

Drama-based techniques for teaching speaking in efl classrooms applied to 1st bachelor's teenagers

Técnicas basadas en el drama para la enseñanza de la expresión oral en aulas de EFL aplicadas a adolescentes de 1.º de Bachillerato

Karla Antonieta Sayago Garcia
Universidad Bolivariana del Ecuador
kasayagog@ube.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-3111-20>
Duran- Ecuador

Cristian Alberto Véliz Espinoza
Universidad Bolivariana del Ecuador
cavelize@ube.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3670-1880>
Duran- Ecuador

Carmen Andrea Letamendi Lazo
Universidad Bolivariana del Ecuador
caletamendil@ube.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-2209-7038>
Duran- Ecuador

Josue Bonilla Reinaldo Tenesaca
Universidad Bolivariana del Ecuador
jrbonillat@ube.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6748-2345>
Duran- Ecuador

Formato de citación APA

Sayago, K., Véliz, C., Letamendi, C. & Reinaldo, J. (2026).
Drama-based Techniques for Teaching Speaking in EFL Classrooms applied to 1st Bachelor's teenagers. Revista REG, Vol. 5 (Nº. 1), p. 101 -119.

CIENCIA INTERACTIVA

Vol. 5 (Nº. 1). Enero – marzo 2026.
ISSN: 3073-1259
Fecha de recepción: 28-12-2025
Fecha de aceptación :08-01-2026
Fecha de publicación:30-03-2026



ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of drama-based techniques as an effective teaching approach to enhance speaking skills in A2-level teenage learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Due to the communication challenges faced by adolescent learners with lower skills, drama provides an engaging method for participating in authentic language use. Techniques such as: role-playing, and process drama create significant scenarios that improve fluency and motivation. Drawing from theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, this research highlights how drama enhances language acquisition by minimizing emotional obstacles and encouraging active participation. The findings suggest that integrating drama into speaking classes enhances verbal abilities while promoting student autonomy and teamwork. This research adopts a qualitative and quantitative mixed-methods paradigm within the framework. It utilizes an Action Research methodology as it is conducted by a teacher-researcher with the goal of enhancing students' speaking abilities in an authentic EFL classroom environment. This pre-test aims to assess the existing speaking skills of teenage EFL students before the implementation of drama-based methods. It focuses on oral fluency, confidence, vocabulary usage, and interactive communication via questions and prompts connected to everyday life, social engagement, and descriptions. The present study reveals that, applying drama-based technique demonstrate most of the students gain satisfactory prior knowledge like as: self-confident, security and positive attitude and aptitude when they need to do any exposure, let them in side anxiety, nervous, insecurities. So, is important that the technique of drama, is an excellent option for students to strategy in developing communicative skill and our professors obtain more experience in the teaching teacher.

KEYWORDS: Drama-based techniques, speaking skills, Role playing, Motivation.



RESUMEN

Este estudio investiga el uso de técnicas basadas en el drama como un enfoque pedagógico eficaz para mejorar las habilidades orales en estudiantes adolescentes de nivel A2 de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL). Debido a los desafíos comunicativos que enfrentan los estudiantes adolescentes con niveles bajos de competencia, el drama proporciona un método atractivo para participar en el uso auténtico del lenguaje. Técnicas como el juego de roles y el drama de proceso crean escenarios significativos que mejoran la fluidez y la motivación. A partir de marcos teóricos y estudios empíricos, esta investigación destaca cómo el drama potencia la adquisición del lenguaje al minimizar los obstáculos emocionales y fomentar la participación activa. Los hallazgos sugieren que la integración del drama en las clases de expresión oral mejora las habilidades verbales, al mismo tiempo que promueve la autonomía y el trabajo en equipo de los estudiantes. Esta investigación adopta un paradigma de métodos mixtos cualitativos y cuantitativos dentro de su marco metodológico. Utiliza la metodología de Investigación-Acción, ya que es llevada a cabo por un docente-investigador con el objetivo de mejorar las habilidades orales de los estudiantes en un entorno auténtico de aula de EFL. Este pretest tiene como objetivo evaluar las habilidades orales existentes de los estudiantes adolescentes de EFL antes de la implementación de métodos basados en el drama. Se centra en la fluidez oral, la confianza, el uso del vocabulario y la comunicación interactiva mediante preguntas y estímulos relacionados con la vida cotidiana, la interacción social y las descripciones. El presente estudio revela que la aplicación de técnicas basadas en el drama demuestra que la mayoría de los estudiantes adquieren conocimientos previos satisfactorios, tales como: autoconfianza, seguridad y una actitud y aptitud positivas cuando necesitan realizar exposiciones, reduciendo la ansiedad, los nervios y las inseguridades. Por lo tanto, es importante destacar que la técnica del drama es una excelente opción para que los estudiantes desarrollen estrategias orientadas al fortalecimiento de la competencia comunicativa, y para que los docentes adquieran mayor experiencia en la práctica de la enseñanza.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Técnicas basadas en Drama, habilidades en comunicación oral, juegos en roles, motivación.



INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, educators seek ways to teach English and develop speaking skills in EFL classrooms. Drama-based techniques for developing speaking skills have an impact on our students. That technique provides teachers with engaging methods to improve students' communication with role-plays, dramatizations, or conversations. These methods encourage both teachers and students properly. The way teachers choose the activities depends on the conception. As teachers come to get the feel of the class group. Maley, A., & Duff, A. (2005).

Drama-based techniques have been interactive tools to foster speaking skills; these tools have surfaced to foster communication and engagement. When working with Drama, learners can be more focused on increasing their abilities, especially in their speaking. Furthermore, it utilizes dialogue and expression to bring stories and ideas to life, often on stage or in the classroom. Drama is a form of storytelling performed for an audience. It uses dialogue, action, and expression to bring stories and ideas to life, usually on stage, screen, or even in the classroom. Drama can include communicative activities. (Neelands & Goode, 2015). In addition, drama opens up opportunities for creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking while fostering communication skills. Vygotsky recognized the importance of developing creativity through schooling and rejected the notion of creativity as the product of sudden inspiration (Vygotsky, 2004).

However, little research has focused on Drama-based techniques for developing speaking skills in students. In our classroom, most of the students present anxiety when they have to speak in English and speak in front of classmates. This is a common problem in which students do not want to make mistakes, be judged, or not be understood. According to some research, such as Romios, Musthafa, and Lengkanawati (2024) depicted that many students experience anxiety when participating in classroom speaking activities. This anxiety is a normal consequence of the pressure associated with participating in such an activity.

This article explores how drama-based techniques affect speaking skills, including student participation and speaking confidence, in a classroom among A2-level students. Specifically, it aims to diagnose oral speaking skills in active participation with learners for A2 students, examine how drama techniques can promote the use of real-life conversations in EFL classrooms, and evaluate the overall development of speaking skills resulting from the implementation of these techniques. Furthermore, educational drama techniques are also useful to build students' confidence as they involve their whole selves, body and mind. Including realia and different objects as part of these can be motivating and

engaging. (Asma, 2025). These techniques can be applied with students of different ages and levels, especially with teenagers.

The skill to communicate effectively in English is crucial for students in today's interconnected world. Many teenage learners in EFL classes, especially those at an A2 level, face challenges in speaking due to restricted vocabulary, insufficient fluency, low self-esteem, and fear of making errors. Such obstacles frequently inhibit learners from actively engaging in speaking activities, which subsequently impedes their comprehensive language growth. Conventional, grammar-focused, or teacher-centric methods of language teaching frequently fail to offer the lively, interactive experiences essential for involving students in authentic communication with the language.

In light of this context, the incorporation of drama-driven methods offers a compelling alternative for teaching languages. Drama provides students with the chance to engage in English through authentic and relevant situations that reflect genuine communication. Through role-plays, improvisation, and scripted conversations, students gain confidence, expressiveness, and fluency. These methods address the emotional and developmental requirements of adolescents by fostering creativity, empathy, collaboration, and critical thinking— aspects that are frequently neglected in traditional language instruction approaches.

This study was conducted at Ciudad de Valencia High School, a public school situated in the urban region of Valencia, Los Ríos province, Ecuador. The school caters to a diverse group of students with different socio-economic backgrounds, family dynamics, and educational requirements. The study's sample included 95 first-year bachelor's students, aged 15 to 16, who were recognized as having an A2 level of English proficiency according to diagnostic assessments.

In this scenario, learners encounter shared difficulties concerning English language acquisition, particularly in enhancing their speaking abilities. Numerous individuals feel nervous when addressing their colleagues and struggle with confidence to participate in impromptu dialogues in English. These challenges are intensified by a deficiency of interactive, communicative classroom activities that promote active involvement.

General objective of the research

To demonstrate how drama-based techniques affect speaking skills, including students participation and speaking confidence in a classroom among A2-level teenagers

Specific objectives of the research

To diagnose oral speaking skills in active participation with learners for A2 teenagers.



To examine the use of drama techniques to help learners to produce real-life conversations during speaking tasks in EFL classrooms.

To assess speaking skills' development in A2- level teenagers in the implementation of drama-based techniques.

Speaking skills are the ability of individuals to express their thoughts either creatively or critically by using proper pronunciation or intonation. Educators' speaking skills have an immense impact on students (Aminuddin, Sabil, & Jamian, 2019). When teachers communicate confidently and with expressive intonation, they not only enhance understanding but also motivate students to participate in speaking activities. Additionally, effective speaking abilities in educators foster a lively, captivating classroom atmosphere, where learners feel encouraged to engage verbally, inquire, and share their opinions. Speaking is defined as the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts or situations (Belliveau, 2013). This definition emphasizes that speaking involves not just creating language, but also forming and navigating meaning through interaction with others. It encompasses not only words but also gestures, facial expressions, vocal tone, and body language, and factors that enhance communication and aid in expressing emotions, attitudes, and intentions.

Although different strategies have appeared to expand speaking skills, different studies have shown that issues such as inhibition, lack of participation, and use of mother tongue, among others, are found in EFL classrooms (Tuan & Mai, 2015). Furthermore, everyday conversation develops students' speaking skills both within the school environment and at the community level (Tuncel, 2015: 2575). The importance of English speaking skills becomes visible from the students' increased passion for everyday peer communication, clarifying that speaking power has a higher value than any other mode of the English language learning process (Suleimenova, 2013: 1860). The speaking skills develop students' ability to learn more fluently and proficiently, leading them to improve other areas of the English language, such as writing, reading, and listening.

Creating opportunities in school for speaking to be encouraged is critical in helping students develop the skills they need to deal with social and professional situations. For students to participate in the class and society, they will need the oracy skills (Mercer, Warwick, & Ahmed, 2017).

Although speaking seems to be perceived as an intuitive skill that does not need complex teaching strategies, teenagers face a multitude of difficulties at the moment of speaking. One of the learning process barriers is shyness. Shyness is emotional, and students suffer from it when they are compelled to speak in an English class. Because of a failure to develop their communicative skills,

learners become ashamed while attempting to speak and are afraid of making mistakes (Juhana, 2012). Additionally, in an English as a foreign language (EFL) class some students choose to make use of their mother tongue outside or even inside the class because it is easier, which subsequently makes them less exposed to the target language (Zineb, 2021).

Drama-based techniques

Drama in language education is defined as any activity where the learner engages in using language in a particular situation or task in a communicative manner (Cockett, 2000; Mok, 2012; Sirisrimangkorn & Suwanthep, 2013). According to Winston and Stinson (2016), drama techniques have 3 dimensions: text interpretations with performance, improvisation, and role-play; and process dramas. By 10 instances, the first one refers to performing and communicating sub-skills through physical and vocal features, while improvisation and role-play promote active and spontaneous interaction, simulating a role in anything.

Drama is a form of storytelling performed for an audience. It uses dialogue, action, and expression to bring stories and ideas to life, usually on stage, screen, or even in the classroom. Drama can include communicative activities. Neelands, J., & Goode, T. (2015). Drama extends beyond traditional theatrical venues like plays and stage shows; it can also be effectively used for educational purposes in the classroom. In this context, drama may appear in various forms, such as role-playing, improvisation, skits, storytelling, and simulations. All these formats encourage learners to actively engage with content, adopt different perspectives, and express meaning clearly through spoken language and non-verbal cues.

Drama techniques in classes can be highly versatile and engaging. This technique is applied as role-playing, improvisation, hot seating, scripted drama, and storytelling with movement. Baldwin, P. (2004) highlights the educational benefits of drama by presenting various effective strategies that can be integrated into routine teaching. Among these methods, role-playing allows learners to immerse themselves in imagined scenarios, practicing genuine dialogue. Furthermore, Improvisation promotes spontaneity, creativity, and quick thinking, helping students become more fluent and confident speakers.

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, Moosavinia, & Jabripour, 2010). Although Sirisrimangkorn (2018) also revealed that students gain more chances to use a foreign language for communication when utilizing the drama project-based learning in the teaching and learning process.

However, by using drama, students can develop their affective aspects, such as self-esteem and motivation. Besides, the increased level of self-confidence in classroom participation and social interaction is fostered within the comfortable space of drama-based role-play activities. According to Ashton-Hay (2005), the use of drama techniques in the classroom has been proven to give benefits for the students' learning process. Students learn differently, think differently, and act differently according to the knowledge and experience they acquire every day. Therefore, drama techniques have a unique ability to engage students in many different learning styles, thus facilitating the increase of motivation and partnership among students.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

This research adopted a qualitative and quantitative mixed-methods paradigm within the framework. It utilized an Action Research methodology as it was conducted by a teacher-researcher with the goal of enhancing students' speaking abilities in an authentic EFL classroom environment. The study emphasized employing drama-oriented methods, including role-playing, as engaging approaches to enhance oral communication among first-year bachelor students. Action Research was appropriate for this situation since it facilitated a hands-on and reflective process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, enabling the teacher to investigate the impact of these creative methods on students' fluency, confidence, and engagement in spoken English. Additionally, this method enabled the teacher to respond adaptively to students' requirements, improve teaching strategies, and evaluate progress in speaking skills directly through ongoing observation and formative assessment instruments. Ultimately, this research sought to connect theory and practice by improving learners' communicative skills through engaging, student-focused activities.

The outgoing study was conducted at Ciudad de Valencia High School. It was a public institution located in the city of Valencia - Los Ríos, on 13 December Avenue. The institution was situated in the urban area of Valencia, in the center of the city. Furthermore, teenagers from this high school came from diverse social classes, family structures, and faced different challenges related to academic pressures, social dynamics, and mental concerns. Participants belonged to the 1st year of Bachelor's from the morning timetable. Although, their ages fluctuated from 15 and 16 years old. The interaction with the students was in a face-to-face class modality in which the teacher applied different strategies as role-play, scripted dialogues, and improvisation. Furthermore, the research explored how the application of strategies such as role-playing, scripted dialogues, and classroom simulations influenced participation, fluency, and accuracy during speaking classes. After

integrating these strategies, the study aimed to identify modifications in motivation, speaking fluency, and accuracy in communicating in EFL contexts in both high schools.

The research project was carried out in six well-defined stages to ensure a systematic and organized investigation process. First, in the delimitation of the problem, the researcher identified the object of study and selected a sample of 95 teenagers from the 1st year of Bachelor's at Ciudad de Valencia High School, based on accessibility, feasibility, and their A2 English level. In the literature review stage, relevant theoretical frameworks and previous studies on speaking skills and drama-based techniques in ESL classrooms were explored. The third stage involved the elaboration of instruments, in which the researcher developed a pretest, post-test, survey, observation checklist, and a focus group, which were validated by experts.

Student Survey on Speaking Skills

To accurately evaluate the influence of drama-based methods on the enhancement of speaking abilities in 1st Bachelor's, the student survey was a self-reported questionnaire aimed at measuring students' views on their speaking skills and their experiences with role-playing exercises. The questionnaire featured inquiries about students' self-assurance in English speaking, the challenges they faced while speaking, their participation in English discussions beyond the classroom, their views on improvements in speaking skills over time, and the advantages they associated with role-play exercises.

Observation Checklists

The observation checklists were tools that allowed for documenting information about the performance related to speaking skills during the application of Drama-based techniques. This captured the behaviors and characteristics of students' performance in role-plays, scripted dialogues, or improvisation, allowing educators to provide feedback about the strengths and weaknesses in speaking skills. This assessed the pronunciation, vocabulary range, and interaction through three ratings: yes, no, and somewhat. In addition, this allowed for the addition of comments or specific details about the development of fluency and accuracy observed in the use of Drama-based techniques.

Pre- and Post-Test Assessments

This pre-test aimed to assess the existing speaking skills of teenage EFL students before the implementation of drama-based methods. It focused on oral fluency, confidence, vocabulary usage, and interactive communication via questions and prompts connected to everyday life, social engagement, and descriptions.

The post-test assessment aimed to measure the speaking skill progression of 1st Bachelor EFL students, following the use of drama-oriented teaching methods. It emphasized verbal fluency, vocabulary development, pronunciation, spontaneity, and interaction, aligning with the objectives of communicative competence.

RESULTS

Satisfaction Survey Results (Drama-based Activities in English Class)

Table 1: Satisfaction survey.

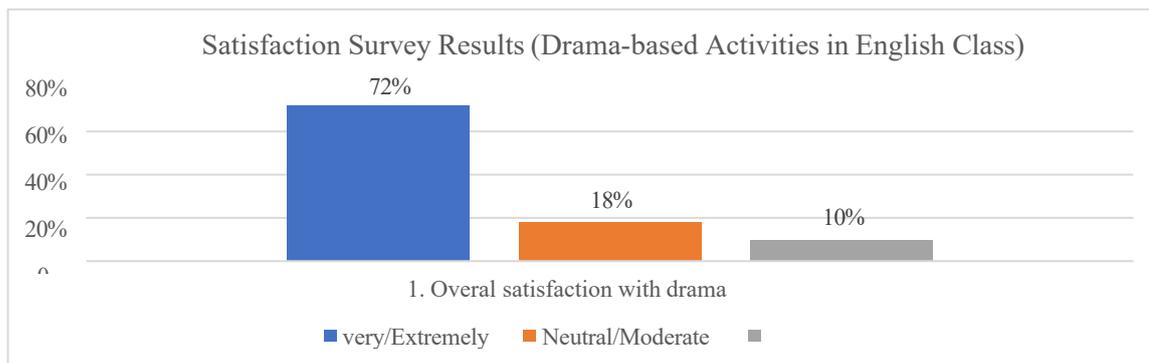
| Question | Very/Extremely Positive | Neutral/Moderate | Negative |
|---|-------------------------|------------------|----------|
| 1. Overall satisfaction with drama activities | 72% | 18% | 10% |
| 2. Attractiveness/fun of activities | 78% | 14% | 8% |
| 3. Help in class participation | 70% | 20% | 10% |
| 4. Perceived usefulness for learning English | 74% | 16% | 10% |
| 5. Desire for more drama activities | 76% | 12% | 12% |
| 6. Drama-based activities done (role-play, dialogues, improvisation, short plays) | 71.2% | 18.7% | 10.1% |
| 7. Are drama activities fun and engaging? | 79.5% | 14.4% | 6.1% |
| 8. Do they help you participate more actively in class? | 73.9% | 16.5% | 9.6% |
| 9. Are they useful for learning English? | 81.6% | 11.3% | 7.1% |
| 10. Would you like your teacher to use more drama activities? | 77.4% | 13.6% | 9.0% |

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The previous chart revealed a highly right-skewed distribution, with the vast majority of students scoring approximately 37, while only a few achieved scores between 8 and 20. This concentration of low scores indicated that most participants had minimal prior knowledge or understanding of the

evaluated content before instruction. The small number of students with moderate to high scores suggested isolated cases of prior familiarity or stronger foundational skills. Overall, the results reflected a generally weak baseline performance, was made the pretest a useful benchmark to measure future learning gains in subsequent assessments.

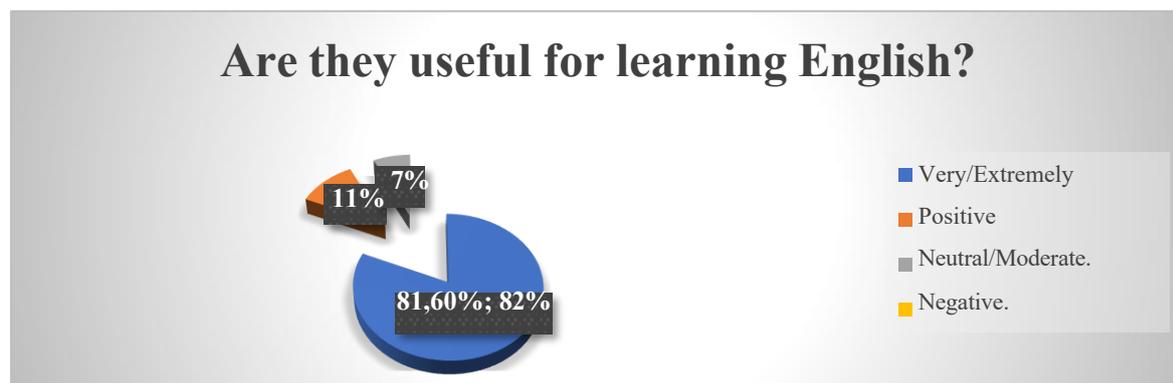
Table 2: Satisfaction Survey Results.



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Those results showed the positive activities based on Drama techniques from English were the highest satisfaction, where the students talked through these evidence answers, the majority of entertainment mentioned were satisfied with the activity, however, students were main in neutral position, and a lower percentage of students are negative. Furthermore, this graphic evidenced and considered that drama-based techniques were activities were used and helped in strategies applied in classes.

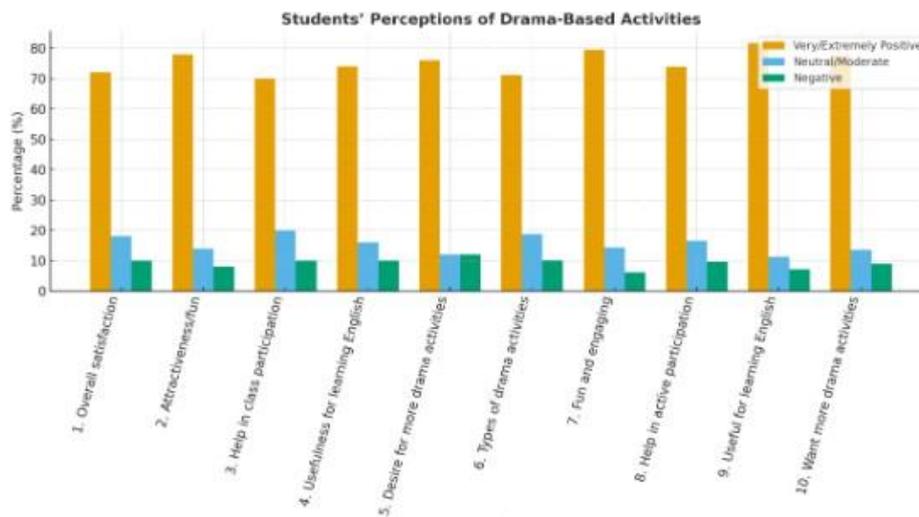
Table 3: Sastifaction Survey.



Most of the students mentioned that the drama - based technique was extremely positive for learning in English, it indicated the perception in positive from our methodology, which evidenced that concept. On the other hand, some students main in neutral perception and the lowest were estimated

in lowest result. It evidenced that, were valued as an meaningful pedagogical strategic, capable of enhancing motivation and developing communicative skill in English teaching-learning process.

Table 4: Students Perception of Drama. Based technique.

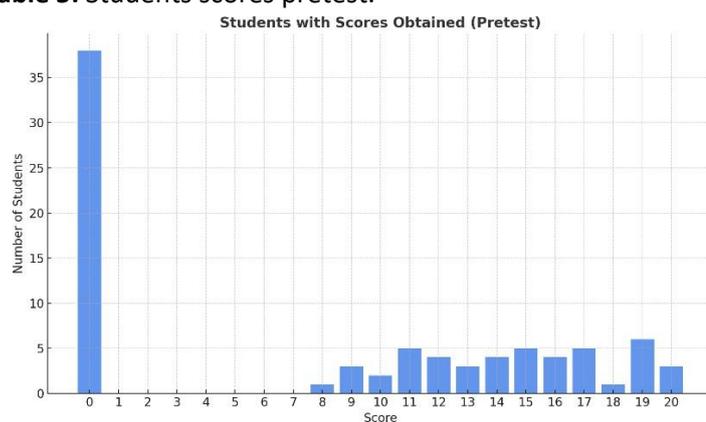


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The chart clearly illustrated that the “Very/Extremely Positive” responses dominate across all items (mostly above 70%), while negative perceptions remained below 12%, indicating that students generally enjoyed and valued drama-based learning in English classes.

Pre-test Results

Table 5: Students scores pretest.



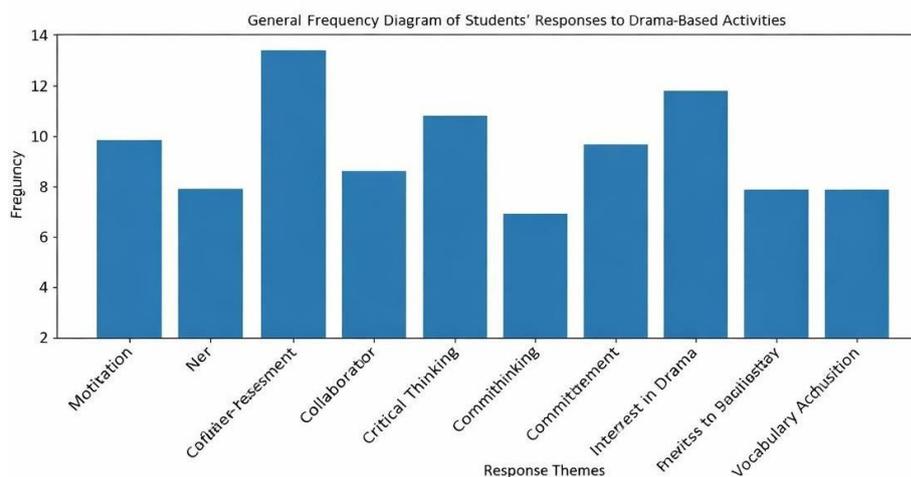
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Table 6: Post test.



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Post-test Results

The chart demonstrated positive learning outcomes, with the highest frequencies presented in confidence improvement, positive perceptions of drama-based learning, and vocabulary development. The majority of students have gained self-confidence and communicative competence after participating in drama-based activities. These results showed that drama techniques encouraged active participation and oral expression in English.

Lower frequencies were related to fear and nervousness, emphasizing that some students initially experienced anxiety when speaking or performing in front of their peers; these affective barriers were less prominent in the post-test results. This supported the idea that repeated exposure to drama-based activities helped students become more comfortable over time, reducing shyness and anxiety in speaking activities. Additionally, responses showed a noticeable preference for dramatization techniques and indicated a high level of satisfaction with their implementation. These findings verified the post-test as a meaningful indicator of learning gains following the instructional intervention.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results obtained, it is possible to interpret the findings in relation to previous studies on the use of drama-based techniques in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as well as to discuss their pedagogical implications and limitations.

First, the high percentages of Very/Extremely Positive responses (generally above 70% across all survey items) are consistent with prior research highlighting the positive impact of drama on students' motivation, active participation, and meaningful language learning. Studies by Maley and Duff (2005) and Kao and O'Neill (1998) emphasize that drama-based activities promote experiential learning by allowing students to use the language in authentic and communicative contexts. In this study, the strong perception of usefulness for learning English (81.6% in Question 9) supports this view and suggests that drama is not perceived merely as entertainment, but as an effective pedagogical strategy.

Regarding the pre-test results, the highly right-skewed distribution, with most students obtaining low scores, indicates a generally weak baseline level of prior knowledge. This finding aligns with previous research showing that many EFL learners struggle with vocabulary, oral fluency, and self-confidence before being exposed to communicative methodologies (Richards, 2006). In contrast, the post-test results reveal clear improvements in students' self-confidence, communicative competence, and attitudes toward learning English. These outcomes support findings by Piazzoli (2011), who argues that drama-based pedagogy helps reduce anxiety and enhances oral expression through repeated practice and collaborative performance.

From a pedagogical perspective, these results suggest that drama-based techniques can be systematically integrated into English classes as an effective strategy to promote motivation, participation, and communicative skill development. The reduction of fear and nervousness observed in the post-test supports affective theories such as Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, according to Serrano (2017), which states that low-anxiety and supportive learning environments facilitate language acquisition. Furthermore, the high percentage of students expressing a desire for more drama-based activities indicates that these methods contribute to a more dynamic, inclusive, and engaging classroom atmosphere.

However, the findings strongly support existing literature that recognizes drama-based learning as a valuable pedagogical approach in EFL contexts. Nevertheless, future research should involve larger samples, mixed research methods, and long-term evaluations to strengthen the validity of the results and to further explore the lasting impact of drama techniques on language learning.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study set out to examine the impact of drama-based techniques on the development of speaking skills among A2-level teenage learners of English as a Foreign Language. Based on the theoretical foundations, classroom implementation, and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, the findings clearly indicate that drama-oriented strategies constitute an effective, motivating, and pedagogically sound approach to enhancing oral communication in EFL contexts. The results confirm that techniques such as role-playing, improvisation, scripted dialogues, and process drama not only improve linguistic performance but also address the emotional and social barriers that often hinder adolescents' participation in speaking activities.

One of the most significant conclusions of this study is that drama-based techniques positively influence students' speaking fluency and confidence. Pre-test results revealed a generally weak baseline in oral skills, characterized by limited vocabulary use, low confidence, and hesitation when speaking in English. These findings reflect common challenges reported in EFL classrooms, where learners fear making mistakes or being judged by peers. However, the post-test results demonstrated notable improvement in students' ability to express themselves orally, showing greater spontaneity, clearer pronunciation, and increased willingness to participate. The contrast between pre- and post-test outcomes suggests that drama-based activities provide learners with repeated, meaningful opportunities to practice speaking in a supportive environment, thereby fostering steady progress in oral proficiency.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the motivational value of drama-based techniques in the EFL classroom. Survey results revealed overwhelmingly positive student perceptions, with most participants expressing enjoyment and satisfaction with drama-based activities.

Motivation is a crucial factor in adolescent learning, and the interactive, creative nature of drama appears to meet students' developmental needs more effectively than traditional, teacher-centered approaches. By incorporating movement, imagination, collaboration, and real-life contexts, drama transforms the classroom into an engaging learning space where students feel actively involved in the learning process rather than passive recipients of information.

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CONFLICTO DE INTERÉS:

Los autores declaran que no existen conflicto de interés posibles

FINANCIAMIENTO

No existió asistencia de financiamiento de parte de pares externos al presente artículo.

NOTA:

El artículo no es producto de una publicación anterior.

