

Enhancing EFL Learners' Communicative Skills through Dramatisation of Lessons

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Abstract

Dramatisation breathes vitality into the realm of language learning, transcending mere vocabulary to engage the entire learner - their body, mind, emotions, and senses. This research explores the integration of drama within language instruction and its profound impact on students' speaking proficiency. Studies consistently highlight that enacting lessons not only bolsters fluency but also instills a sense of confidence in learners. As students step into various roles and articulate lines, their language skills undergo marked improvement, rendering their speech more natural and expressive. This newfound confidence serves as a catalyst, empowering students to actively participate in classroom discourse and embrace English communication with enthusiasm. Even for those initially hesitant to voice their thoughts, the immersive experience of dramatisation provides a safe haven. The playful nature of role-play alleviates apprehensions, enabling even the most reserved learners to find their voice and connect with their peers on a deeper level. Furthermore, the empathetic exploration of diverse perspectives inherent in dramatisation enriches students' spoken English with nuance and emotion. Beyond immediate language proficiency, dramatised lessons foster positive attitudes towards learning, injecting an element of enjoyment and excitement into the language acquisition process. By engaging in creative expression, learners not only acquire language skills but also develop a genuine passion for linguistic exploration. In essence, the integration of dramatisation into language instruction serves as a powerful tool for guiding students towards achieving proficiency in a language. Its multifaceted benefits extend beyond the classroom, shaping learners into confident, expressive communicators with a profound appreciation for the intricacies of language and culture.

Keywords: Communication; Dramatisation; EFL Learners; Project-Based Learning; Speaking

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Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, language skills have become essential tools for bridging cultural divides and fostering understanding. Mastering a foreign language unlocks a multitude of benefits. Firstly, effective communication transcends the boundaries of our native tongue. As Piaget (1967) noted, language empowers us to express ourselves, forge connections, and navigate the social landscape. In today's globalised context, relying solely on one's native language proves insufficient.

As Kosonen (2013) pointed out, English has emerged as a common thread, a unifying language facilitating intercultural exchange. Therefore, developing competency in speaking a foreign language, particularly English, becomes crucial. Among the four skills, speaking occupies a unique position. It allows us to engage in real-time dialogue, be it through conversations or presentations. As Chomsky (1995) acknowledged, acquiring fluency requires dedication and sustained effort. Speaking a foreign language demands spontaneity and the ability to express oneself without the safety net of pre-planning. While other skills, like writing, offer opportunities for correction and revision, spoken communication necessitates immediate response and adaptation. Several factors can hinder the development of communicative skills, as highlighted by various researchers. Among them are emotional factors like anxiety and fear of making mistakes (Khalil, 2018).

Psychological barriers, such as negative attitudes (Piaget, 1967), and practical limitations, such as insufficient vocabulary or lack of practice (Davies, 1990; Scott & Ytreberg, 2010), can significantly hinder language communication skills. Overcoming these hurdles requires dedication, effective teaching methods, and a supportive environment. By acknowledging the challenges and embracing the importance of speaking, we can empower ourselves to become active participants in the global dialogue. The rewards of linguistic fluency extend far beyond professional advantages; they open doors to cultural understanding, deeper connections, and a richer worldview.

Learning English does not have to be a dry affair. Drama methods and techniques can breathe life into language, providing a potent cocktail of motivation, diverse practice, and sheer enjoyment. This engaging approach thrives on shared excitement and a willingness to take risks, benefiting both learners and teachers. Drama's effectiveness lies in its universality. It's deeply rooted in educational psychology, recognising that the more senses we engage, the deeper and more lasting the learning. By actively involving learners in expressing themselves through drama, we encourage them to embrace English as a natural tool for communication. Group tasks imbued with the magic of drama, become fertile ground for confidently sharing ideas and opinions.

In essence, drama methods offer a transformative language learning experience. They move beyond rote memorisation to ignite passion, spark creativity, and build lasting fluency. As Dörnyei (2007) emphasises, "Drama offers a unique and powerful context for language acquisition." With its focus on simplicity, accuracy, and clarity, this revised passage retains the key points of the original while using more accessible language and highlighting the motivational power of drama in language learning.

This study investigates the potential of drama-based activities to enhance student communicative skills within the English language curriculum. Informed by prior research, we hypothesise that integrating drama can not only refine spoken fluency and accuracy but also cultivate a positive learning environment conducive to success in speaking tasks. The primary objective is to rigorously evaluate the efficacy of this pedagogical approach in achieving desired speaking outcomes for English language learners.

1. Literature Review

Teaching approaches sometimes struggle to bridge the gap between memorisation and genuine communication. In this context, drama emerges as an effective tool in the teacher's apparatus, transforming the barren pages of textbooks into alive, interactive landscapes where languages truly come alive. Dramatisation, as Richards and Lockhart (2007) emphasise, is not merely the addition of costumes and theatrics; it is a pedagogical approach that engages the learner's body, mind, emotions, and senses to create a complete learning environment that reflects real-life situations. By stepping into the shoes of fictional characters and navigating simulated scenarios, students exceed the limitations of lessons and actively contribute to the construction of meaning. The dramatisation approach, as Dörnyei (2009) suggests, raises motivation, and enhances a deeper connection with the target language. The benefits of dramatisation extend far beyond mere engagement.

Breiner et al. (2015) reveal that dramatising lessons can considerably enhance communicative skills. By providing a safe space for performance and improvisation, drama allows students to overcome their difficulties and embrace the complexity of communication. This, in turn, advances confidence and fluency, enables them to interact with their peers, and navigates real-world communications with greater ease. Moreover, dramatisation grants a distinguished platform for learners to overcome anxieties and shyness. As Pinter (2006) notes, by assuming fictional characters, learners can distance themselves from their own weaknesses and explore the world through a different opening. This haven allows them to experiment with self-expression and develop one's ability to comprehend and empathize with others' perspectives, as evidenced by Brown and Yule (1983).

Ultimately, dramatisation is not simply a technique; it is a philosophy of language learning that praises the creative capacity of each student. By uniting elements of performance, collaboration, and imagination, dramatisation transforms the classroom into a theatre where languages are not just spoken but felt. As Kosonen (2013) concludes dramatisation can be a powerful tool for promoting both language acquisition and personal growth, paving the way for a journey of linguistic discovery that is both significant and outstanding. Dramatisation is a simple yet powerful tool that transcends rote memorisation and textbook activities. It taps into the natural human desire to play, creating a safe and engaging environment for language practice. This resonates deeply with children, who readily immerse themselves in imaginary worlds, enriching their inner experience and language acquisition (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The benefits of dramatisation extend far beyond mere vocabulary improvement. Studies by Tokdemir (2015) and Rastelli (2006) highlight its impact on motivation, communication, and teamwork. Students become storytellers, developing fluency, pronunciation, and confidence in expressing themselves (Demirel, 1999). As Hamilton & McLeod (1993) point out, the playful atmosphere eases anxieties and allows learners to focus on using the language without fear. The research is clear: dramatisation is a valuable asset in the language learning toolbox. Studies like Güzelsoy (2018) on vocabulary acquisition, Akin (2016) on attitude towards language courses, and Galante & Thomson (2017), Pishkar et al. (2017), and Wang (2017) on communicative skills all demonstrate its effectiveness in enhancing various language skills.

In essence, dramatisation transforms learning from a passive, often stressful experience into a joyful, active exploration of language. It fosters a love for communication, ignites creativity, and builds a foundation for lifelong language confidence.

2. Methodology

This qualitative study involved a systematic exploration of the efficacy of dramatized language lessons in enhancing English speaking abilities among learners. The study encompassed various stages, including development, integration, and examination of dramatized language lessons within the classroom setting. Initially, the study focused on the development of dramatized language lessons, which involved crafting lesson plans and activities that incorporated dramatic elements to facilitate language learning. These lessons were carefully designed to align with language learning objectives and cater to the needs and proficiency levels of the learners.

Subsequently, the developed lessons were integrated into the classroom environment, where they were implemented and executed with the participation of the learners. The integration phase provided valuable insights into the practical application of dramatized language lessons and allowed for observation of their effectiveness in improving English speaking skills. Following the implementation of the lessons, the study proceeded to examine their impact on learners' speaking abilities. This involved assessing the learners' progress and performance in speaking tasks before and after exposure to dramatized language lessons. Various qualitative data collection methods, such as observations, interviews, and student reflections, were utilized to gather comprehensive insights into the learners' experiences and perceptions.

Finally, the discussion of results involved a rigorous analysis of the data collected during the study, supplemented by relevant previous studies and research in the field. This comprehensive examination allowed for a thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of dramatized language lessons in enhancing English speaking abilities among learners. The findings of the study were affirmed through comparison with existing literature and contributed to the body of knowledge on language teaching methodologies and approaches.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Fluency: The Key to Effective Language Learning

Fluency may not be the first image that pops into mind when thinking about foreign language learning, but its importance is undeniable. Yet, this crucial skill has often been sidelined, with rote memorisation of dialogues taking centre stage (Kayi, 2006). Learners find themselves starved for real-world language, rarely venturing beyond the sterile classroom walls to engage with native speakers or immerse themselves in authentic media like movies, songs, or even news channels (Scott & Ytrebeg, 1990).

Even inside the classroom, awareness of the spoken language can be surprisingly low. To bridge this gap, learners' success hinges on a delicate interplay of factors: the teacher's expertise, the chosen materials, and the adopted teaching methods (Moeller & Catalano, 2015). The goal is to empower learners to confidently navigate conversations with friends and participate in a variety of language-driven activities, all under the watchful eye of a skilled guide (Brown, 2015).

This guide, the teacher, plays a pivotal role in nurturing speaking skills. Effective strategies include fostering collaborative activities, ensuring the language used is accessible and readily producible, selecting engaging topics, and encouraging learners to actively interact with the target language (Dillon, 1981). By orchestrating this dynamic learning environment, teachers pave the way for students to truly master the tongue.

By prioritising genuine communication and fostering an immersive learning experience, both inside and outside the classroom, we can ensure that fluency becomes an attainable goal, not an overlooked afterthought, in the journey of foreign language acquisition.

3.2. Enhancing Communicative Skills through Drama: A Learner-Centered Approach

Speaking maintains a considerable part in the language learning process (i.e., mastering English) even though speaking is sometimes overlooked since it is rarely assessed during the admission test. In speaking, communication efficacy is the leading objective of learning. Learners are expected to quickly comprehend and avoid mistakes in understanding the message due to inappropriate grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary. Thus, to enhance learners' communicative skills, the teachers use drama as the next substitute approach.

By implementing drama, the learners' energy towards operational development will grow since they are autonomous (Ananto & Rusmiati, 2018). This phenomenon can be characterized as a "learner-centered" approach, which emphasizes fostering learners' self-confidence and promoting their autonomy. According to Stoller (2006), students' autonomy can be gained through dramatisation (project-based learning), which encourages learners to share their responsibilities with the group. While working in a group, they certainly have to communicate with their group members to discuss work duties. In such a case, they can practice their English with fellow friends so that when they find difficulties in pronunciation or vocabulary, they can have peer correction. By doing so, learners will be able to speak English confidently and easily in their daily lives.

Teachers can prepare oral materials according to students' needs, interests, levels and abilities. The teacher should tell students not to worry about mistakes they might make and give them the motivation they need. Hui (2011), Wang (2015), and Kayi (2006) state that teachers should ensure that they use reliable materials in the classroom, encourage learners' participation in speaking activities, involve them in collaborative learning activities, spend more time on reinforcement and feedback should be provided.

3.3. Exploring the Role of Drama in Language Learning

According to Holden (2012): drama refers to any type of activity that asks learners to represent themselves or another individual in a designed situation. In other words, drama is about the world of 'let us pretend'; it asks the learners to imaginatively relocate themselves to another situation, outside the classroom, or into the skin and personality of alternative person" (p. 5). Piaget (1967) highlights the emergence of dramatisation (symbolic representation) that offers an ideal platform for students to use costumes, props, and imaginary scenarios to represent objects and ideas, aligning with the emblematic play characteristics. Engagement with symbolic language, as demonstrated by Kosonen's (2013) research, fosters vocabulary development and resourceful expression. Kosonen's findings signify that dramatisation activities have a positive impact on students' vocabulary mastery and speaking abilities.

Drama plays a crucial role in unlocking students' communicative abilities. When learners feel emotionally and socially safe, their voices naturally find their wings. Drama offers a unique learning space where students explore human nature through collaboration and harmony. Role-playing safely channels emotions, making the often stressful foreign language journey a bit smoother. Drama provides a real-world stage for language practice, where students imbue their words with genuine purpose and intent – a skill often elusive in traditional learning settings. Teachers who actively participate become co-creators, guiding students to express themselves in captivating and

impactful ways. The result is confident communicators who embrace spoken language with newfound fluency and finesse. Drama implies the body, mind, emotions, and senses to construct a distinct environment with real-life situations. This paper explores the integration of dramatisation in the process of teaching and learning language.

3.4. The Implementation of Dramatisation

Dramatisation adds a splash of real or fantastical scenarios and characters to the language classroom, injecting it with excitement. Prochazka (2017) highlights the need for both student and teacher enthusiasm and risk-taking for this approach to flourish. Dramatisation methods are powerful tools because they engage learners on multiple levels. Aldavero (2008) points out that these lessons go beyond language and literacy, stimulating even physical movement and kinaesthetic learning. This multi-sensory experience deepens learning and makes it more active.

Dramatically enriched lessons hold promise for improving oral communication skills, especially for EFL learners facing workplace language challenges. As noted by researchers, communicative language teaching methods, particularly those incorporating dramatic elements, are well-suited to address these needs. Maley (1983) in his piece "A Roomful of Human Beings" emphasises the numerous advantages of employing dramatic techniques in language learning.

At its core, language is about interaction and social connection (Berns, 2015). This interpersonal activity finds its meaning within contexts. Therefore, Berns (2015) argues that language learning should consider not only the linguistic context (what surrounds a particular utterance) but also the social and situational context (who speaks, their roles, and their reason for communicating).

4. Recommendations

Based on the research findings and the effectiveness of drama in enhancing language learning, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Adapt activities to your students' age, skill level, and cultural background. Customizing the educational process boosts interest and pertinence. Content that speaks to students' interests and experiences will have a greater chance of being absorbed.
2. To convey the idea of dramatisation to your students, start with brief, concentrated scenes or role-plays. As their confidence and abilities increase, progressively move on to more challenging situations. Students can develop core abilities with easier activities at first and work their way up to more difficult ones.
3. Use accessories like clothes, flashcards, or items as props to enhance the learning environment and encourage expression and creativity. In especially for visual learners, visual aids can improve understanding and engagement while offering more context for language practice.
4. Encourage students to participate actively in the dramatization process by providing thoughts, comments, and recommendations, going beyond just memorization. Deeper involvement and comprehension are promoted by fostering a collaborative learning environment where students feel empowered to contribute their ideas and points of view.
5. Provide opportunities for improvisation, adaptation, and individual interpretation within the framework of the script. This allows students to explore their creativity and linguistic skills in a

supportive environment. Encouraging flexibility and spontaneity in language use promotes fluency and confidence in communication.

6. To keep students interested and motivated throughout the dramatization activities, embrace experimentation, humour, and creative expression. Students are more likely to actively participate in and enjoy the learning process when the environment is lively and enjoyable. Students' language practice sessions may be more fun and memorable when playfulness and humour are incorporated, which increases language retention over the long term.

Conclusion

Research suggests that deeper involvement in self-expression activities, like drama, can spark a genuine interest in English. This study explores the power of drama in language learning, specifically its potential to enhance spoken fluency through drama-infused lessons.

While drama allows learners to spontaneously voice their ideas, it also requires them to navigate the script's framework. This unique interplay not only sharpens communicative skills but also provides hidden benefits during the preparation process. Imagination flourishes within the fertile ground of drama education. Learners embody characters beyond their everyday selves, exploring facets of personality they might not have imagined.

This tapping into creative reserves can be surprising and transformative. Drama activities are champions of engaging language in diverse ways. The classroom transforms into a vibrant stage, offering playful learning within a rich tapestry of emotions. This fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation for language, making it more than just words on a page. In essence, drama unlocks communication at its finest: confident, adaptable, and infused with creativity and emotion. So, let the curtain rise on a transformative language learning experience!

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

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