Using Drama Activities to Foster Primary Students' Oral Communication Skills

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating the impact of using drama activities on developing primary students' oral communication skills. It attempts to provide answers to the following main question: "What is the impact of using drama activities on developing primary students' oral communication skills?" A group of 50 primary stage students were selected from one of Cairo language schools. The quasi-experimental design (the non-equivalent group design) was employed where two intact classes were randomly selected to represent both groups. The experimental group received training through drama activities. The control group received regular instruction. A pre/post oral communication test was given to both groups before and after the treatment. The results of the t-tests proved to be statistically consistent with the hypotheses. They revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the oral communication skills. Implementing drama activities changed the classroom from a place where oral communication was taught to one where opportunities to think broadly and flexibly away from the constraints of the classroom were provided, and raised students' confidence.

Keywords: Drama activities, Oral communication Skills, Primary Stage

Introduction

Incorporating drama into language classrooms is a valuable and useful way to deepen students; active involvement in their own learning process; thus, better language attainment takes place. This is particularly true in the case of young learners who always prefer enjoyable tasks, which would naturally enhance their learning. With the teacher as a guide, facilitator, and monitor rather than as a controller, target language learners will certainly profit from the incorporation of drama into classrooms. Drama is a powerful tool to provide a meaningful and real communicative context. Students feel more encouraged, successful and motivated if they are able to communicate in the target language.

Drama activities are reported to foster language learning, and may prepare learners for oral skills that mirror those used in real life(Lee& Liu,2021).Habidin et al.(2016) assure that play is directly related to a range of talents that help accomplish academic achievement, improved imagination among students. Although changing the patterns of classroom discourse requires efforts from a variety of actors in an educational system , this research aims to help practicing teacher engage in a critical reflection on the quality of their classroom communication.

The challenge is to allow young learners to experience and feel the concept rather than just learn about it in the traditional sense. Hence, this leads to emphasis on a pedagogy that encourages learning: by doing; by playing; by experimentation; by risk taking and 'positive' mistake making; by creative problem solving; by feedback through social interaction; by dramatization and role playing .

The pilot study

The researcher performed a pilot study in which she interviewed ,and gave a questionnaire to 16 primary English language teachers and supervisors. The interviews and questionnaire aimed at

identifying the methods and techniques currently employed in teaching oral presentation among primary students. Moreover, the researcher asked 15 primary students to make an oral presentation test. The results of the pilot study revealed primary students' weakness in oral communication skills(Content,, Organization, Language, Adaptation to Audience and context, Vocal Deliver, Nonverbal Delivery) , which may be attributed to the prevailing traditional method of teaching oral communication skills and speaking in the primary stage. The dominant model of oral communication and speaking teaching, particularly for primary stage students, had been to teach by giving questions and answers and traditional group activities.

Furthermore, teachers main aims were to work within the confines of the exam and just prepare students for the exam by helping them understand the basic skills and memorize the answers. Most of the teachers (90%) reported that students are not provided with adequate opportunities to practice speaking due to the short time of the lesson. However, speaking practice is just restricted to giving short answers and some questions. Eighty seven percent of the teachers and supervisors do not have adequate knowledge of the speaking and oral communication skills necessary for primary students, Hence, when they were asked to mention the oral communication sub-skills necessary for primary students, most of them focused on grammatical competence skills including grammar, sentence structure and pronunciation and, they mentioned some obstacles that they face with students in the speaking skills: fear of making mistakes and criticism ,lack of vocabulary, some students being very dominant in class while others speaking less or not at all, and not being able to provide each student the opportunity to speak adequately. Moreover, teachers concluded that there was little discussion in any class in the sense of an open and in-depth

exchange. What most teachers called discussion, was, in the words of one teacher, 'question-answer discussion' that is, some version of recitation.

Furthermore, the researcher attended some English classes to conduct informal observations. These observations aimed at investigating the students' oral proficiency and communication throughout their answers to the teacher's questions and their interaction during classroom activities. The researcher noticed that teachers most of the time controlled the class by doing most of the speaking and directing all the language production, and were obsessed with correcting their students' errors. This made the students passive recipients waiting for direction and afraid of making mistakes, and could not express themselves adequately, and even continued to make the same errors after being corrected many times. In addition, students were guided by some structures which have no impact on improving their oral communication skills. Even, in dialogue drills, students just memorized the whole dialogue and some were asked to act it out in front of the class as they learned it by heart.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that there is weakness in the students' low level of the oral communication skills. This might be attributed to the methods of teaching adopted in oral communication at the primary stage. These results were consistent with the results of several studies in the Egyptian context which assured that little attention is given to oral communication and speaking skills and indicated that students were unable to communicate orally in English because of inadequacy in expressing themselves clearly and intelligibly. This was mainly attributed to the teacher who used traditional methods for teaching English language in the classroom(Salem,2019;Al-Maleh,2018;Ibrahim,2015; Ahmed 2007; Torky, 2006; Al Ghussain, 2001; and Al Khuli 2000). In fact,

Egyptian students often find some difficulties in mastering speaking skills. Many complaints are being raised by teachers regarding students' low level in English language. Therefore, students need more opportunities to practice English and use it communicatively inside and outside the language classroom .This is particularly true of primary stage schools. Much will depend on how current trends towards the promotion of drama activities which require collaborative talks, are actually embedded in the statutory curriculum. Hence, the present study tries to develop the oral communication skills of primary stage students through drama activities.

Statement of the problem

The study problem can be stated in primary stage students' low level of the necessary oral communication skills. This might be attributed to many factors. Among these factors are the traditional methods of teaching speaking and oral communication still adopted by most EFL primary school teachers and the absence of motivating speaking activities that can build and activate students' background knowledge necessary for the successfully interpreting and making meaning of spoken discourses, and engage learners in the oral communication process.

Questions of the study

The current study attempted to provide answers to the following main question :" *What is the effectiveness of the proposed drama activities on developing EFL oral communication skills among elementary stage students?*

The study hypotheses: The study hypotheses were as follows:

Hypothesis one: There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group exposed to the suggested drama activities and the control group receiving regular

instruction on the post-test in oral communication in favor of the experimental group.

Hypothesis two: There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group on the oral communication pre-and post-tests in oral communication skills in favor of the post -test scores.

Significance of the study

The significance of the present study lies in the fact that: 1- It is an attempt to overcome the current shortcomings in teaching EFL oral communication skills for primary school students. 2-It is also an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of the proposed drama activities based on developing EFL oral communication skills.

Delimitations of the study:

This study was confined to:1- Developing oral communication skills necessary for primary students : Content, Organization, Language, Adaptation to audience and context, Vocal delivery, and Nonverbal delivery. 2) Two intact primary classes in a Language School in Cairo governorate.

Rationale for implementing drama activities on developing oral communication skills:

One of the main principles of the social aspects of oral communication is the ability of producing a fluent speech, efficiently and with confidence. However, even after years of studying the English language, students do not feel secure enough of using it outside the classroom, in a real communicative situation. This is due to the traditional lesson system in which students have little chance to practice the language and gain fluency, and also because they are not exposed to spoken English beyond the class. Hence, a possible solution indicated by Trivedi (2013), is teaching English through dramatic techniques, which settle a meaningful communicative context for listening and speaking, and make

students use their language resources necessarily, fostering their linguistic skills. Theatre enhances verbal communication, making the participants use the language both conceptually and contextually. Drama techniques can be used to provide the students with the possibility of being involved actively in the process of interaction, by employing personality and the affective domain. Being completely involved in the activities, the learner is more motivated to use the foreign language. Aladini et al. (2021) investigated the effect of CLIL and drama on developing 9th graders English speaking skills. Among the speaking skills, the focus is on describing sequence of events based on visual input , expressing personal feelings, emotions, responding to direct questions, instructions, suggestions, offers, visual input and responding to referential, inferential and factual questions. The findings revealed that the program based on CLIL and drama was effective to improve the students' speaking skills.

Moreover, drama is authentic, it can be used in real conversations, where students can express their emotions and ideas while listening to the feeling and ideas of their classmates. In other words, English is taught in a communicative context, as a real mean of communication, which is far from lists of vocabulary or grammar exercises. Drama encourages students to speak by giving them the chance of communication. Aldavero (2008) also points out how learners improve self-confidence and their collaborative work in the classroom. She comments that to use the language they feel comfortable with : The advanced learners can employ more complex dialogues, whereas those who are less secure just develop simple conversations. Aldavero also stated that drama activities foster students' socialization, critical thinking, problem solving and improve oral communication skills, by exploring different language styles.

With the emphasis on the communicative approach to language teaching, a lot of importance is given nowadays to setting situations in the classroom where students in the classroom where students can employ language in a meaningful way. This arises from the basic principle that language is especially a means of communication, not an abstract body of knowledge to be learnt. Dramatic techniques are able to finish a framework in which students have a real need to communicate. Through role-plays, miming and acting students' whole personality is involved and stressed, not just the thought-processing aspect. Therefore, drama techniques tend to abandon the classic one-sided classroom, characterized by a teacher-dominated lesson in favor of students' pair and group works. The communicative approach gave the students a more active role in the process, by decentralizing the classroom and promoting a collaborative learning environment. Al-Ahmed (2017) investigated the effect of using some drama techniques on developing the speaking skills of fifth grade EFL students in Jordan and on their attitudes towards learning to speak in English. The results of the study showed there were significant differences in the speaking skills of the students due to the drama techniques. Results also showed that students' attitudes towards speaking in English were significantly better as a result to applying the "Drama" techniques compared to using the conventional method.

Drama activities can foster language learning, and prepare learners for oral skills that mirror those used in real-life. It has been proven that students acquire a foreign language best when they have a real purpose for learning, and when their use of language is meaningful and authentic (Long,2019 & Chamot,2009).

In the realm of FL and L2 research,(Kao et al., 2011 & Hwang et al., 2016) reported that in the process of building the drama context, FL learners had the chance to critically evaluate and practice their

listening and speaking skills; they claimed that drama is a tool with the potential to engage English FL learners and promote their oral proficiency. Also, Zhang et al.(2019) found that the interactions among peers in the form of collaboration and discussion during a drama-based learning process significantly promoted young English-as-a-foreign-language(EFL) learners' storytelling skills. Despite the importance of speaking skills, reluctance to participate freely in oral activities is clearly observed in students' behaviors (Cheng,2000). Speaking problems are classified by many researchers into linguistic and affective(Humaera,2015;Leong& Ahmadi,2017). The linguistic problems that might prevent students from sharing in conversations include grammar mistakes, lack of vocabulary, mispronunciation and mechanics related problems such as fluency and accuracy. The second category is the affective factors such as confidence, in addition to anxiety, and shyness. Hence, speaking a foreign language appears to be challenging and stressful for the learners. In addition, Salem (2019) investigated the effect of using drama activities on developing preparatory stage EFL learners pronunciation. The results showed that drama activities were significantly effective in developing EFL learners' pronunciation. Fabio (2015) and Goodwin (2001) confirm that drama is a particularly effective tool for teaching speaking especially pronunciation because it has different communicative competences such as: discourse intonation, pragmatic awareness and nonverbal communication. In addition, they added that drama activities foster students' socialization, critical thinking, problem solving and improve oral communication skills, by exploring different language styles and registers.

Dramatizing enhances students' motivation and creates a joyful and pleasant environment, both for students and for the teacher. Moreover, young pupils find it familiar, because it is part of their

lives from a very young age, when they used to play by acting out stories and scenes. Another advantage of using drama techniques is the possibility of employing language in a context. In fact, in the classroom students are often exposed to small bits of language, such as individual words, sounds, rather than whole phrases or situations.When speaking, they are not always asked to combine the different structures they are learning, so drama leads to make an effort, by employing a huge variety of language structures and functions, in order to have a successful communication(Philips, 2003).Another important benefit stated by Ashton Hay(2005); is that drama is able to employ all the learning styles. Drama does not only involve the cognitive sphere, but also the affective and psychological ones. Drama incorporates verbal linguistic learning through use of language, scripts, vocabulary and reading. Interpersonal learning relates to the feelings and emotions involved in drama, characterizations and how we respond as an individual, while interpersonal learning comes from working with others to create a scene or role play. Kinesthetic learning activates the physical self, the body and doing actions. As students re-create images, pictures, visual details, staging, movement, location and direction with drama their spatial learning skills are developed. Logical learning follows from using rational patterns, cause and effect relationships and other believable concepts involved with the drama. Sometimes music , or even the music of language is also used in working with drama. To summarize the numerous benefits of drama in language teaching , Maley and Duff (2005,p.1) maintained that drama: It integrates language skills in a natural way. Spontaneous verbal expression is integral to most of the activities.-It integrates verbal and non-verbal communication.-It draws upon both cognitive and affective domains.-By fully contextualizing the language, it brings the classroom interaction to life through an

intense focus on meaning.- -The emphasis on whole-person learning and multi-sensory inputs helps learners to capitalize on their strength and to extend their range.-There is a transfer of responsibility for learning from teacher to learners-which is where it belongs,

Samantaray (2014) investigated using dramatization in teaching English and its effect on learner's oral proficiency. It was noticed that students had enjoyed the class and gained confidence. The research showed that progression from simple, more guided activities to more advanced, less supported can be on the effective to teaching a communicative task in a low level classroom. Several studies supported the benefits of drama in foreign language learning such as Bobkina 920150 who aimed to analyze the impact of drama activities both on the development of students' speaking skills and their motivation. The two variables are connected since the speaking skills enhancement is achievable by raising students' interest and motivation. Ulas (2008) summarizes the advantages of drama techniques through six principles: -A student learns meaningful content better than other content-learning occurs as a result of a student's interaction with his environment,-The more sensory organs a student uses while learning, the greater the retention of the lessons,-A student learns best by doing and experiencing,-Effective participation is important in learning emotional conduct,-Learning becomes easier and more permanent in educational environments where there is more than one stimulus. Moreover, Pishkar et el. (2017) highlighted in their study the positive effects of drama on students' fluency and accuracy.

Utilizing drama as a teaching tool is not a new strategy. Many scholars have advocated integrating drama in language classrooms, maintaining this teaching tool would yield valuable academic results if implemented effectively. Through drama, young learners experience creativity and enjoy being artists while unintentionally

acquiring essential language skills (Mc Caslin,2006;& More,2004).Desiatova (2009) stated that using drama activities has clear advantages for language learning. It encourages students to speak; it gives them the chance to communicate, even with limited language, using non-verbal communication, such as body movements and facial expressions. Moreover, drama brings the real world into the classroom ,since the aim is more than linguistic. It can be a cross-curricular experience, as students can use topics from other subjects and also discover the culture of a foreign language. Also, Peregoy and Boyle (2008) confirmed that drama activities provide students with a variety of contextualizes and scaffold activities that gradually involve more participation and more oral language proficiency, they are also non-threatening and provide a lot of fun.

Alasmari & Alshae el (2020) maintained the use of drama as a technology/learning tool in English language classrooms is one proposed method, justifying their study to investigate the effects of teaching English language through drama, thus deciphering the advantages of this experience and possible challenges it may pose . Results showed that the use of drama develops participants' language skills, especially the communicate ones such as interactions and conversations, and yields higher proficiency levels as it motivates them to become more engaged in the learning process. These participants also displayed more responsibility and self-reliance; thus, much more learning took place. These results confirmed the general claim that introducing drama activities in language classrooms positively supports language acquisition. Moreover, Zakhareuski (2018) strongly defended the incorporation of drama in English language classrooms and argued that the acting not only promotes learners' self-confidence and self-esteem but also lowers speaking anxiety. She also added that drama provides

learners with an atmosphere of security, trust, and put on a show, concentration irrespective of their academic abilities. " Being put on a show," learners will not be worried about their accuracy when using dramatic and expressive language .Playing out a story removes language barriers and helps learners feel the authentic meaning of the words they are learning and encounter different language registers and uses which , in turn, allow the learners deeper and more meaningful learning. Zakhareuski added a second reason for incorporating drama into English language classrooms is that it nurtures collaboration between learners who, while playing different characters, interact to decide such aspects of drama as the characters, and the scenario in order to create a successful piece of art.

Furthermore, Said (2019) investigated the effectiveness of using a drama techniques-based program on developing EFL speaking skills and reducing speaking anxiety among secondary stage students. The study used the one group pre-posttest quasi-experimental design. Results of the study revealed that the drama techniques-based program was found to be effective in developing EFL speaking skills and reducing speaking anxiety among first year secondary stage students. Galante & Thomson(2017) highlighted in their study how instructional techniques adapted from drama can positively impact L2 fluency , comprehensibility, and accentedness-three frequently discussed dimensions of L2 speech. Results indicated that drama-based instruction can lead to significantly larger gains in L2 English oral fluency relative to more traditional communicative EFL instruction; comprehensibility scores also appear to be impacted, but with a much smaller effect; accentedness scores do not seem to benefit from one type of instruction over the other. Fluency requires 'performance' to achieve fluency; a learner has to perform the language. However, speaking a foreign language in the classroom is inherently artificial. It is very difficult to involve students in

artificial speaking activities. Students need life like situations to perform the elements of the language. They also need to feel as if they are not acting. Action is an essential part of learning a language, as it develops body language increases motivation, and keeps students involved in the learning process. Drama techniques include action as an essential component of language learning (Gorjian, Moosavivnia,& Jabripour,2010).

Moreover, Koylugla (2010) and Zafeiriadou (2009) confirmed the strong relationship between drama and motivation. Hence, drama fosters and sustains learners' motivation as it is fun and entertaining and because it engages feelings it can provide a rich experience of language for the participants. The creation of a drama is in and of itself a linguistically challenging task (Kawakami,2012). Yet collaborating on the best way to express an idea through a story can allow students to more easily make use of the foreign language resources available to them. This is in part because stories are easier for our brains to process than expository text.

Gokturk, Caliskan & Ozturk (2020) aimed in their action research to examine the effects of creative drama activities used in a 7th grade English course to improve the speaking skills. Results showed the creative drama activities improved the speaking skills of students and this improvement positively affected the attitudes towards the English course. They proved that creative drama has a significant impact on language teaching, with students taking active roles, communicating more easily, and providing a more comfortable environment. Moreover, Lee & Liu (2021) investigated in their longitudinal study, promoting oral presentation skills through drama-based tasks with an authentic audience. Results showed that the participants' attention to three presentation skills-structure, audience adaptation and content-was significantly raised after their presentation involved a real-life audience. The study found that to

maximize the effectiveness of drama-based activities require a catalyst such as an authentic audience beyond the classroom for it to bloom.When the drama-based activities moved beyond the isolated pedagogical setting to include elements of real-world setting and interaction with an authentic audience, they became a none powerful tool for presentation training. Hence, this study provides an empirical demonstration that the nature of the audience in drama-based activities should be taken into consideration when searching for effective pedagogic tasks for FL presentation training.

Furthermore, Bobkina (2015) aimed in her study to analyze the impact of drama activities both on the development of students' speaking skills and their motivation. The two variables are connected since the speaking skills enhancement is achievable by raising students' interest and motivation. Within their concern for reproducing real life situations, drama activities have the power of bridging the eternal divergence between the classroom environment and the language actually employed in everyday human interventions. Students have shown their willingness and desire to communicate while working on the drama project. Drama activities offered the perfect tools to create a meaningful, pleasant and low-stress atmosphere, and provided a range of language functions when recreating authentic communicative contexts. In this environment to work in groups, being engaged in a cooperative learning context. The results revealed that the objectives of the study were fully accomplished. The students enjoyed the classroom ambience created through the activities and most of them lost their inhibitions and fears. The data analysis displayed an enhancement of students' communicative skills, in particular speaking and vocabulary. Drama techniques revealed to be powerful instruments to develop a contextual and an authentic use of language, as well as critical thinking and creativity. It could be concluded that dram techniques

make the learning process an enjoyable and useful experience, by bringing the outside real life into the classroom

Boonkit (2010), conducted an action research to investigate the factors enhancing the development of speaking skills of their EFL undergraduate students. A confidence factor was gradually developed during the 15 weeks of a regular listening and speaking course. A task-based pedagogical design provided opportunities for the participants to speak in different situations, which helped to make 'passive' vocabulary 'active' and also speaking strength , and errors in pronunciation and grammatical structure were categorized as weaknesses of the research findings. Confidence and competence usually lead to strengthening English language speaking skills. Patil (2008) asserted that building up the learner's confidence to eliminate fear of making errors was a priority that the teacher should consider in order to make the learner feel comfortable with their language use. Confidence and competence in speaking could be developed from appropriate syllabus design, methods of teaching and sufficient tasks and materials (Bailey,2005; &Songsisi,2007).Also, Shannon (2013) provides examples of how language skills are assessed in municipal speech contests in Japan. These skills include 'pronunciation', 'delivery,' and ' composition'. The 'language skills' in such oral presentations primarily evaluate how well students can use their English in the appropriate discourse of an oral presentation. In the case of oral presentations, the external communicative function or purpose of the language to be used is the presentation itself. The internal relationships of form and meaning refer to the vocabulary associated with the presentation topic, and the grammar and textual organizational features necessary to present that topic in English.

Method

Participants :A group of (50) primary students were selected from one of Cairo language schools , in the year 2021 - 2022 (25 students in the experimental group and 25 students in the control group). Students' age in both groups ranged from seven to eight years old. All students in the sample of the current study had been learning English as a foreign language for six years.

Research Design

The quasi-experimental design called the non-equivalent group design was employed in the present study. This design is identical to the pre-posttest control/experimental group design in all aspects except that intact groups rather than randomly assigned ones are used, creating a control problem in terms of selection bias. This makes the use of a pre-test necessary for this particular design. In this study, two intact classes were randomly selected to represent the experimental and the control groups. The experimental group received training throughout the proposed drama activities for developing oral communication skills.

On the other hand, students in the control group received regular instruction. A pre/post oral communication test was given to the two groups before and after the treatment. The independent variable was the suggested drama activities, and the dependent variables were the pre-posttest, and the oral communication skills.

Instruments: The present study made use of main instruments: a- Oral communication skills checklist. b-A pre- post oral communication test.

a-   The oral communication skills checklist: The checklist was meant to determine the most important oral communication skills necessary for the primary stage. It was designed in light of the objectives included in the Ministry of Education document and the previous literature and related studies concerned with developing

oral communication skills at this stage for ESL/EFL students, the checklist was submitted to a panel of jury in the field of EFL methods of teaching to determine the degree of importance of each skill.

The oral communication skills selected by the study according to their high percentages were as follows:

(1) Content :

- Central idea/purpose is vividly stated, content is accurate, thorough, and directly on point, strong support is provided for each assertion.

(2) Organization (Introduction, Body, conclusion):

-Language presentation is free from errors in grammar and pronunciation

-Word choice aids clarity and vividness

(3)Adaptation to Audience and Context:

-Content and / or style are consistently appropriate and targeted to audience and context.

-Presentation makes full, effective use of time and stays within time parameters.

-Maintaining good eye contact with audience and is appropriately animated (e.g., gestures, moving around, etc.).

-Strong sense of audience and confidence.

(4) Vocal Delivery:

-Vocal Delivery is varied and dynamic. Speech rate, volume, and tone enhance listener's interest and understanding.

(5)Nonverbal Delivery:

-Most or all the following apply: Eye contact, posture, attire, gestures, movement or facial expressions enhance the presentation.

b-The oral communication test: Students were asked to talk about their experience about going shopping in a supermarket in not more than 10 minutes.

Objectives of the test: A pre/post oral communication test was constructed and administered to the two groups by the researcher. It was used prior to the program implementation to make sure that students of both groups were at the same level before starting the experiment, and hence, the progress achieved by the experimental group would be attributed to the drama activities they had been exposed to. As a post-test, it was used to investigate the effectiveness of the proposed drama activities, on developing the selected oral communication skills.

The equivalency of both the control and experimental groups was established through analyzing their pre-test results. The following table shows that there were no statistically significant differences between the control and the experimental groups on the pre-test in oral communication.

Table (1)

T-test results of the pre-test of both the control and experimental groups

Skills	Group	N	M	S.D	D.F	T - value	Level of sig.
Content	Exp.	25	3.48	1.851	48	.145	Not sig. at 0.05
	Control	25	3.40	2.041			
Organization (intro, body, conclusion)	Exp.	25	3.60	2.217	48	1.406	Not sig. at 0.05
	Control	25	2.84	1.546			
Language	Exp.	25	2.24	.970	48	.428	Not sig. at 0.05
	Control	25	2.12	1.013			
Adaptation to audience and context	Exp.	25	2.28	.936	48	.528	Not sig. at 0.05
	Control	25	2.44	1.193			
Vocal delivery	Exp.	25	2.36	.860	48	1.199	Not sig. at 0.05
	Control	25	2.04	1.020			
Nonverbal delivery	Exp.	25	2.44	1.044	48	.138	Not sig. at 0.05
	Control	25	2.48	1.005			
Total	Exp.	25	16.40	6.545	48	.601	Not sig. at 0.05
	Control	25	15.32	6.163			

As shown in table (1), t-values are (.145) for Content (1.406) for Organization (intro, body, conclusion) (.428) for Language (.528) for Adaptation to audience and context (1.199)for Vocal delivery (.138) for Nonverbal delivery ,which are not statistically significant at 0.05 level. Thus, it can be concluded that the two groups were almost at the same level of performance in oral communication skills.

Description of the test: The pre-posttest consisted of asking each student to talk about his/her experience in going shopping in the supermarket in not more than 10 minutes.

Test validity and reliability: To measure the test content validity, the first version of the test was given to 6 EFL supervisors and teachers to evaluate it in terms of content appropriateness, and suitability of the test to the students' level. In addition, they were asked to evaluate the test as a whole in terms of: (a) correctness, (b) number of items and (c) suitability of the language level to the primary stage students' linguistic level. The test proved to be a valid one, as it measured what it was intended to measure in most cases.

In order to establish the test reliability, the test-retest method was employed with an interval of two weeks on a sample of 15 primary students of the pilot study. The Pearson's correlation coefficients was used to calculate the reliability coefficient which was (0. 81), and which was relatively high. Therefore, the test could be considered a reliable one for the purpose of the current study.

Piloting the test: The test was piloted on a group of 15 students randomly selected to determine item difficulty, and the suitability of the task selected to extract the expected skills. Results revealed that the majority of students obtained low scores. Moreover, students reported that talking in English continuously for more than 5 minutes was more difficult for them than answering questions whose answers were directly and clearly stated before or known for them.

This may be due to the fact that they were accustomed to answering the direct questions included in their textbook. In addition, it was estimated that a period of 10 minutes would provide ample time to complete the test. This time was estimated by the jury members who agreed on not more than 10 minutes. The pre-test was administered to both groups in normal classroom conditions three days prior to the experiment. The post-rest was administered four days after the experiment ended.

Inter-rater Reliability: To insure reliability of scoring, analytical scoring was utilized to evaluate students' oral communication during the pre-posttest, which was done by three raters based on the checklist of the oral communication skills (oral communication rubrics). It was assessed through Pearson's correlation coefficients, the following table shows the correlation coefficients among individual raters of the pre-posttest.

Table (2)

Summary of the correlation coefficients among individual raters

Test	Raters		
	11.111	1.111	1.11
Pre	0.813	0.891	0.863
Post	0.885	0.876	0.913

Through comparing the correlation coefficients extracted from the statistical table at 0.01 levels, it was found that the estimated correlation coefficients were statistically significant at 0.01 levels. This shows reliability of scoring. Hence, scores were pooled to get an average score for each oral communication skill.

A small pilot study was carried out, 15 students were selected from the primary stage and were asked to perform two activities, the pilot study aimed at determining the time taken by the students to do the

activities and to what extent they enjoyed the activities and were suitable for their age and linguistic level and activities.

Suggested Drama Activities:

Learning objectives

Students were expected to master the identified oral communication skills by the end of the treatment.

Duration of the drama Activities: The drama activities are taught in six weeks. The first classroom period was an introductory one aiming at introducing students to the aims of the drama activities they were going to practice and what they were expected to do in order to succeed in the final drama performance.

Validity of the activities: The drama activities' validity, sample activities were given to EFL specialists who approved them, and suggested some modifications. The panel of jury approved the drama activities and the drama performance after they read the script of the play (drama performance) as valid and suggested allocating more time to teaching the oral communication activities.

Piloting the activities: After designing the program and modifying it according to the panel of jury suggestions ,a small pilot study was carried out, 15 students were selected from the primary stage and were asked to perform three activities, the pilot study aimed at:- determining the time taken by the students to do and practice the different activities. -Getting an indication to what extent they enjoyed the activities and how far students were enthusiastic about the oral communication and drama activities.-Getting an indication concerning the suitability of the project content and activities to students' linguistic proficiency level.

Description of the drama project (Play/Drama performance): The features and concepts underpinning the Drama activities and the Communicative approach to classroom practice call for teachers to engage with students as co-collaborators in meaning -making by

planning drama activities that generate genuine conversation between students and interventions that are communicatively responsive. The implementation process was made up of nine sessions. The methodological principles were based on the communicative approach, and they were fulfilled through the use of dramatic techniques and activities. These provided the students a meaningful context to communicate in, since they were socio-linguistically pertinent to the participants, the setting and the topic. The lessons were learner-centered, as the students were given responsibility for their own learning. Students were never interrupted for any error correction during the activities, since the true aim was to recreate a low-stress ambience where they could be engaged in through conversations similar to the everyday human interactions. In addition, most of the activities were conducted in pairs or groups and involved physical movement within the classroom.

It was taken into consideration that the different skills of speaking and oral communication sub-skills should be stressed in each lesson through practicing a varied range of oral communication and drama activities. However, the choice of a particular oral communication skill to be developed in a given lesson was affected by the nature of information included in the spoken activity and in their genre. According to the drama activities and project (Play) to develop oral communication skills , The project was divided to three phases. These three phases were as follows:

First phase: Prior to speaking, building and activating students' prior knowledge is necessary for the active reconstruction of the original intentions of speakers. This can be done by using videos, pictures, songs (Barney songs), visual tools that correspond to the thinking processes and a combination of activities including prediction, brainstorming. The researcher made an audition ,where

she gave students part of the script of the play to be able to allocate them in their suitable roles.

Second phase: Students were given photocopies of the play script which was written by the researcher, with the instructions about the activities. Songs were sung by students and teacher. The play script was read and interpreted by the students, who applied everything they learnt during the whole activities and improved their expressivity and communicative skills. Students had the opportunity for putting into practice their linguistic knowledge within a pleasant and cooperative environment. During and after rehearsing, students should be given time to reflect about what they did. This can be done in groups or as a whole class. Learners should evaluate themselves, examining what they did properly and considering how can improve it. The teacher gives his/her opinion, but concentrating on the positive points in order to motivate students and reinforce their work. Oral communication should be primarily taught as a process of making meaning that proceeds from whole to parts. In this sense, attention is focused on teaching oral presentation skills in context when they become relevant or when they occur naturally in the speaking and oral presentation activities which students practice. This should be done using varied during and post speaking activities that integrate the language skills.

Third phase: Giving feedback which help to lead students' thinking forward. It is fundamental to give feedback on what the students have done, not only about the final product or achievement, but also and especially the whole process, the way they collaborated in groups. Therefore, even if the students consider the final 'performance' as the activity, the process is the teacher's main aim. Feedback is essential and constructive, so if the teacher provides it regularly during dramatization activities, students will gradually refine   their   drama   skills,   their   interest   and   their

language(Philips,2003).In the end , students acted the drama performance on the stage, in front of a real audience (their parents) who made the whole project more realistic and motivating.

Description of the Activities: All activities are (collective, reciprocal, supportive, motivating, and fun).Activities were a variation of role-play, simulation, conversation, discussion, talk show, rehearsals ,and acting. The scripted play (The Supermarket): The script was written by the researcher and was revised by the jury .In writing the script , it is important that the teacher should ensure that the language is accessible to the learners and relevant to their needs and that the topic arouses the students' interest. Themes relating to family situation are therefore useful. All the scenes are short, and involve no more than 2 to 3 characters. The play include songs related to the topic and some songs such as (Barney songs) required some movements which the students enjoyed .

Evaluation: Formative evaluation took the form of following each speaking activity with a feedback. Discussions and conversations are two interactive speaking activities which provide a level of authenticity and spontaneity that other assessment techniques may provide. On the other hand, summative evaluation included the final drama performance (play) and the oral communication test utilized to measure the achievement of the intended goals after the treatment. Oral communications are the most common tasks for evaluating extensive speaking

Results

Results of the study are presented in terms of the study hypotheses.

Hypothesis one: There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group exposed to the suggested drama activities and the control group receiving regular instruction on the post test in oral communication in favor of the experimental group.

T-tests for independent samples were conducted in order to compare the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups in oral communication skills (Content, Organization, Language, Adaptation to audience and context, Vocal delivery and Nonverbal delivery).The results of the T-test proved to be statistically consistent with the above stated hypothesis. Therefore, the first hypothesis was supported. Table (3) shows this statistical significance. To investigate the differences between both the experimental and control groups with respect to each determined oral presentation sub-skills, t-tests for independent samples were used and they revealed statistically significant differences at 0.05 level.

Table (3)

T-test results of the post-test of both the control and experimental groups.

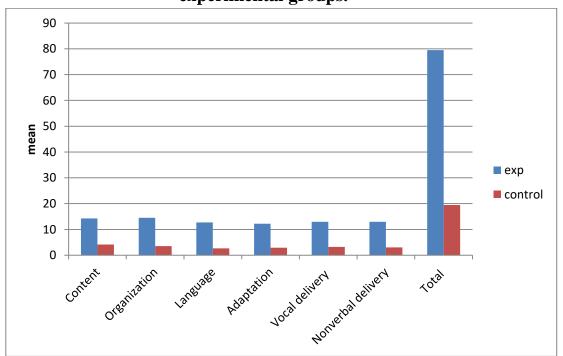| Skills	Group	N	M	S.D	D.F	T - value	Level of sig.	Effect size
Content	Exp.	25	14.28	1.137	48	23.592	sig. at 0.05	6.81
	Control	25	4.16	1.818				
Organization (intro, body, conclusion)	Exp.	25	14.48	1.229	48	22.491	sig. at 0.05	6.49
	Control	25	3.52	2.104				
Language	Exp.	25	12.68	.690	48	41.475	sig. at 0.05	11.97
	Control	25	2.68	.988				
Adaptation to audience and context	Exp.	25	12.20	1.155	48	29.889	sig. at 0.05	8.62
	Control	25	2.92	1.038				
Vocal delivery	Exp.	25	12.96	.735	48	37.355	sig. at 0.05	10.78
	Control	25	3.20	1.080				
Nonverbal delivery	Exp.	25	12.92	.702	48	37.566	sig. at 0.05	10.84
	Control	25	3.00	1.118				
Total	Exp.	25	79.52	3.151	48	45.419	sig. at 0.05	13.11
	Control	25	19.48	5.810				

The above table shows that there were statistically significant differences at 0.05 level between the mean scores of the control and

experimental groups on the post - test skill in favor of the experimental group, since the estimated t-values were (23.592) for Content (22.491) for Organization (intro, body, conclusion) (41.475) for Language (29.889) for Adaptation to audience and context (37.355)for Vocal delivery (37.566) for Nonverbal delivery .Moreover the effect size values, (6.81), (6.49),(11.97), (8.62), (10.78) and (10.84) for the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth skills respectively reveal that the proposed drama activities had a large effect on the experimental group students' oral communication skills on the post-test as compared to those of the control group receiving regular instruction.

Chart (1)

T-test results of the post-test of both the control and experimental groups.

Hypothesis two: There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre-post-tests in oral communication skills in favor of the post-test scores.

In order to verify the validity of this hypothesis, t-tests for paired samples were used. The t-test results proved that there were statistically significant differences between the pre-posttests mean scores of the experimental group in oral communication skills (Content , Organization, language ,Adaptation to audience and context, Vocal delivery and Nonverbal delivery) in other words, the results of the t-tests proved to be statistically consistent with the above stated hypothesis. Hence, the second hypothesis was accepted.

To investigate the differences between the experimental group students' oral communication skills before and after being exposed to the drama activities, t-tests for paired samples were used for each determined oral communication skill. The following table shows the existence of statistically significant differences at 0.05 level .

Table (4)

T-test results comparing the pre-test vs. post-test means for the experimental group.
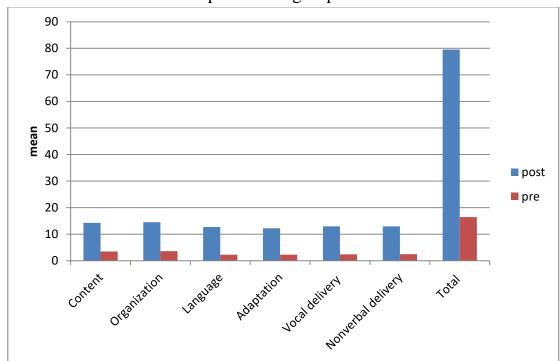
Sub Skills	measure	N	M	S.D	Paired differences		D.F	T – value	Level of sig.	Effect size
					M	S				
Content	post	25	14.28	1.137	10.800	2.160	24	24.997	sig. at 0.05	10.20
	pre	25	3.48	1.851						
Organization (intro, body, conclusion)	post	25	14.48	1.229	10.880	2.728	24	19.940	sig. at 0.05	8.14
	pre	25	3.60	2.217						
Language	post	25	12.68	.690	10.440	.961	24	54.324	sig. at 0.05	22.17
	pre	25	2.24	.970						
Adaptation to audience and context	post	25	12.20	1.155	9.920	1.256	24	39.501	sig. at 0.05	16.12
	pre	25	2.28	.936						
Vocal delivery	post	25	12.96	.735	10.600	1.080	24	49.068	sig. at 0.05	20.03
	pre	25	2.36	.860						
Nonverbal delivery	post	25	12.92	.702	10.480	1.085	24	48.306	sig. at 0.05	19.72
	pre	25	2.44	1.044						
Total	post	25	79.52	3.151	63.120	6.704	24	47.077	sig. at 0.05	19.21
	pre	25	16.40	6.545						

above table shows that there were statistically significant differences at 0.05 level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre -post tests in favor of the post-test in the six skills, since the estimated t-values were (24.997) for Content (19.940) for Organization (intro, body, conclusion) (54.324) for Language (39.501) for Adaptation to audience and context (49.068) for Vocal delivery (48.306) for Nonverbal delivery. Moreover the effect size values, (10.20), (8.14), (22.17), (16.12), (20.03) and (19.72) for the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth skills respectively reveal that the proposed program had a large effect on the experimental group students' s oral communication skills on the post-test as compared to the pre-test.

Chart (2)

T-test results comparing the pre-test vs. post-test means for the experimental group.

Discussion

Given the prominent role communicative competence plays in mastering a language, teachers create environments for learners to develop oral fluency by using drama activities in their classrooms. The goal, in this regard, is to communicate. Thus, effective communication is reflected through speaking efficiently and articulately.

Considering creative drama, it created a stress-free and entertaining environment that makes it easier for students to speak in the target language. Students realized that there is no need to be shy and they focused more on language and engaged in speaking activities . All these features can be argued to eliminate the obstacles. Moreover, students' self-efficacy has increased, believing in their own ability feeling self-confident, and controlling their own success. It is noteworthy to mention that children have a very short span, hence activities based on drama-based learning was effective. The implementation of drama activities, both as a method itself and as a positive effect on oral communication skills, affected the attitude towards the English course positively, it helped students to speak English fluently and confidently. The improvement of the students' pronunciation was very clear and even their parents realized that.This is consistent with the results of Hassi (2016) ,Fabio (2015) and Goodwin(2001).

I had to analyze the quality of the students' oral communication skills which quality of their relationships. The extent to which they were real and spontaneous in the conversation and discussion with each other made a difference to their ability to think together. I called this the dialogic quality of the students' relationships and found indicators of it in things like a willingness to ask each other to help them understand , openness to a change of opinion in the face of arguments and individuals being able to admit that they had been

wrong and someone else had been right. The way students speak and listen to each other is governed by practices predicted on respect for all voices to speak and be listened to. Difference is valued and alternative interpretations welcomed.. Using body language , eye contact and ….effectively in communication is consistent with the results of (Gorjian, Mosavivia & Jabripour,2010).

Motivation is also developed through variety and sense of expectancy produced by the activities, especially by fostering student self-esteem, self-awareness and confidence. The movement in drama is useful to foster motivation. Students need to move physically while they are speaking, because that is what we normally do in our normal conversation. Actually it was clear that language flows more easily when students are in a friendly environment and they are not concerned about accuracy.

Remarkably, given the prominent role communicative competence plays in mastering a language, drama activities create learning environments for learners to develop oral fluency by providing opportunities to communicate and use the English language effectively in the classrooms. Thus, effective communication is reflected through speaking efficiently and articulately, and enhancing learners' experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning , and the linking of speaking situations to real world English helped students to gain both confidence and competence. Building up students confidence in oral communication was a crucial factor that strengthened the speaking performance. The drama activities in a variety of situations helped students to prepare for speaking , this preparation became an effective strategy to minimize anxiety , and thus maximize speaking confidence ,this is consistent with (Alasmari & Alshae el ,2020;Gokturk et al. ,2020 ;Zakhareuski,2018, and Samantaray,2014).

It is noteworthy that the findings were obtained also from the speaking activities and discussions. Strengths of speaking performance found in this study included a wide variety of real world topics , when a broad range of vocabulary was employed ; students used the new vocabulary in the classroom interaction and was positively reflected in their communication. Moreover, stress-free environment encouraged the participants to feel comfortable and motivated to speak, and hence, maximized speaking confidence. The wide range of vocabulary related to the selected topics and issues increased and activated the EFL learners' English lexicon.. These findings were consistent with (Said,2018;Leong & Ahmadi,2017; Shannon (2013) and Humaera, 2015)results.

Remarkably, through using drama activities, students were encouraged to think and interact in different ways. Hence, it is valued as a process that can promote inclusion of all students ,this is consistent with).Moreover, roleplaying increased students' self-confidence and were more inclined to take the initiatives. It allowed students to develop communicative skills, these findings are consistent with Paco and Palinkas (2011) and Bobkina(2015) results. Furthermore, students were creative, able to work in teams, identify and evaluate opportunities, they were really amazing and improved their oral communication skills(Content, Organization, Language, Adaptation to audience and context, Vocal delivery and Nonverbal delivery).Their parents were proud of the performance of their children and highly appreciated the effort they exerted to make the drama performance a success and commented on the high confidence ,the vocal delivery which was dynamic, speech rate and tone which enhanced the audiences' interest and realized the great improvement in pronunciation.

Recommendations and suggestions for further research :

-Fostering drama awareness and developing oral communication skills should be a part of early childhood educators' commitment to helping children move towards using their fullest potential. Teachers should play a vital role in encouraging drama activities to enhance learning and must create an atmosphere that encourages creativity as well as confidence in the classroom. Therefore, teachers must prepare conditions or settings that enhance oral communication skills.

-.Oral communication instruction should be engaging as well as challenging and given more attention in our EFL classes. More time and efforts should be exerted to develop this main skill and its sub-skills. More studies are needed to compare the relative efficacy of implementing the drama activities through play-based learning approach to address different genres and other language skills.

-Further research is necessary to explore and investigate the effectiveness of applying similar drama activities with different stages and student populations over a longer period of time on students' skills especially on speaking sub-skills.

-Curriculum designers should dramatize the topics in the English curriculum in an interesting and motivating way.

-English language teachers should be aware of the importance of drama activities and use this tool as a challenging task in order to increase their learners' motivation and thus their academic achievements.

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