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Drama Pedagogy in Language Service Education: A Case Study of Interpreter Communication Skill Development in Distance Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The development of professional competencies in language mediation is commonly associated with linguistic accuracy, memory management, and rapid bilingual processing. Yet interpreting and related language service activities also depend on broader communicative abilities, including attentive listening, vocal clarity, interaction management, and sensitivity to contextual meaning. In recent years, experiential learning approaches in higher education have drawn attention to the potential of embodied and practice-based pedagogies for strengthening such competencies. Among these approaches, drama pedagogy provides structured learning environments in which participants explore communication through voice, gesture, role enactment, and reflective interaction. This study examines how engagement with drama-based learning within a distance higher education program may contribute to the development of transferable skills relevant to language mediation. The article presents a qualitative case study of a postgraduate student enrolled in a master's program in Theatre Studies delivered through distance learning. The student, who works professionally as a community interpreter between Greek and Russian, participated in two courses focused on educational theatre and drama-based practice. Data were drawn from reflective writings produced during the courses and from a later discussion with the course instructor. The analysis indicates that sustained engagement with drama pedagogy supported the development of four interrelated competencies relevant to interpreting practice, namely vocal awareness, attentive listening, communicative presence, and responsiveness within live interaction. The study suggests that drama-based pedagogical practices may offer a valuable complementary pathway for

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strengthening communication skills that underpin professional language mediation.

Keywords: Drama Pedagogy; Interpreter Training; Language Mediation; Distance Higher Education; Embodied Communication; Experiential Learning

1. Introduction

Interpreter education in higher education traditionally emphasizes linguistic precision, memory management, and the rapid transfer of meaning between languages. Programs that prepare interpreters frequently concentrate on listening comprehension, note-taking strategies, and the development of bilingual processing abilities required for live communication. These elements remain central to the professional preparation of interpreters and continue to shape the design of interpreter training curricula across many university contexts[1]. At the same time, interpreting takes place within communicative encounters that unfold in real time and involve multiple layers of interaction. The interpreter participates in exchanges where tone, rhythm of speech, vocal presence, gesture, and situational awareness influence the way meaning circulates between participants. In such conditions, communication emerges as a coordinated activity shaped by timing, attention, and the capacity to remain present within unfolding interaction.

In professional settings such as community services, healthcare environments, and intercultural encounters, interpreters engage with speakers whose intentions, emotions, and communicative styles vary widely. Effective mediation, therefore, requires a refined sensitivity to interactional cues and an ability to sustain clear communicative presence during spoken exchanges. Researchers in interpreter education increasingly acknowledge that these dimensions of professional practice benefit from forms of training that extend beyond technical instruction[2]. Practice-oriented learning environments, including simulated communicative situations and reflective engagement with interaction, have gained attention in recent discussions on interpreter education within higher education. Such environments bring forward the experiential dimension of learning, where communicative understanding develops through participation rather than through procedural instruction alone.

Within this educational context, drama pedagogy provides a way of approaching communication through embodied participation and experiential learning. Drama-based educational practices encourage attention to voice, gesture, spatial awareness, and the dynamics of interpersonal exchange[3]. Through activities such as role enactment, guided improvisation, and reflective observation, participants develop an awareness of how spoken language interacts with bodily expression and situational context. These processes foster attentiveness to the relational dimensions of communication and cultivate forms of listening and responsiveness that resonate with the communicative demands encountered in language mediation[4]. The emphasis placed on presence, timing, and relational awareness aligns closely with the conditions under which interpreting unfolds, where meaning depends on subtle adjustments within interaction.

Drama pedagogy has long been associated with educational contexts that seek to strengthen expressive capacity, collaborative engagement, and reflective awareness[5, 6]. In higher education settings, these pedagogical practices often function as environments in which learners experiment with forms of interaction that reveal how communication emerges through coordinated verbal and physical expression[3, 7]. For individuals whose professional activity involves language mediation, such experiences may shape the way communicative encounters are perceived and managed. This connection becomes particularly relevant in fields where communicative precision depends on sensitivity to context, speaker intention, and the rhythm of exchange.

The present study examines this relationship through a qualitative case study situated in a distance higher education program in Theatre Studies. The program brings together postgraduate students from diverse academic and professional backgrounds who share an interest in theatre and its educational applications. Among them was a student working as a community interpreter between Greek and Russian. During her participation in two courses focused on educational theatre and drama-based practice, she began to reflect on connections between the activities explored in the program and her professional experience in interpreting. Her reflections, recorded during the courses and later discussed

with the course instructor, form the empirical basis of this study. The case allows close examination of how learning experiences are internalized and reinterpreted in relation to professional practice, with attention to the meanings attributed by the participant herself.

By examining this individual learning trajectory, the article explores how engagement with drama-based educational practices can contribute to the development of communicative competencies relevant to language mediation. The analysis focuses on the ways in which embodied learning experiences influenced the student's awareness of voice, listening, interactional rhythm, and communicative presence in her interpreting practice. Rather than approaching these dimensions as predefined skills, the study attends to how they become perceptible through reflection and practice. Through this case, the study contributes to discussions on the role of experiential pedagogies in the formation of transferable skills within higher education and highlights the potential relevance of drama pedagogy for professionals involved in language services [1]. In light of the above, the study is guided by the following research questions:

(1) How does engagement with drama pedagogy influence the development of communication skills relevant to language mediation?
(2) How are these skills perceived and articulated by a practicing interpreter within a distance higher education context?
(3) In what ways do embodied learning experiences inform professional interpreting practice?

2. Drama Pedagogy and Communication Skills in Language Mediation

Research in higher education increasingly examines learning processes that involve the body, perception, and social interaction as integral components of knowledge formation [7]. Embodied perspectives on learning draw attention to the role of physical presence, voice, gesture, and spatial awareness in shaping communicative understanding. In communicative professions such as interpreting and language mediation, these elements acquire particular significance, since meaning emerges within dynamic exchanges that unfold in real time and involve multiple forms of expression [8]. Spoken language interacts continuously with tone, rhythm, posture, and visual cues that influence the interpretation of communicative intent [9]. This orientation shifts attention toward communication as a situated and time-sensitive process, where meaning takes shape through coordination between participants rather than through isolated linguistic units.

Within this broader perspective, drama pedagogy provides a structured educational environment in which communication is explored through action and reflection [10]. Drama-based educational practices invite participants to engage with situations that require attentive listening, expressive clarity, and responsiveness to others. The pedagogical design of such activities typically combines guided participation, collaborative interaction, and reflective observation. Through this process, learners develop awareness of how communication operates simultaneously at verbal and non-verbal levels. Engagement in such activities often brings forward aspects of communication that remain less visible in conventional instructional formats, particularly those related to timing, presence, and the subtle coordination of interaction.

In educational settings, drama pedagogy often includes activities that encourage participants to explore different communicative positions and perspectives. Role enactment allows individuals to inhabit particular communicative situations and experiment with ways of expressing meaning through voice, gesture, and spatial orientation. Improvisational exercises create conditions in which participants respond to emerging interactional cues and negotiate meaning collaboratively. Structured dramatic scenes invite learners to examine how variations in tone, rhythm, and movement shape the interpretation of spoken language. These practices encourage participants to attend closely to the relational dynamics that organize communication [11–13]. Through repeated engagement, participants begin to recognize patterns in interaction, including shifts in attention, alignment between speakers, and the influence of pacing on communicative clarity.

Such forms of learning resonate with competencies associated with language mediation. Interpreters frequently operate within complex communicative environments that involve cultural nuance, emotional expression, and shifting interactional roles [14]. Effective mediation requires sensitivity to speaker intention, careful listening, and the capacity to maintain communicative coherence within ongoing dialogue.

In this context, drama-based activities can cultivate forms of communicative attentiveness that complement linguistic and cognitive aspects of interpreter preparation [15]. These forms of attentiveness relate closely to how interpreters manage transitions between speakers, regulate their own vocal presence, and sustain continuity within exchanges that evolve moment by moment.

Another important element of drama pedagogy involves reflective engagement with experience [16]. Participants are often invited to document their observations, emotional responses, and interpretive insights following practical activities. Reflective writing and group discussion allow learners to articulate how communicative interactions were perceived and how meaning developed during the exercise. Such reflection encourages the consolidation of experiential learning and fosters greater awareness of communicative processes that might otherwise remain implicit. In this sense, reflection functions as a space where experience becomes analyzable, allowing participants to revisit interactional moments and reconsider how communicative decisions were made.

In higher education environments where drama pedagogy forms part of the curriculum, these practices frequently support the development of transferable communication skills that extend beyond artistic training [17–19]. Students from diverse disciplinary backgrounds engage with exercises that strengthen vocal awareness, listening capacity, interactional sensitivity, and confidence in spoken communication [20]. These competencies hold relevance for a wide range of professional contexts, including fields connected with language services. The value of such experiences becomes evident when learners relate them to situations outside the classroom, where communication unfolds under different constraints and expectations.

For individuals involved in interpreting, engagement with drama-based learning can illuminate aspects of communication that remain less visible within conventional interpreter training. Activities centered on voice projection, articulation, and tempo encourage attention to vocal clarity during spoken meditation. Exercises that involve role-based interaction highlight the importance of understanding speaker intention and communicative positioning [21]. Improvisational practices cultivate adaptability in situations where communicative developments unfold unpredictably [22]. Through such experiences, participants gain insight into how embodied aspects of communication influence the effectiveness of language mediation in real-world contexts. This perspective supports a view of interpreter development that includes experiential and relational dimensions alongside technical preparation, with attention to how communicative presence is shaped through practice.

3. Educational Context and Case Description

The case examined in this study emerged within the academic environment of the Open University of Cyprus, a public European university dedicated to the provision of higher education through open and distance learning structures. The institution was established with the aim of expanding access to university study and supporting flexible forms of learning that allow adult learners and professionals to combine academic study with personal and professional commitments. Teaching and learning activities are organized primarily through online educational environments that integrate asynchronous study, digital learning materials, and periodic interactive meetings between students and instructors. These conditions shape a mode of participation in which learners engage with content over extended periods, while synchronous sessions function as points of interaction where ideas are tested, clarified, and shared within a collective setting.

Within this institutional framework, the postgraduate programme in Theatre Studies provides advanced academic training in the field of theatre and drama, covering areas such as theatre history, theory, performance practices, and theatre in education. The programme seeks to cultivate analytical thinking, research competence, and a deeper understanding of theatre as both an artistic and cultural phenomenon. It also places particular emphasis on the pedagogical dimensions of theatre and on the ways theatrical practice can intersect with educational and social contexts. Attention is given to how theatrical processes operate as forms of inquiry, where participants examine communication, representation, and interaction through structured artistic engagement.

The programme attracts students from diverse academic and professional backgrounds. Participants often include educators, cultural practitioners, artists, and individuals whose professional activity relates more broadly to

communication and cultural mediation. This diversity of backgrounds creates a learning environment in which theatre functions as a shared field of exploration rather than as a narrowly specialized professional training. Students bring different experiences and professional perspectives into the study process, allowing theatrical practices to interact with a wide range of applied contexts. Such diversity contributes to exchanges in which participants interpret activities through the lens of their own professional experience, leading to varied and often unexpected connections between course content and applied practice.

The case examined in the present study concerns a postgraduate student who was enrolled in the Theatre Studies programme while working professionally as a community interpreter between Greek and Russian. Her academic engagement with theatre unfolded through participation in two modules that focused on drama pedagogy and its educational applications. These modules introduced students to theoretical perspectives on educational theatre as well as to practical activities designed to explore communication through dramatic action and collaborative interaction. The dual positioning of the student, as both learner and practicing interpreter, created conditions in which experiences from the course could be directly related to ongoing professional activity.

Throughout the duration of the courses, students were invited to document aspects of their learning experience through short reflective texts produced alongside their coursework. These reflections provided space for participants to record observations related to communication, participation, and the dynamics of the activities explored during the modules. In the case of the student examined in this study, the reflective writings gradually began to articulate connections between the communication practices explored in drama-based activities and her professional experience as an interpreter. The reflective texts were produced at multiple points during the courses, allowing the emergence of a developing line of thought rather than a single retrospective account.

Toward the completion of the second course, a discussion between the student and the course instructor further elaborated on these reflections. During this conversation, the student described how certain elements of the drama-based learning process had influenced her awareness of communication in professional interpreting contexts. Her reflections, together with the instructor's observations regarding the student's engagement with the activities, form the empirical material through which this case study examines the relationship between drama pedagogy and the development of communication skills relevant to language mediation. The inclusion of both reflective writing and dialogic exchange allows the case to be approached as a process of meaning-making that unfolds over time, rather than as a fixed account of experience.

4. Materials and Methods

4.1. Research Design

The present study adopts a qualitative case study design in order to explore how engagement with drama pedagogy may influence the development of communication skills relevant to language mediation. Case study research allows the detailed examination of learning experiences within their natural educational context and provides insight into how individuals interpret and integrate academic experiences into their professional practice [23]. In higher education research, such approaches are particularly suitable when the objective is to examine the development of transferable skills emerging from specific educational experiences. The design places emphasis on depth of understanding, attending closely to the meanings constructed by the participant as she engages with both the educational process and her professional activity.

The study focuses on a single postgraduate student whose professional activity involved community interpreting. The aim of the analysis is to understand how participation in drama-based learning activities within a theatre studies programme influenced the student's awareness of communication processes relevant to interpreting practice. The case was approached as an instrumental case, selected for its capacity to illuminate the relationship between embodied learning and language mediation within a real educational setting. Attention was directed toward how the participant articulated connections between course experiences and professional practice, rather than toward the measurement of predefined outcomes.

The research design follows an interpretive orientation, where emphasis is placed on understanding experience as it is expressed through reflection and dialogue. This orientation allows the analysis to remain grounded in the participant's

own perspective, while also considering the educational context in which these reflections were produced. The case is examined as a bounded unit defined by the duration of the two courses and the associated learning activities, enabling a focused exploration of how communicative awareness develops across a specific period of study.

Given the dual role of the researcher as course instructor, particular attention was given to maintaining analytic distance during the interpretation of the material. To address this dual role, the researcher adopted a reflexive stance throughout both data collection and analysis. The participant's reflections were produced voluntarily as part of the learning process and were not linked to assessment, reducing the influence of evaluative dynamics. During analysis, emphasis was placed on remaining close to the participant's own language and interpretations, while iterative reading supported the identification of themes grounded in the data rather than in prior assumptions. This approach aimed to ensure that the analysis reflected the participant's perspective while acknowledging the researcher's positionality within the educational context.

4.2. Educational Context and Participant

As outlined in the previous section, the study was situated within the Theatre Studies postgraduate programme of the Open University of Cyprus. The participant of the study was a postgraduate student, 33 years old, who worked professionally as a community interpreter between Greek and Russian. During her studies, she attended two modules related to drama pedagogy: Theatre Education I: Theory of Educational Theatre and Theatre Education II: Research and Practice. These modules combined theoretical exploration with practice-oriented activities designed to examine communication, interaction, and expression through drama-based educational processes. Her professional role involved real-time mediation between speakers in community settings, where communication required continuous adjustment to linguistic, cultural, and situational factors.

The participant engaged consistently with both the theoretical and practical components of the modules, contributing to discussions and completing reflective tasks associated with the coursework. Her responses indicated an active effort to relate the material to her professional experience, particularly in moments where communication was approached as a relational and embodied process. This positioning, as an experienced practitioner within a learning environment centered on drama pedagogy, allowed the case to capture how disciplinary knowledge is reinterpreted through ongoing professional practice.

4.3. Data Sources

Data for the study were drawn from two sources. The first source consisted of reflective writings produced by the student during the modules. The reflections were optional and were encouraged as a means for students to document their learning experience and personal observations related to the activities explored during the courses. The student whose case is examined here chose to produce a series of written reflections in which she described her responses to the drama-based activities and considered their relation to her professional experience as an interpreter. The written material was produced at different points during the modules, allowing the documentation of emerging connections between learning experiences and professional practice over time.

The second source of data was derived from a synchronous online conversation between the student and the course instructor toward the completion of the second module. The discussion took place through an online meeting platform and focused on the student's reflections regarding the relationship between drama pedagogy and her interpreting practice. The conversation provided an opportunity to further elaborate on points introduced in the written reflections, with attention to specific moments of the learning process that the participant identified as meaningful. The discussion was not audio-recorded; instead, detailed analytic notes were taken during and immediately after the session to capture key points and participant expressions relevant to the study.

4.4. Data Analysis

The analysis followed an interpretive thematic orientation [24]. The reflective writings and the notes derived from the online conversation were examined in order to identify recurring themes related to communication, interaction, and professional awareness. The dataset consisted of a series of eight reflective texts produced over the duration of the modules, along with notes from a synchronous online discussion lasting approximately 45 min. Particular attention was

given to passages in which the student described connections between the drama-based activities and her experience as an interpreter. The analytic process involved repeated reading of the material, allowing initial impressions to be gradually refined into more focused thematic groupings.

Through iterative reading of the material, several thematic patterns emerged that illustrate how engagement with drama pedagogy influenced the student's perception of communication during interpreting practice [25]. Coding was conducted manually with the support of ATLAS.ti software, which facilitated the organization and comparison of thematic segments across the dataset. Coding remained closely aligned with the participant's language, so that the themes reflected meanings articulated within the data rather than externally imposed categories. The findings presented in the following section describe these themes and discuss their relevance for the development of transferable communication skills associated with language mediation. The analysis attends to how communicative awareness becomes more explicit through reflection, with emphasis on the ways experience is interpreted and rearticulated across different moments of the learning process.

Throughout the analytic process, attention was given to consistency in the interpretation of the material, with themes revisited across multiple readings to ensure coherence with the data. Credibility was supported through a process of analytic revisiting, in which emerging themes were continuously compared with the original material to confirm their alignment with the participant's expressions. In addition, selected interpretations were revisited in light of the participant's overall narrative to ensure internal consistency across data sources. Interpretations remained grounded in the participant's own expressions, allowing the analysis to reflect the meanings as articulated within the material.

5. Findings

The examination of the reflective writings together with the notes derived from the online discussion revealed several recurring themes related to the student's experience of communication during the courses. Across both sources of data, the student repeatedly connected elements of the drama-based activities with aspects of her professional work as an interpreter. Four thematic areas appeared consistently in her reflections: awareness of vocal expression, attentive listening, communicative presence during interaction, and responsiveness within unfolding communicative situations.

5.1. Vocal Awareness and Clarity of Expression

A first area of development concerned the student's growing awareness of voice and speech delivery. Several activities during the courses focused on articulation, breathing, rhythm of speech, and projection. Through these exercises the student gradually began to reflect on how vocal expression shapes the intelligibility of spoken communication. Her reflections included repeated references to adjustments in pacing and breathing during spoken delivery, as well as to the effort to maintain consistency in vocal tone. In more than one reflection, she referred to moments where changes in breathing patterns altered the clarity of her speech during exercises (Student reflection 2).

In one of her reflective texts, she described how the work on voice made her reconsider aspects of her own speech during interpreting situations. As she noted in one of the reflections, "*During the voice exercises, I realized how much breathing and pacing affect the clarity of what we say. When I interpret, I now try to slow down slightly and keep my voice steady so that the message remains clear for both sides.*" (Student reflection 3). In the same set of reflections, she also referred to moments during the activities where variations in articulation influenced how speech was received within the group, noting differences in clarity when tempo and emphasis shifted. She further noted that "when the pace changes too quickly, it becomes harder for others to follow, even if the words are correct" (Student reflection 3).

During the online discussion, she further explained that the activities helped her become more conscious of how listeners perceive mediated speech. The exercises encouraged attention to tempo, articulation, and vocal stability, elements that she began to associate more directly with the effectiveness of her interpreting practice. She described focusing more deliberately on how her voice is heard by others during interaction, including instances where maintaining a steady pace contributed to smoother exchanges. As she commented during the discussion, "*I started thinking more about how my voice sounds to others, not only about what I say*" (Student, online discussion). This dimension of vocal awareness

relates to clarity and delivery in interpreter-mediated speech, where control of pace, articulation, and voice stability contributes to the effectiveness of spoken mediation.

5.2. Attentive Listening and Perception of Communicative Cues

Another theme that emerged strongly in the reflective material concerned listening. Many of the drama-based exercises required participants to remain closely attentive to the speech and reactions of others in order to sustain the interaction. This experience gradually strengthened the student's awareness of listening as an active communicative process. Across the reflective texts, listening was repeatedly described as a condition for maintaining continuity within interaction, particularly in activities where responses depended on subtle shifts in the contributions of others.

In one of the reflections, she wrote that the dramatic interactions encouraged her to listen with greater attentiveness to the intention and emotional tone of the speaker. As she expressed it, "*In the improvisation activities, I noticed that listening carefully changes the way the whole scene develops. I began to realize that the same happens when I interpret. If I really listen to the speaker's intention, the interpretation becomes clearer.*" (Student reflection 4). In related reflections, she referred to moments where differences in tone and emphasis influenced how she responded within the activity, noting that small variations in delivery affected the direction of the interaction. She also noted that "*Sometimes a pause or a change in tone says more than the words themselves*" (Student reflection 5).

Through this process, the student became more attentive to elements such as pauses, variations in tone, and emphasis in speech. She associated this heightened awareness with a more nuanced understanding of the communicative situations she encountered during interpreting. She also noted instances in which attention to pauses and shifts in rhythm contributed to a more precise alignment with the speaker's flow of expression during mediated communication. During the online discussion, she added that "*When I focus more on how something is said, I feel more connected to what the speaker really means*" (Student, online discussion). This form of attentive listening aligns with the interpreter's need to identify speaker intention and maintain alignment within ongoing interaction.

5.3. Communicative Presence in Spoken Interaction

The reflections also revealed a growing awareness of communicative presence during interaction. Several activities encouraged participants to pay attention to posture, orientation toward others, and the overall quality of engagement during spoken exchanges. The student described how these elements gradually became part of her understanding of communication. References to body orientation, eye contact, and steadiness in interaction appeared across multiple reflections, indicating sustained attention to how presence is enacted during participation.

In one of the reflective notes, she observed that participation in dramatic interaction created a clearer sense of how presence influences communication. She wrote, "*When we worked in small scenes, I became aware that communication is not only about the words we say. The way we stand, look at the other person, and stay present changes the whole interaction.*" (Student reflection 6). In related entries, she noted moments during the activities where shifts in posture and attention altered the way interaction unfolded within the group. She also commented that "*When someone is fully present, the interaction feels more stable and easier to follow*" (Student reflection 6).

During the later conversation with the instructor, she connected this awareness with her professional work. She explained that maintaining calm and attentive presence during interpreting situations helped sustain the flow of interaction between speakers. She referred to situations in which remaining focused and physically composed contributed to smoother exchanges, particularly in interactions that required sustained attention over time. She remarked that "*If I stay calm and focused, the communication between the speakers continues more naturally*" (Student, online discussion). Such communicative presence is closely connected to interactional management in interpreter-mediated encounters, where the interpreter's positioning and attentiveness support the continuity of dialogue.

5.4. Responsiveness within Live Communication

Improvisational activities formed another important aspect of the learning experience. These exercises created

situations in which participants had to respond to unexpected developments within a scene. Such conditions required attentiveness, flexibility, and rapid adjustment to the evolving interaction. Across the reflective material, these activities were described as moments where immediate response was necessary, with participants adjusting their contributions in relation to changes introduced by others. In several reflections, she described situations where she had to respond quickly without prior planning (Student reflection 7).

The student associated this experience with communicative situations encountered during interpreting. In her reflections, she described how improvisational work encouraged her to remain attentive to the unfolding dialogue rather than focusing exclusively on the translation of individual phrases. As she explained, "*Improvisation showed me how communication changes from moment to moment. As an interpreter, I often face situations where speakers shift direction or introduce new ideas suddenly.*" (Student reflection 8). In additional reflections, she referred to instances where maintaining attention to the overall flow of interaction influenced how she followed and reproduced meaning during mediated exchanges.

The experience of responding to evolving interaction within dramatic activities helped her perceive interpreting as a process that involves continuous attention to the communicative situation. Through this engagement, she described a stronger sense of readiness to adapt to shifts in conversation and maintain coherence during mediated exchanges. She also noted occasions where rapid changes in the direction of dialogue required immediate adjustment in delivery, highlighting the importance of staying aligned with the progression of the interaction as it unfolded. During the discussion, she commented that "*I feel more prepared now when something unexpected happens in communication*" (Student, online discussion). This responsiveness reflects the dynamic nature of dialogue interpreting, where interpreters continuously adapt to shifts in interaction as communication unfolds in real time.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the relevance of drama-based pedagogical practices for the development of communication competencies associated with language mediation. The experience of the student examined in this case illustrates how participation in drama pedagogy can influence the perception of communication within professional interpreting contexts. Through sustained engagement with activities centred on voice, interaction, and reflective observation, the student developed a heightened awareness of several elements that underpin effective language mediation, including vocal clarity, attentive listening, communicative presence, and responsiveness within evolving dialogue [6, 10, 16]. These elements appeared in the data as interrelated dimensions of communication, rather than as isolated skills, forming a coherent pattern that reflects the complexity of mediated interaction. The contribution of the study lies in making visible how communicative awareness develops through engagement with embodied learning processes and is subsequently reinterpreted within professional practice.

These observations hold particular relevance for discussions surrounding language service education. Training in translation and interpreting has long emphasized cognitive processing, bilingual competence, and strategies for meaning transfer [2]. The findings of the present study draw attention to the communicative dimension of mediation, where the interpreter functions within a relational environment shaped by interaction between speakers. The student's reflections indicate that drama-based learning processes encouraged closer attention to vocal delivery, rhythm of speech, and speaker intention, elements that influence the clarity and effectiveness of mediated communication [9]. This shift in attention suggests that communicative effectiveness is closely connected to how interpreters position themselves within interaction, attending to both the content and the manner in which it is conveyed. From this perspective, drama pedagogy can contribute to a broader understanding of how communication skills develop within educational contexts connected to language services.

The results also resonate with ongoing conversations about interpreter skill development in higher education. Professional interpreting involves more than the accurate transfer of linguistic content. Interpreters participate in communicative encounters that require sensitivity to contextual meaning, awareness of interactional dynamics, and the ability to sustain coherent dialogue between speakers [8]. The drama-based activities explored in the courses encouraged the student to examine communication as a dynamic pro-

cess unfolding through voice, listening, and relational awareness[19]. Her reflections suggest that such experiences can strengthen the interpreter's capacity to perceive communicative cues and respond attentively within real-time exchanges. This orientation brings forward a view of interpreter development that includes continuous adjustment within interaction, where meaning is shaped through alignment with speakers and the evolving flow of dialogue.

Another dimension emerging from the study concerns the place of drama pedagogy within higher education environments that gather students from diverse academic and professional backgrounds. The postgraduate programme examined in this case did not target interpreter training specifically. Participants entered the programme with varied professional trajectories, including education, cultural practice, and language mediation. Within this heterogeneous learning environment, drama-based activities functioned as shared spaces for exploring communication through embodied participation. The experience of the student examined here illustrates how engagement with these practices may intersect with professional fields beyond theatre itself. In this sense, drama pedagogy contributes to the development of transferable communication competencies that hold relevance for multiple professional contexts[3]. The case indicates that participants actively reinterpret learning experiences in relation to their own professional frameworks, allowing disciplinary boundaries to become more permeable during the learning process.

The findings also invite reflection on the role of distance higher education in supporting experiential learning processes. The programme in which the case developed operates within a distance learning framework that combines asynchronous study with interactive online communication. Despite the physical separation between participants, the student's reflections indicate that drama-based activities and reflective exchanges were able to stimulate meaningful engagement with communication processes[26]. This observation suggests that experiential learning approaches associated with drama pedagogy can retain pedagogical value within digitally mediated learning environments when accompanied by opportunities for reflection and dialogue[27]. The interaction between asynchronous reflection and synchronous exchange appears to support a continuity of engagement, where learning unfolds across different moments rather than being confined to isolated sessions.

7. Conclusions

The present study investigated how engagement with drama pedagogy within a distance higher education programme intersected with the professional experience of a postgraduate student working as a community interpreter. Through the examination of reflective writings and a subsequent online discussion, the case illuminated ways in which drama-based learning activities contributed to the student's awareness of communication processes relevant to language mediation. The case presents a detailed account of how these connections were articulated over time through reflection and dialogue.

The analysis highlighted the development of competencies connected with vocal clarity, attentive listening, communicative presence, and responsiveness within live interaction. These elements emerged through participation in activities that emphasized voice work, role enactment, and improvisational interaction, as well as through reflective engagement with these experiences. The student's reflections indicated that such learning processes strengthened her sensitivity to communicative cues and encouraged a more deliberate approach to spoken mediation between speakers. These competencies appeared as interconnected aspects of communication that were gradually recognized through engagement with practice.

Within the broader context of language service education, the findings point toward the value of experiential pedagogical approaches that cultivate communicative awareness alongside linguistic competence. Drama pedagogy creates learning environments where communication is explored through embodied participation, allowing students to examine how voice, gesture, and interaction shape the transmission of meaning[17, 28]. When individuals involved in language mediation engage with such practices, they may develop forms of communicative attentiveness that complement traditional forms of interpreter training. This orientation brings forward the role of practice-based engagement in shaping how communication is perceived and enacted in professional contexts.

The study also illustrates how programmes in the humanities that attract students from diverse professional back-

grounds can contribute to the development of transferable competencies. In the case examined here, participation in a theatre studies programme created opportunities for reflection on communication that extended beyond artistic practice and intersected with professional interpreting activity. This observation suggests that drama-based pedagogical processes may hold relevance for a range of professional contexts connected with language services and intercultural communication. The case indicates that such intersections emerge through the active interpretation of learning experiences by participants themselves.

Finally, the case provides insight into the potential of distance higher education environments to support experiential learning processes when accompanied by reflective dialogue and collaborative interaction. Even within digitally mediated learning structures, drama-based educational practices can stimulate meaningful engagement with communication and interaction[27]. The combination of individual reflection and shared discussion appears to support continuity in the learning process across different modes of participation. These observations may be transferable to educational contexts where drama-based or experiential learning approaches are integrated into programmes involving communication-intensive professional practice, particularly when opportunities for sustained engagement, reflective writing, and dialogic interaction are provided. Under such conditions, similar developments in communicative awareness may be expected, especially in fields where meaning is negotiated through real-time interaction.

Although the study focuses on a single learning trajectory, it highlights an area that merits further investigation. The scope of the case remains bounded by one participant and a specific educational context, which frames the findings as context-sensitive rather than broadly generalizable. The findings are also based on self-reported material, which reflects the participant's perspective on her experience without external observation of professional practice. Future research could examine how drama pedagogy may contribute to the formation of communication competencies among students engaged in translation, interpreting, or other language service professions. Such work may deepen understanding of how embodied and experiential learning approaches intersect with the development of professional skills within contemporary higher education.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

Ethical review and approval were waived for this study because it involved a small-scale educational case study based on voluntary student reflections and a follow-up discussion. The study did not involve sensitive personal data and the participant's identity remains fully anonymized.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from the participant involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study consist of anonymized reflective writings and notes from an online discussion. Due to privacy considerations, these materials are not publicly available but may be provided by the author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest. The participant was a student in a course taught by the author; participation in the study was voluntary and all data were anonymized.

AI Use Statement

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) solely for language refinement. No AI tools were used for data analysis, interpretation, or generation of scientific content. All outputs were critically reviewed and edited by the author. The author takes full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

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