by the research participants. I delved into interpretive theorizing, described by Charmaz (2006) as the "theorizing of social actions that researchers construct in concert with others in particular places and times" (p. 129). Going back and forth and aspiring for reflexivity enabled me to see the internal logic amid the shifting voices and multiple realities shared by the participants, and these insights illuminated a different perspective on theater, play and communication.

Using constructivist grounded theory, I engaged in coding and memo writing. Adhering to Charmaz' systematic and flexible guidelines for doing constructivist grounded theory, I focused on actions and processes considering that play is also processual and in flux. Also, studying processes allows the definition and conceptualization of relationships between experiences and events (Charmaz, 2006).

Summary

Immersing in the performance space together with the research participants, and doing successive levels of comparative analysis, the following social processes in theater as play emerged. The core categories of *Wari at Yari* (Discern and Design) represent and capture the processes of reflexive dialogue. Meanwhile, *pakikiramdam* (sensing) and *pagbabanyuhay* (transforming) are processes that permeate the entire play experience.

Figure 2. *Wari at Yari: Proseso ng Pakikipag-dayalogo*



Investigating the play experiences in both the pre-production phase (among the Pailah cast) and the actual performance (among the Pailah cast and the guest audiences turned into co-players), it was revealed that participants undergo *pagpapasigla* (activating), *pagtatauli* (reacting), *pagmamasid* (observing), *paggaya* (imitating), *pagsubok* (testing), *paglubog* (immersing), *pagtugon* (responding), *pagsasakatawan* (embodying), *pag-angkin* (owning), and *pagpapadayon* (lingering).

These processes do not occur in isolation. Rather, they are mutually supportive and constitutive, as represented by the infinity model and broken lines. Since meaning-making is very much influenced by, and in turn, influences cultural contexts and behaviours, the participants go back and forth these processes. How each process is arranged in the infinity model serves as a heuristic guide, rather than fixed constructs, while simultaneously representing the processual and intuitive nature of the phenomenon being studied.

Pagpapasigla or activating is where 'audiences' are invited into the world of play through playful, simple, and easy to do tasks, diverse multisensorial stimuli, and initial interactions with the *facimunos*. This is akin to pressing the play button in a digital game, and being welcomed into the play world through music, characters, game rules and mechanics, and space design.

Pagmamasid or observing is where participants gain increasing awareness through reading their environment, reading the verbal and non-verbal communication of their co-players, and their own reactions through *pakikiramdam* or sensing. It was revealed that sensing is an action or process

that permeates the entire play experience.

Paggaya or imitating is where participants perform the same gestures that they see others do. They imitate the gestures, movements, behaviour, manner of speaking of the people around them, thus serving as an adaptive response to lessen potential conflict given that they are traversing an unfamiliar terrain.

Pagsubok or testing is where participants begin exploring what certain actions will lead to, having gained familiarity with how the play world works. Testing involves figuring out different ways of acting in the play world, and reading cues from their co-players' responses arising from the testing.

Paglubog or immersing is where participants demonstrate behaviors showing that they have fully entered into the storyworld. Changes in their language, expressions, movements become fluid and natural, as if they inhabit the storyworld as real characters in the play. When participants are immersed, they become fully present in the moment which manifests as perceiving time as fast and not minding the physical tiredness for they are enjoying the playful experiences.

Pagtugon or responding is where participants have fully immersed in the play world, and are 'response-able' as they move in and out of that world. The quality of being in the here and now is continued as the players navigate the play world with the belief that he is the role he is playing. Responding is experienced as the simultaneous 'going with the flow' and 'thinking of the best course of action' at a given moment. An in vivo code that emerged from the data is the concept of "pop-up" scenes (*iglap*) describing the emergence of different

scenarios throughout the play. Responding is where players can act at an instant to the pop-up scenes, or the playful interactions that spontaneously happen.

Pagsasakatawan or embodying is where participants physicalize their thoughts and perceptions as they inhabit their characters in the play. Embodying means possessing an awareness of one's role in the play, and manifesting such awareness as movements. The movements lead to deepening knowledge of the play world, and such knowledge, in turn, shapes the movements.

Pag-angkin or owning is where participants play a role with full confidence, thus giving off a 'solid' and believable performance. Owning is best described as playing seriously, driven by one's sense of belief in the storyworld. As a result, one's thoughts, feelings, and actions are aligned. A solid and believable performance does not rely on acting abilities per se, but on the power of belief one injects to his/her role which makes playing effortless, natural, and fluid.

Pagpapadayon or lingering is where participants carry over their behaviours, actions, and relationships in the play even after the play has ended. Lingering manifests as feelings of still being in the ancient times, and acting as though they were still in the play.

At the course of these social processes, two overarching actions permeate the Pailah experience, namely, *pakikiramdam* or sensing and *pagbabanyuhay* or transforming.

Pakikiramdam or sensing is where participants use their senses and strive to be attuned to their co-players so they can accommodate each other's meaning-making. Erasga (2015) views *pakiramdam* as a Filipino brand of reflective inquiry.

The act itself signals the presence of another person in one's ordering of self. This kind of sensing is likewise characteristic of Bakhtin's heteroglossia where communicative interactions are seen to happen only if utterances are "un-finalized or centrifugal and willing to accommodate one another" (as cited in Kim, 2011).

Pagbabanyuhay or transforming is where participants' experiences unfolded changes in the way they think, feel, and act. Borrowing Liu's Stages of Critical Reflection (2013) as framework, I presented how the participants engaged in a reflective discourse which implies transformative learning.

The core categories in this grounded theory are *Wari* (Discern) and *Yari* (Design).

Pagwawari or discerning is how players make sense of the uncertain through imagination and intuition, and where they explore possibilities through improvisation and creativity. More than just being pretense, *pagwawari* invites players in what Turner describes as the character of play as "the supreme bricoleur of frail, transient constructions..." (Turner, 1983, pp. 233-34).

When players engage in the communicative dance of leading and yielding, which are the dialogic interactions, they co-construct possibilities and realities. The safety net that provides the courage to experiment and make mistakes is "*Kunwari*." At times, it is used to introduce a thought that connotes an estimation, a suggestion, and an opinion for consideration. When a co-player accommodates the thought, that player responds. Such unfinalized interactions of multiple voices then lead to "the creative elaboration as a result of dialogical

interaction between differing world views and voices" (Kim, 2011, p. 55).

It is in this juncture that the lens of Victor Turner's Social Drama is positioned. *Pagwawari* is how players navigate the breach and crisis phases, which are characterized by ambiguities and uncertainties. In these ambiguities, the actors and the players have no fixed codes as to how to enact their performances.

In the words of Turner, "Indeterminacy, is, so to speak, in the subjunctive mood, since it is that which is not yet settled, concluded, and known. It is that may be, might be, could be, perhaps even should be" (p. 157, 1980). Emphasizing the fluid and the emergent, the actors and the players engage in the processes of reflexive dialogue to reimagine what it was like to live in ancient Pailah and to experience the rich culture of our ancestors. The subjunctive mood invites actors and players to imagine possibilities. The subjunctive mood expresses something desired or imagined. In the process of expressing such, they discern what could be better courses of actions.

Pagyayari or designing is how the imagined possibilities are worked out in action. *Yari*, as a Filipino word which refers to something made or done, is related to the Filipino terms "*gawa*" (do) and "*likha*" (create). *Yari* is a shared, dialogic act because what one thinks, feels, wills shape and are shaped by the Other. *Wari* and *Yari* are both characterized by three attributes - actively creating belief, supporting the belief, and enacting the belief. It therefore works in concert with *Pagwawari*. Taken together, the journey of *Wari* and *Yari* involves intuitive decision-making, challenging the norms and working within the norms, and

dialogic communication through action, imagination, improvisation, reflection, and action.

Overall, experiencing theater as play is a reframing of theater with emphasis on co-construction and co-creation, on intuition, reflection, and action.

Implications

At this juncture, I am reminded of the research curiosities that started me in this journey. *What difference can play make in educational experiences? What makes learners engage in communication and dialogue, which according to Freire, are requisites of education that empower? How does play figure in the present education system, which is based on planning, purpose, and outcomes?*

The *Wari at Yari* model, by explicating actions that constitute processes of reflexive dialogue, allows educators to reflect on their own learning experiences and design future learning experiences anchored not only on outcomes, but also on playful dialogic interactions. Entering a play space where norms and statuses get leveled off and where new ways of thinking and doing can be explored, students can engage in constructivist learning. Since today's society is increasingly characterized by volatility, uncertainties, complexity and ambiguities, there is also an increasing need for learners to be able to navigate the "How's," "What If's," and "Why's" and not just identifying the "What's." An education that welcomes awe, wonder, and exploration can set a more fertile ground for creative and critical education.

Going back to what I wrote in the first chapter of this dissertation, I intended to contribute to the discourse of critical pedagogy. At the course of my research,

I witnessed how educational insights and sparks for action-reflection-action, consistent with Freire's notion of dialogue, is propelled by *Wari* and *Yari*. Emotions create motions. In the *Wari* and *Yari* model, the feelings of uncertainties expressed by the participants while they were in the liminoid space led to active discovery, being attuned with their co-players' actions and behaviours, and discerning and designing their own actions and behaviours in the process.

A serious implication of this is that educational programs may be designed where the creative and the critical mindset are viewed as holistic. Beyer, as cited in Baker, Rudd and Pomeroy (2001), defines creative thinking as divergent, while critical thinking as convergent. Beyer maintains that while the two are related, they not identical. However, in the model of *Wari* and *Yari*, critical and creative thinking are embedded in a stream of actions, reflections, and actions guided by both logic and intuition. When players emphasize leading the way and taking calculated risks, critical thinking is present; and embedded in this, is allowing themselves to be led by the emergent dialogic interactions, taking the form of creative impulse.

Also, this grounded theory shed light on the social actors' multiple construction of meanings as they experienced theater as play. In so doing, it extrapolated on the action-reflection-action praxis espoused by Freire, which is an influential discourse on critical pedagogy. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* asserts that for people to overcome oppression, they must first critically recognize its causes by creating situations where people can be closer to becoming more fully human. The *Wari* and *Yari* model, when taken as a

framework for reflexive dialogue, makes possible educational designs where the teacher and student dichotomy can be temporarily suspended. While in the liminoid space, the teacher and the students are transformed into co-players or co-learners. The social hierarchy present in the conventional relationships and places for learning also get levelled off, giving way to empowering and egalitarian education. Hence, the dialogic interactions may emerge not only through cognitive faculties, but also through the affective and psychomotor domains of learning. The opening up of possibilities and spaces for exploration is respectful of learners' inclination for communication, play and learning. As such, communication is education, and education is communication.

As an educator, I recognize how crucial it is to interrogate and challenge the oppressive system. Freire (1970) forwarded that this struggle necessitates perceiving "the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform." Hinging on this, the *Wari and Yari* middle range theory describes creative processes of making sense of communication situations and transforming these through playing, replaying, and re-playing possibilities, actions, and reflections. Theater in education becomes a space to rehearse change and a space to intuitively and reflexively perform the change.

In the same vein, Boal's "Theater of the Oppressed" invites participants to identify limiting situations, and rehearse ways by which they can transform situations. An important contribution of the *Wari and Yari* middle range theory is inviting the participants to experience a multisensorial journey, and in the process, to intuitively and reflexively perform the change. This model places

emphasis on the affective domain where players experienced feelings of nervousness, anxiety, hesitations, and shyness at the beginning, which later turned into feelings of empowerment and sense of agency. Participants confidently asserted that they were able to contribute to the production without fear of mistakes. Being assigned roles led to reframing and stepping into characters allowed imagination and make-believe play to emerge. Thus, the turn of events in the play is also shaped by the actor-facilitators' and the players' communicative interactions.

Finally, this grounded theory unraveled the power of *pakikiramdam* (*sensing*) and *pagbabanyuhay* (*transforming*) in reflexive dialogue. In the theater as play experiences narrated by the social actors, those who immersed in the play manifested deeper connections with the co-players, and in the process, exercising their empathy. Virgilio Enriquez describes the core Filipino value of *Kapwa* or shared identity. He forwards that the closest English translation of *kapwa* is "others," but this word does not quite capture the essence of *kapwa*. He further asserts that "others" implies separation of identities, while *Kapwa* expresses shared identity (1978).

In the immersive play "*Pailah: Ugat ng Lipi*," the participants shared a space where they were invited to engage in *Bahay-bahayan* child's play. Taking the word *kapwa*, I think of a Filipino word for space, which is "*puwang*." Attaching this to the prefix "*ka*," the word *ka-puwang* emerges. *Kapuwang* or *kapwa* alludes to a shared space. In this shared space, communication takes the form of dialogic action, the goal of which is "always to reveal the truth interacting with

others and the world" (Freire, 1970).

In the 21st century where artificial intelligence may take control of functions previously taken care of by humans, we wonder what truths remain. By playing more, we deepen our connection with the inner voice, or the voice of intuition. If machines can engage in logical and analytical reasoning, the ability to create, play, think intuitively, and empathize is something that humans must not lose touch of. In Victor Turner's 1983 work, "Body, Brain, and Culture," he emphasized the social potential of play. He said, performers are "explorers of our future - we should take note of the messages that they give us." This implies that communication is an act of exploration and engaging in it through play may reveal messages that otherwise will not unravel.

The narratives also reveal that experiencing theater as play can potentially bring someone to a present moment awareness. Inhabiting the here-and-now is similar to being in a state of flow, which is described by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in his Flow Theory as a mental state of complete absorption in the current experience (1990). Hence, if educational experiences can be designed to simulate such flow experience, then positive psychology will make a difference in schools, homes, and organizations. Play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith asserts that "The opposite of play isn't work. It's depression" (Braswell, 2017).

In addition, although there are already studies that assert the significance of educational design that incorporates creativity and dialogue in learning (Wegerif, 2007), and that recognizes reflective dialogue as both an individual and social process (Ryan, 2014), these do not describe how dialogues springing from deep reflection can be organically drawn. I say organic because play fulfills a basic

human need to interpret realities and explore potentialities through experience. Thus, play allows the channeling of embodied knowledge, and in the process, propels players to learn truths about themselves in the real world, realized through acts of play in a fictive world.

Overall, experiencing theater as play is experiencing playful dialogues though *Bahay-bahayan* child's play. This is aligned with what Bakhtin describes to be dialogue - ideas are exchanged but ideas are actually lived, rather than abstract and are full of personal values and judgements. The personal values and judgments that players bring with them in contexts filled with "*Wari at Yari*" allow for the accommodation and interplay of different worldviews and voices.

Recommendations

This grounded theory has rendered explicit those tacit knowledge emerging from playful experiences of the immersive theater "*Pailah: Ugat ng Lipi*."

Further research may look into the experiences of the audience-players since this particular study privileged the voices of the actor-players. Although the research participants described how the audience-players responded to them and to the immersive play in general, the narratives from the audiences themselves may be different.

Also, I suggest carrying out a research where ethnovideography is employed. Ethnovideography is "a research procedure that makes use of small-format video-recorded, non-alphanumeric data for social analysis" (Flor, 2002, p. 2). Flor further explains that this approach is concerned less with the processes of selecting audio-visual data for it "records the context along with the event or

phenomenon observed.” This may add layer to the investigation since playful experiences are embodied in the social actors’ performances during the immersive play, and various scenes emerge as they play. This way, the social actors themselves can represent their experiences at the time of recording.

Finally, embarking on theorizing in play, education, and communication through researches positioned in the other communication traditions is worth pursuing. These will shift the focus of the communication problem, and will reveal diverse lenses and frames.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent

Purpose

This study investigates participants' experiences of an immersive fiction play. As part of this study, you will be asked to participate in an in-depth interview. This study will take approximately 90 minutes.

Participants' Rights

I understand that my responses will be kept in the strictest of confidence and will be available only to the researcher. No one will be able to identify me when the results are reported and my name will not appear anywhere in the written report. Please do not share other people's identities or responses from the focus group with others to maintain the anonymity of the participants outside of the focus group. I also understand that I may skip any questions or tasks that I do not wish to answer or complete. I understand that the consent form will be kept separate from the data records to ensure confidentiality. I may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time during the study without penalty. I agree to have my verbal responses tape-recorded and transcribed for further analysis with the understanding that my responses will not be linked to me personally in any way. After the transcription is completed, the tape recordings will be destroyed.

I understand that upon completion, I will be given full explanation of the study. I understand that I am participating in a study of my own free will.

Consent to Participate

I understand my rights as a research participant as outlined above. I acknowledge that my participation is fully voluntary.

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix 2:

Photo and Video Consent Form

Title of the Dissertation: **Communication and Education: Reflexive Dialogue Through Experiencing Theater as Play**

Note for Research Participant: Photos of human participant(s) will be taken throughout the research and will be used for research purposes only. Video recordings will only be used for data analysis and for research purposes only. The names of subjects in the photos or the video **will not be displayed nor will the release form**. If you decide not to have your face displayed, it will be covered with a sticker.

Student Assent (Agreement)

I agree to take part in the research stated above and to have visuals of my participation in the research displayed. I understand that I can withdraw from having any **photos** or **video recording** done of my participation for display unless my face will be covered.

Student's Printed Name: _____ Signature: _____

☐ Yes. Display photo(s) ☐ No. Do not display photo(s) Date: _____

Parental Consent

☐ I consent to the use of visual images (photos and/or video) involving my child in this research. I understand this is an educational research. ☐ Yes display photo(s)
☐ I consent to the use of visual images (photos and/or video) involving my child in this research if the face is covered.

Parent/Guardian's Printed Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Adult Participation Consent

☐ I consent to the use of visual images (photos and/or video) involving myself in this research. Understand this is an educational research. ☐ Yes. Display photo(s)
☐ I consent to the use of visual images (photos and/or video) involving my participation in this research if the face is covered

Adult's Printed Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____