

INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING DRAMA AND ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES FOR ENHANCING YOUNG LEARNERS' ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to compare the effectiveness of traditional instruction methods with creative drama activities in improving young learners' oral communication skills in English. The participants were divided into two groups, with one group receiving traditional instruction and the other group receiving instruction through drama and role-play activities. Information was collected through pretest and post-test scores, which were analyzed using a paired sample t-test to determine any significant improvements in speaking skills between the two groups. Qualitative data were also collected through student feedback and observations during the instructional period, which were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify any patterns or themes related to the students' experiences with the different instructional methods.

Keywords: role-play, teaching technique, flexibility, social skills, cognitive skills.

Learning English as a second language is becoming more popular day by day. As English is becoming more popular, it is being taught at early ages of primary schools as well as well as kindergartens and preschools as a second or a foreign language. Due to this, teaching English to young learners has become a branch in the field of English teaching. Current language learning theory follows the premise that children learn best through discovery and experimentation and being motivated to learn. Children tend to pick up language from other children relatively quickly because they want to play and make friends. They also pick up language from their daily environment and through the media if it catches their interest. Children's reasons for wanting to learn a new language can be varied and change with time. Given the prevalence of English in the environment, children are quick to see the value of learning the language for a variety of purposes.

The study's findings support the idea that incorporating drama and role-play activities into language instruction can be highly effective in improving students' oral

communication skills. This aligns with the widely accepted belief that drama is a valuable tool for developing communicative competence in language learning.

The study also highlights the importance of student engagement and enjoyment in the learning process. The students who participated in the drama and role-play activities expressed higher levels of engagement, enjoyment, and confidence in speaking English, which likely contributed to their improved speaking skills. This underscores the significance of creating a positive and interactive learning environment for language learners.

Educators and curriculum developers can use these findings to inform their teaching practices and develop innovative approaches to language instruction. By incorporating drama and role-play activities into their lessons, they can potentially enhance students' oral communication skills and overall language learning experience.

This study adds to the body of research supporting the effectiveness of drama and role-play in language learning, and it provides valuable insights for educators looking to create dynamic and engaging language instruction.

According to Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory (Saracho, 2023), children follow a thinking pattern that advances through a series of stages. This progression is achieved by utilizing a sequence of schemas, combining their reasoning styles about various aspects of the world. A schema is a comprehensive approach to understanding these components. According to Piaget, preschool-age children fall into the definition of preoperational stage. Children in this stage do not yet possess the ability to understand concrete logic, manipulate information mentally, or consider the perspectives of others which Piaget termed as egocentrism. For example, a young child may believe that everyone sees the world as they do and may be surprised to learn that others have different perceptions and experiences. In contrast, adults generally acknowledge that people have diverse points of view and may have varying interpretations of situations.

Drama-supported cooperative learning methods are effective teaching strategies that engage students in active and collaborative learning while developing social, emotional, and cognitive skills (Güleç & Macan, 2014). Research showed that significant differences in communication skills were found in favor of the experimental group in a drama-supported cooperative learning method study, "the child generally perceives drama activity as a game and concentrates all his or her energy and attention on this activity. Thus, the child finds the opportunity to play a game and learn many concepts, topics, and social behaviors more effectively" (2014. p. 533). Fun and engagement are the main reasons children are attracted to drama activities. They enjoy playing games rather than doing work or listening to lectures

Role play is a standard drama-supported cooperative learning method and a valuable teaching strategy for preschoolers as it supports their learning, social and emotional development and language skills (Kopema, 2020). Pedagogical and educational sciences recognize the therapeutic role of fun, a fundamental activity for children to learn and develop through play(2020). In a roleplaying game, the child embodies the content through the role they assume, which serves as the primary component and a tool for carrying out the plot. Children may use props, costumes, and toys to enhance the experience and make the activity fun. Role play is a spontaneous expression of the child's creativity, involving interaction with adults. The main characteristics of the game, including children's commitment, emotional depth, independence, creativity, and activity, are inherent in the plot and roleplaying aspects of the game (Chorievich, 2020).

A widely cited definition of drama comes from Holden (1981: 1) who defines it as “any activity which asks the student to portray a) himself in an imaginary situation or b) another person in an imaginary situation”—a definition which can be applied to most formats of drama in language teaching and includes role-play as a form of drama. However, vocal and physical exercises that do not imply the creation of a fictional character or situation, such as articulation exercises or movement games, should also be included.

However, for language learners to encounter drama at school or in university, their teachers need to be familiar and comfortable with it. Not all teachers feel at ease with employing drama in the classroom—there are constraints of time and space and not every teacher feels confident to use a method they have not been trained in (Royka 2002, Gaudart 1990). In a business simulation, students can role-play as employees, managers, or even customers, and experience the challenges and opportunities that arise in a dynamic business environment. They can learn to communicate effectively, negotiate deals, manage conflicts, and make decisions under pressure. By simulating real-life scenarios, students can develop their emotional intelligence and learn to empathize with others, which is essential in building strong relationships in the workplace.

For instance, a marketing simulation might involve creating a new product and pitching it to potential customers. Students would need to consider factors such as the target audience's emotions, preferences, and needs to develop an effective marketing strategy. Similarly, a finance simulation might involve managing a portfolio of investments and making decisions based on market trends and economic indicators. Students would need to consider the emotions of investors and stakeholders when making financial decisions.

In conclusion, incorporating dramatic play into business education can help students develop their emotional intelligence and prepare them for the complex and dynamic world of work. By learning to navigate emotional situations in a safe and controlled environment, students can gain confidence and skills that will serve them well throughout their careers.

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