HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

THE PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS ON THE BENEFIT OF DRAMA IN IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS IN LANGUAGE CLASS

ROTIMI JOSEPH AKINRADEWO

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Thesis for M.A. International Studies in Education

Supervisor: dr. Rannveig Björk Þorkelsdóttir

Co-supervisor: Jóna Guðrún Jónsdóttir

Faculty of Education and Diversity

University of Iceland School of Education

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Preface

The perception of students on language learning has been a fascinating topic because it might serve as a reflection for improving the teaching and learning of language, and speaking in particular. Developing fluency in a foreign language has long been considered to be one of the most challenging tasks in language learning. Many factors contribute to the difficulty including lack of speaking practice, ineffective teaching and learning methods, and the background of students. Therefore, drama activities are crucial in the development of students speaking skills.

I would like to express my gratitude to my family for their support throughout this journey. Also, I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis supervisor, co supervisor and other lecturers for their continuous encouragement throughout the thesis. May the lord continue to bless each and everyone of you.

This thesis was written solely by me, the undersigned. I have read and understand the University of Iceland Code of Ethics and have followed them to the best of my knowledge. I have correctly cited to all other works or previous work of my own, including, but not limited to, written works, figures, data or tables. I thank all who have worked with me and take full responsibility for any mistakes contained in this work.

Reykjavík, ____._____ 20__

Abstract

In the past few years there has been a need for a student centered approach in education. As a result, several studies have focused on drama as a tool to improve the learning process, and have showed that drama activities could have significant advantages for language learning. Besides, acquiring communication skills in class is problematic, often because of panic or anxiety. It has been asserted that drama techniques assist students to improve their skills and minimize their anxiety during their work. However, the perspective of the students on this technique has not been extensively discussed. Thus, the current paper is a pilot study that offers a voice to students who participate in speaking classes who use educational drama techniques. The research included a mixed approach of quantitative and qualitative data, specifically interviews and questionnaires. Nonetheless, the COVID 19 pandemic made the collection of data very challenging because the majority of students were not confortable meeting in person and direct observation was not possible. Despite the challenges, the results revealed that most students have a positive opinion on the use of drama, and there is potential for further research in the area.

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1.Introduction

In today`s world, there is a constant influx of new information, therefore teaching approaches cannot remain the same and education has been evolving and constantly changing shape in response to the demands of the modern age. Currently, a vast majority of educational settings face the pressure of shifting from a teacher centered approach, to a learner centered approach to ensure active engagement from students and make sure they can transfer the information from the classroom to the real world. For example, speaking fluently is widely regarded as one of the most important skills in language learning but is also considered to be the most challenging. Irrespective of its status, the teaching of speaking skills has been underestimated, and English as a Foreign Language and English as a Second Language teachers continue to teach speaking skills by making use of outdated techniques, with an emphasis on memorization of dialogues or drill repetition (Rao, 2019). Failure of teaching speaking skills can be easily observed because a vast majority of students find it difficult to express themselves verbally in English as a Foreign Language. Despite the years of English education in schools, students cannot express themselves, often as a result of shyness, lack of self-confidence, and fear and anxiety (Samantaray, 2014).

My interest in the subject of educational drama can be widely attributed to my schooling experiences in my home country, Nigeria. Throughout my years of education, most students in my class believed that speaking classes were unappealing, and there was a clear lack of interest in using modern student-centered approaches. Instead, the teachers were focused on teaching the required modules, regardless of what the students needed or wanted. A few years later, after I left Nigeria, I had the opportunity to study in a programe called International Studies in Education at the University of Iceland. Thus, I started experiencing an unfamiliar perspective: learning was student centered and students were no longer passive participants, but actively involved in the learning process. Instead, students were encouraged to communicate and voice their opinions, which made the lesson remarkably interesting and motivating. Besides, during one of the pedagogy lessons, I was introduced to the use of drama as an effective technique in teaching and learning foreign languages, and my interest in the subject has increased. For this reason, I decided to focus my attention on drama and conduct research that would offer me a more in-depth perspective on educational drama. I was particularly interested in understanding the perception of other students from University of Iceland, who had the opportunity to take similar courses, by offering them a chance to express their opinions on the possible advantages or disadvantages of this technique. As a result, I contacted by email a professor in The English and Drama department, School of Education, in the University of Iceland. During the Fall 2021, 12 master students had the opportunity to participate in a 10-credit course about using drama in language teaching and learning. The

participants are graduate students in Foreign Language Education but do not have any connections to the researcher. After preliminary research on the subject, I realized there is not enough understanding of these students opinions on educational drama, and this is how a research question was formulated: *What is the perception of the graduate students in Foreign Language Education, at the University of Iceland, regarding the use of drama in improving speaking skill?* Before continuing with the research, it is important to emphasize that in this context, the term perception will be defined as an assumption acquired by the five senses of a person then evaluated, viewed, and assessed such that the person obtains a meaning (Zahara, 2018).

2. Quick Overview of Speaking

At this point, the researcher would like to emphasise that the nucleus of this thesis is to discuss the ability of improving speaking skills through drama education. Thus, before reporting on the finding of the study, it is important to understand how speaking is defined in the context of this thesis and what it entails for students to develop this vital skill.

According to Zahara (2018), speaking is a productive skill which is the same as writing because it entails using body parts to convey meaning to others. In addition, it can be inferred that speaking entails the expression of opinions, concepts, or ideas to other people through words or sounds to pass information and entertain. It involves verbal and non-verbal elements, and it is a process that is interactive, which enables an individual to switch between the role of being a speaker and listener (Yuldasheva, 2022). From the above meaning, it can be deduced that speaking is a process of interaction between both the speaker and listener, and essential to communication among humans (Murillo, 2022).

Opportunities for speaking

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). Mercer, Warwick, & Ahmed (2017) emphasize the need for students to effectively use conversation for democratic and social engagement also to activities related to work.

It is important to highlight Vygotsky's impact on thinking and speech while discussing speaking opportunities. Thinking and speaking are connected and he explained how thought to word, and word to thinking is transitioned. In addition, he claims that there is a connection between speaking as a social activity and thinking as an active process, as both are under the language umbrella (McDonnell, 2020). Thus, Vygotsky considered that speech does not represent the final aftermath of thinking, but rather a complex process in the cognitive process itself (Mahn, 2012). An interesting aspect of this theory is the idea that Vygotsky does not limit the notion of active process to thinking (McDonnell, 2020). Instead, he goes further and claims that speaking is an integral part of physical activities because it is involved in motor planning, behaviour control and actions in general (Newman &Holzman, 2013). The more difficult the task, the more important the role of speaking (McDonnell, 2020). By correlation, as drama involves body language and movement, it can be argued that drama and speaking are interconnected and speaking skills can be improved through drama activities (Manabe, Hwang & Chuang, 2021).

Speaking Difficulties

Although speaking seems to be perceived as an intuitive skill that does not need complex teaching strategies, in reality English as a foreign language (EFL) learners face a multitude of difficulties when trying to speak. A quick research in the academic literature reveals several studies discussing speaking difficulties, and some of them are listed below. Their applicability will be examined at the end of the study, when discussing possible correlations between the findings of this study and the existing literature.

Shyness

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). Therefore, most of the learners choose to reduce the time they use in speaking and do not interact (Liu & Huang, 2011).

Having nothing to say:

When teachers ask students questions in a foreign language class, the students often remain silent. When it comes to involvement, one of the challenges is that the learners do not have anything to say (Zineb, 2021). Moreover, the students may say nothing because the teachers chose uninteresting or unfamiliar topics for them to discuss (Rintaningrum, 2018). As a result, teachers should select appropriate topics for students to discuss (Zineb, 2021).

The use of mother tongue

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). In addition, the correct usage of the target language would be influenced by the mother tongue. If students deliberately or unknowingly transfer their mother tongue cultural rules to the foreign language, this can be a barrier to their learning (Rintaningrum, 2018). Therefore, many students find it difficult to identify the exact words in the target language, and they resort to borrowing words from their mother tongue (Ansar, 2017).

Poor proficiency of English Language

As a result of the low English proficiency, the students face numerous challenges when speaking English. They find both the pronunciation and the vocabulary difficult (Zineb, 2021), but the only way to form a speech is through vocabulary (Kochkorbaevna, 2022). To put it in another way, students are unable to demonstrate their original intent without vocabulary and this is as a result of students lacking experience in speaking with native speakers, or their teacher not pronouncing the sound appropriately.

As previously mentioned, it is vital to offfer students as many speaking opportunities as much as possible, in order for them to develop speech and improve their language skills. Apart from the benefits that educational drama brings, by using drama teachniques, teachers might have the opportunity to assess the speaking skills of the students, and recognize the areas that pose difficulties and need improvment. What differs from a regular speaking class is the capacity to get all or the majority of students involved at the same time, which might make the assessment process more productive and efective. According to Brown (2004) there are different criteria that are used for assessing speaking (microskills and mscroskills). In a broader sense, these criteria represent the skills that students need to achieve when developing speaking and they are important to acknowledge for a better understanding of this study. According to Brown (2004), when it comes to the micro skills, students are assessed based on their capacity to make language in smaller chunks, based on the following criteria:

a. production of phonemes and allophones

b. Production of intonation, stress, and rhythm

c. Generating short forms of phrases

d. Using a large enough vocabulary to communicate meaning

e. Ability to communicate clearly

f. Using fillers and pauses strategically

h. Grammatical structures

I. Pauses, phrases and sentences are natural speech components

j. The use of several grammatical forms to convey meaning (Brown, 2004)

In regard to macro skills, students are able to construct larger aspects of language:

a. communicative function

b. Make use of sociolinguistic factors like style and register

c. Making suitable knowledge connections

d. The use of body language to convey spoken language

e. The use of speaking strategy to help the listener better grasp what you are saying (Brown, 2004).

For the assessment process to be accurate, teachers need to be involved and constantly connected to the needs of the students (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). By using different assessment methods, teachers might be able to quickly identify the speaking difficulties of their students and act on them. Thus, the last concept that the researcher would like to draw attention to, are the ways that drama can be used by teachers to assess speaking:

- Oral interviews: They represent the classic method of assessing speaking skills. Most times, oral interviews take the form of a conversation that allows the student to interact with an interlocutor. Thus, teachers can compare the speaking abilities by using a range of language tasks and comparing the performance of the student against several pre defined criteria. The interview can be structured or semi-structured. Although they are widely used, oral interviews have got some criticisim because it can involve a subjective component. Besides, the capacity of the student to control their emotions and level of stress, could have an impact on the results (Ahmadi & Sadeghi, 2016).
- Monologues that are live: When students give a speech in front of their peers. Spontaneous conversation is facilitated, which might lead to interactions.
- Monologues that are recorded: Assessment like this are more convenient and less stressful because the students make recording of themselves for the teacher to evaluate afterwards
- Role Play: This type of assessment allows students to portray a character in various situations.
- Collaboration. A collaborative task and discussion are given to students, they work together to express their ideas and opinions regarding a given topic, their interactive abilities are easily assessed (Utama, 2020).

3. History of drama in education

Looking at the twentieth century in regards to the attitude of education, there are two opposing perspectives on education that emerged: teacher centered, and learner centered and they have been in persistent confrontation. Bolton (1998) describes these two opposing educational approaches, stating that education is viewed as a means of transmitting knowledge in the teacher centered approach and children's individual interests, abilities and cognitive development are considered in the learner centered approach. According to Slade (1954), the use of drama and improvisation began as a reaction to the limited vision of the teachers, and their lack of creative methods, in which children are acting out in a formal way instead of developing ideas on their own.

Slade‘s statements were part of a new movement in UK that aimed to introduce children‘s theatre in schools. Such movements were starting to spread more and more across Europe. Thus, great pioneers of history drama education, such as Isabel Burger and Geraldine Siks, established a path for the development of educational drama, which was subsequently reproduced in educational settings from other countries. For instance, Elsa Olenius of Sweden modelled her teaching after the creative making play of Isabel Burger and managed to establish Vår Teater in 1942 in Stockholm, which was the first municipal library in Europe to support children`s theatre (Bolton, 2007).

According to Kao & O'Neill (1998) drama in education was derived from the play of children and is justified by the concept of child centered progressive education. Drama`s educational potential was initially recognized before the second world war in the UK. Prior to that time, the training teachers institutions were not offering the possibility to study educational drama. In local schools in 1924 dramatics was offered elective with support from Northwestern University’s School of Speech staff. However, creative dramatics was established later as a separate topic. The fact that drama was now taught rather than used, offered the students the freedom to create their own plays with all acting abilities (Bolton, 2007).

An interesting perspective is the one of Fleming (2011), who outlined the evolution of drama teaching since the mid twentieth century. He created a model that depicts the teaching of Drama History. The experience participants go through in the class is defined by the interaction between the actors and audience (Thorkelsdóttir, 2016). In the model below, the focus of drama 1 was on the personal growth of an individual through self-expression and creativity, whereas in Theatre 1, the focus was on the product. Drama 2 in the model implies that all the drama in the classroom can be beneficial from the ideas provided by the drama in form of art. In Theatre 2, the practitioners of theatre are linked with rehearsing and acting.

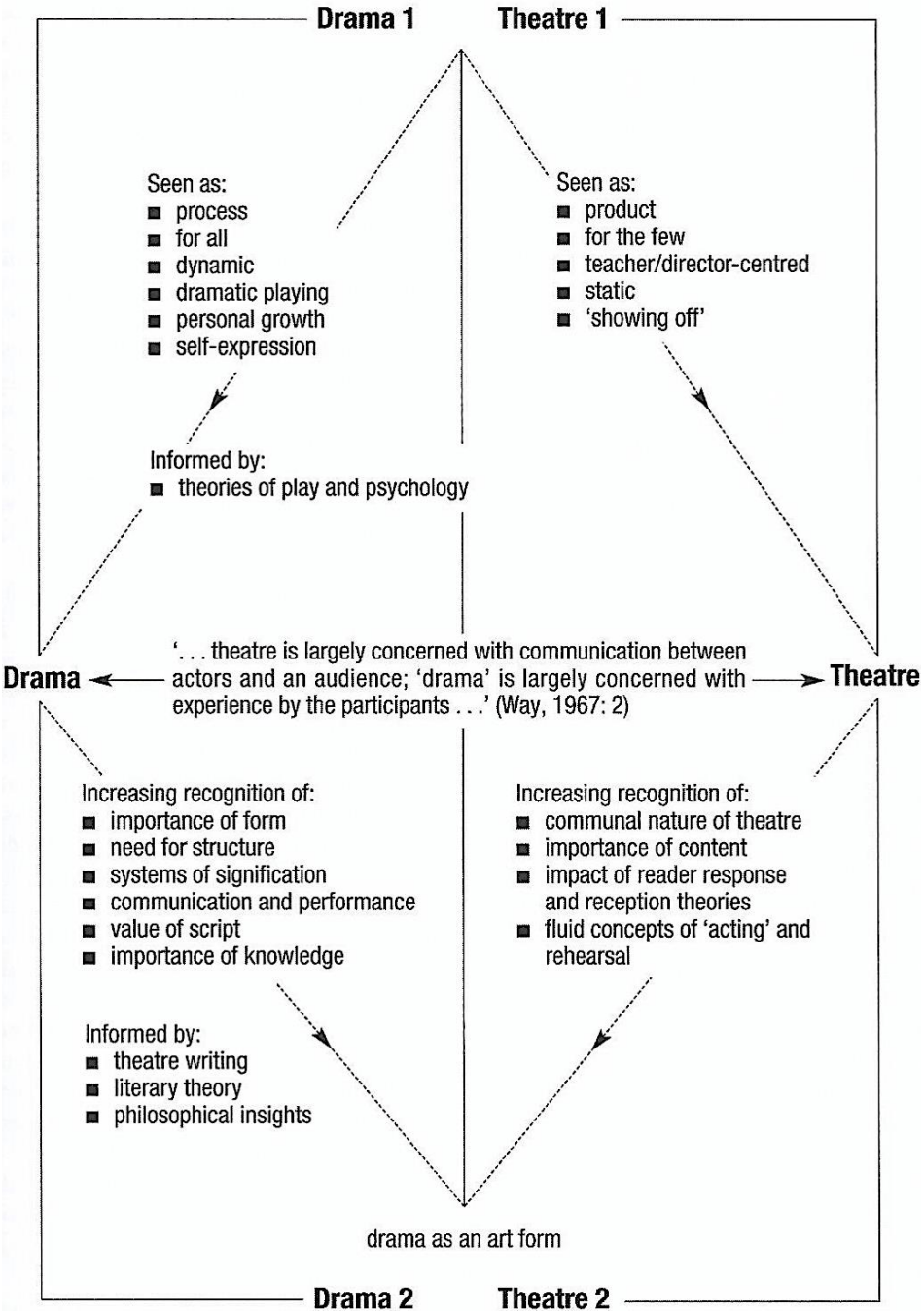

Figure 1: Model of the history of drama teaching according to Fleming

The model portrays a certain incompatibility between Drama 2 and Theatre 2. While Theater 2 focuses on drama as an art form, most times Drama 2 is introduced to the curriculum through activities and games whose primary focus is knowledge acquisition (Thorkelsdóttir, 2016). Although the techniques and activities employed by Drama 2 were all originally from Theatre 2, the primary goal is not to practice or prepare a play for an audience, but provide a learning experience (Thorkelsdóttir, 2016).

The concept of Fleming is similar to the one of O ´Toole (2009), characterizing drama as a unified Paradigm in three dimensions which are making, presenting, and responding. Playwright, designer and director are under *making,* actor, crew and technician are under *presenting* and audience are under the *respondent* (Thorkelsdóttir, 2016).

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4. Literature review

Drama and speaking skills

It has been widely recognized that knowledge cannot be passively put into students` head, it is rather produced by individual learning (Malik, 2018). Thus, in the recent years, educational drama as a teaching method has been increasing in popularity because several studies have concluded that it significantly encourages active and reflective cognitive processes and enhances the development of communication skills (Kalidas, 2014).

By making use of drama, students are able to identify the connections to chains of meaning, and they are stimulated to think and develop new concepts and inquire. According to Galiya Saraç (2007), the use of creative drama in English language class develops children's speaking abilities and enables them to use the target language in a communicative manner. Moreover, drama has an additional component that is not only relevant in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), but also essential: it develops spoken and written skills while also facilitating visual, tactile, and experiential learning approaches (Park, 2015).

Drama in an English as a foreign language (EFL) class allows students to use their imaginations while they improve their speaking proficiency (Hind, 2021). For instance, by using stories and tales, drama can provide a useful foundation for expanding the vocabulary of students (Thorkelsdóttir & Ragnarsdóttir, 2019). Students are also able to change abstract written words into real images and generate meaning from the text through collective and individual experience, making the literary world accessible through drama (Chang, 2012). From a practical perspective, it would be a chance not only for students to improve their speaking skill but also for English teachers to improve the quality of the process when teaching in a language speaking class using drama (Zahara, 2018).

Drama in language acquisition - psychological impact

It is important to understand that apart from the teaching of grammar and vocabulary, language learning has an emotional component because it is the expression of a culture (Celik, 2019). Thus, drama as method can help students overcome their fear of public speaking and enhance their speaking skills in class and in the real world (Demircioğlu, 2010). An authentic and non threatening atmosphere is created with the use of drama method in which second language acquistion can take place (Bora, 2021). Good drama setting, will allow students to desire communication and will overcome the fear they have for linguistic deficiency, allowing them to make the most of language skills they own while simultaneously learning from various vocabularies from their peers (Rao,2019). Thus, the use of drama in the classroom allows students to create a fictional world, an autonomous learning environment, which spikes the

need for verbal contribution in order for the drama to continue (Thorkelsdóttir & Ragnarsdóttir, 2019). In addition, children are given the chance to feel empathy for the character which might help them expand their vocabulary when the source used for the drama are stories and tales. Children learn to be accountable for their actions, give solutions to problems, and have a better understanding of the subject. In order to accomplish it, they must utilize a range of words so that their vocabulary can increase (Thorkelsdóttir & Ragnarsdóttir, 2019).

In education, drama has long emphasised spontaneity, creativity, and loquacity. Hence, it has been observed that the level of participation increased when the participants were involved in a more spontaneous and improvised activity than when they performed on stage (Zineb, 2021). The explanation lies in the fact that drama allows and encourages self-expression, which is a crucial aspect because students are recognized as individuals, and this is why it is acknowledged as one of the learner-centered approaches (Zineb, 2021).

In a drama class students have the opportunity to put themselves in the position of others and experiment with different expression forms, behaviours and solutions in a secure school environment. Drama encourages students to express, form and present their ideas and feelings. In addition, drama constantly tests cooperation, relationships, creativity, language, expression, critical thinking, physical exertion and voice projection.

Drama and societal change

Another interesting perspective in the literature is the success of educational drama in increasing students` knowledge in the domain of social justice in general. Thus, Berry (2002), who is a professor of Education in Cultural studies, states that drama is a powerful tool for questioning and reshaping our world because it serves as a medium for greater comprehension and cultural acceptance through simulation, conversation, and discovery. Drama can assist students to reflect about stereotypes in ways traditional classroom approaches cannot because of its kinesthetic element (Sandahl, 2018). For example, drama involves a great deal of physical movement, which makes it an excellent tool for a work program that incorporates body mind bonding, regardless of the difficulties in learning foreign language (Celik, 2019). It comprises the genres of interactive, representation and practical drama, and used in a variety of learning environments.

As a preliminary conclusion, drama education can improve speaking and increase vocabulary of students, while also promoting societal change, educational creativity and cultural engagement (Thorkelsdóttir, 2016). Besides, it can have a positive impact on the

psychological aspect of learning a language, which is vital because it encourages students to participate, and indirectly practice their speaking skills. The use of drama in English as a foreign language has inevitably claimed its place in this field because of new research on language teaching have emerged. The activities of drama bring the outside world into the classroom by providing the students with a communication setting that is only limited to their creativity. To put this in another way, drama creates scenarios and venues for students to speak spontaneously outside of the classroom and because of this feature drama studies are useful and a practical tool in speaking class (Mart, 2019).

4.1 The Icelandic curriculum and drama

The overarching aim of the study is to understand how a part of the Icelandic society perceives and reacts to educational drama. For this reason, due to the location of the study and the nature of the research, it is important to understand the educational context that shaped the Icelandic society in the past few years. This endeavour will offer a more explicit picture of the status of drama in the Icelandic learning system, and subsequently elucidate the findings of the study, which will be discussed in a future chapter.

The introduction of the Icelandic curriculum was made in 2011, and in 2013 , a new curriculum and drama as a subject was introduced. In 2014 the English version of the curriculum for compulsory school was published which was based on Compulsory School Act No. 91/2008. (Thorkelsdóttir, 2016). It was designed to guide and achieve objectives, and goals in school activities, while including a comprehensive knowledge of educational policy (Thorkelsdóttir, 2016). The curriculum is built around six fundamental pillars of education which are health and wellbeing, literacy, sustainability, democracy and human rights, equality and creativity.

In a compulsory schools they all serve as the main guidelines for education (The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014). In the curriculum these six fundamental pillars can be found In the chapters for internal evaluation of schools, subject area, abilities of students and assessment, (Thorkelsdóttir, 2016). Furthermore, due to these pillars, children are intended to develop mentally and physically because of the social, ecological literacy , culture and environment. It is intended to stimulate the will power to influence active change, develop, and maintain the society because it is a vision of the future (The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 2014). The six pillars are integral aspects of the activities in schools, which are seen through school working techniques and communication within the school environment. The fundamental pillars have to be reflected in the teaching material, play and study content.

Creativity, which is one of the pillars of Icelandic education, is greatly emphasised by the curriculum because it can provide new perception, exploration and inquisitiveness of new concepts (The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 2014, p.22). Creativity is no longer tied to arts alone but to other fields of study, (The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 2014, p.22), because it fosters reflection, which leads to improvements in personal development and educational work. The pedagogical methods used in arts and sciences show how creativity is concerned with uniqueness (The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 2014, p.22). Critical thinking, as mentioned before, has a connection with creativity. However, the curriculum not only emphasizes new methods of thinking in schools, but also focuses more on creativity because when students develop critical thinking skills, they reflect and create, and become more competent in the learning process (Thorkelsdóttir, 2016).

The Icelandic curriculum defines drama as the training given to students in an art form to better understand themselves, the nature of human and the society at large. According to the Icelandic curriculum, drama education should not only teach the art form methods, but more dramatic literacy, which implies that students are enhanced and facilitated with the understanding of themselves, human nature and essential aspects of the society. This is all done through play and creation. (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014, p. 153)

Innovation is also emphasized in the curriculum because it is a crucial aspect of competency. The important qualities needed by citizens are innovation and creativity. Students can make use of innovation to identify challenges and come up with possible solutions (Jónsdóttir & Macdonald, 2013). Innovation enhances action competence in students, while drama can also support it (Thorkelsdóttir, 2016).

4.2. Theories that justify and support the use of drama technique in language teaching

Experiential learning theory (a lifelong experience on learning)

This theory suggests that the significant impact on performance of the learning process of the students is greatly influenced by the social, physical, mental experience in relation to the material studied and the situation in which the entire process is carried out (Gabriella,2014). The experiential learning was first carried out by John Dewey and then developed by David Kolb. Kolb used a holistic and integrational method by comparing the study of Dewey, Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget. According to the theories of Lewin, action model research and the laboratory training shows that learning or change can only be effective through an integrated method that starts with „here and now" experience, in addition with data gathering and

observation of the experience. The gathered data are then examined, and the results are provided back to the actors so that they can use it in changing their behavior when choosing a new experience (Gabriella,2014). Kolb finds two points from Lewin's model of action research to be noteworthy by emphasizing on the „here and now“ as concrete experiences. The two concepts are the focal point for learning to take place and for appropriate feedback to be provided. According to Kolby (2014), Dewey`s model was greatly similar to Lewin's model on how learning transforms feeling, impulses into a high level of purposeful way of doing things. Piaget (1936) model, experience, idea, and action constitute the fundamental components for the development of how adults think (Gabriella, 2014). In addition, from childhood to maturity, development changes from a concrete perceptual view to abstract constructivism of viewing the world and from active viewing of oneself to a reflective internalization of thinking (Gabriella, 2014).

These three theories, according to Kolb, create a great and distinctive perspective on learning and human growth. Kolb believes that the given perspective can be categorized in this viewpoint, because learning is a continuous process which is firmly rooted in experience. Hence, it necessitates the negotiations between modes that are dialectic contrary method of adapting to the world. At the same time, it is a systematic approach of adapting to the world because it incorporates interactions between individuals and the environment (Gabriella, 2014). Therefore, according to Kolb‘s theories, learning can be defined asa process of establishing knowledge through experience (Gabriella,2014).

When drama techniques are used in language teaching, there is a possibility that the students can experience an experiential learning process because the students start with a concrete experience which simply is an active involvement (Morris, 2020). According to the theory, learning cannot only take place through reading and watching. In the reflective observation which is the next stage, the students discuss the task and review what has been experienced and this stage is an excellent opportunity for the students to express and verbalize their opinion as they communicate with other students in the group. At the third stage, which is abstract conceptualization, the students reflect on what they have done by comparing with what they already know such as from textbooks or other colleagues' ideas. The final stage, which is active experimentation, the students try their best to practice what they learned (Gabriella,2014). The four stages of experiential learning cycle, as explained by Kolb‘s theory are represented in the image below.

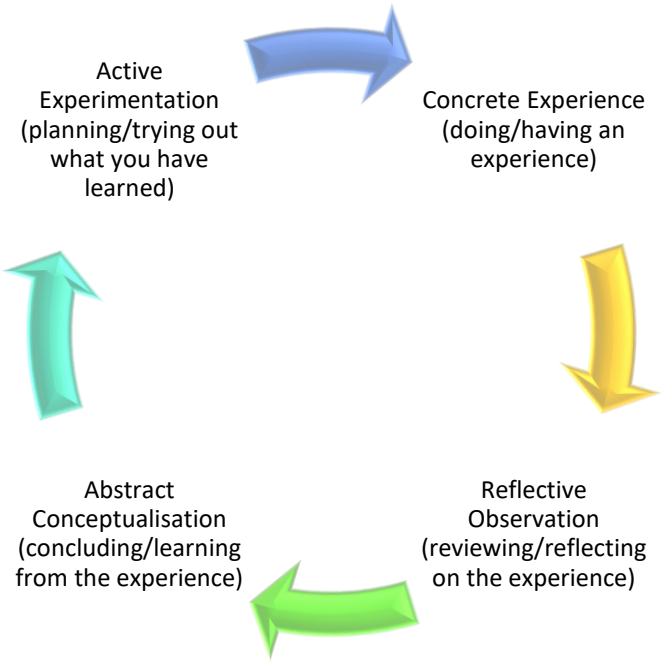


Figure 2:Kolb`s experiential learning cycle (McLeod, 2010)

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi came with another theory that focuses on the whole quality of an experience. Thus, he spent a long time studying peope such as surgeons or athletes, people who were practicing their passion, and he found out that the sense of fulfilment and pleasure did not come when relaxing or being stress free. Instead, he discovered there is a state of flow, a zone of complete focus and immersion, which he compared to a river flow that carries the person away (Frank, 2012). By transfering this theory into learning and language acquisition, students cannot usually reach the state flow when they are passivly watching or listening to the teacher (Frank, 2012). Instead, their skills and capacities need to be challenged (Shernoff, D.J., Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider & Shernoff, E, S., 2014). Thus, artistic activities such as drama are more likely to bring the students into a state where they are completely engaged and interested in the activity (Frank, 2012). This could possibly provide relevant information for the purpose and the research question of this thesis.

4.3 Dramatic conventions

In the mainstream theater, dramatic conventions represent a set of techniques that signify to the audience watching a theatrical performance, about the nature of the act (Burn, 2011). When transfered to the classroom, these conventions could represent the pillars of educational drama because it provides both teachers and students with the tools and context necessary to engage with this type of performative art (Toivanen, Komulainen & Ruismäki, 2011) Besides, dramatic conventions offer structure and can help students make meaning of

what they are experiencing and learning (Brennan & Pearce, 2009). They can range in complexity from basic brief exercises to more complex ones, such as process drama (Ackroyd, 2006), which will be discussed later in the paper. Thus, before proceeding, it is important to understand some of the existing codes and conventions, and how they have been integrated in the educational context.

Simulation

Educational simulation is a pedagogical method based on replicating a real event or situation (Beaubien and Baker, 2004) by making use of "educational tool or device with which the learner physically interacts to mimic real life" (Cook et al., 2013, p. 876). Simulation is all about participating in a highly authentic learning experience that precisely mirrors an actual scenario (Clapper, 2010). In educational drama, these real-world situations can be recreated with models,dolls or by role playing, bringing the experience to life by actors. While it is becoming more common and used in many other professions -such as nursing or engineering education- to improve comprehension and skill development, the general community of education is yet to completely embrace this crucial learning technique (Clapper, 2010). The benefits of simulation include the capacity to assist learners, gain deeper understanding of difficult tasks, also fostering critical thinking and cultural skills needed in the twenty-first century professions. Simulation achieves this by integrating active learning, feelings, and reflection, all of which are essential for long-term comprehension (Clapper, 2010).

Role Play

Role play is the most common method that many teachers are familiar with, making it the most accepted of the drama conventions (FKisanya, 2021). However, research shows that teachers' perspectives on role play differ. During role play activities, the teacher assigns parts to students and having them read the conversation aloud while the teacher corrects pronunciation mistakes. Although this is the most popular "role play", dramatic play, story dramatization, interviews, debates, socio drama are all types of roleplays (Neupane, 2019). Role play varies from beginners to advanced in a language class, for example, for beginners, students working in pairs may be requested to invite one another to an event at a higher level and at this level one student strongly persuades the other student to attend an event but opposed by the other, making the invitation more challenging, at this level the students are also given images to work with in groups, each students plays the roles assigned to them in the images. They decide what the person is like in the picture within a few minutes and act on what is in the picture, what was said and the behavior of the person in the picture. Generally speaking, students show more interest towards role play because it includes the application

of knowledge to action in order to solve issues (Seyedi, 2020).Besides, O`Sullivan (2018) claims that role play is a way of facilitating engagement and deep learning from early childhood through adult education. However, for role play to be effective, the teacher and the students must have the right to express themselves. Teachers frequently believe that they must spend a lot of time preparing because the students must be given explicit guidance on how to act out the role play (FKisanya, 2021). Nonetheless, teachers should not get too involved in the presentation when the topic is introduced, but they should rather explain how the activity will be performed or done. As a result, students can fully be engaged and present (González-González, 2012). Another criticism has been that role play activities can be too emotionally exhausting because they are carried out in front of other students but contrary to popular opinion, role play does not always imply that activities must be completed in front of other students (Gaudart,1990).

Language games

Games vary from structured language practice such as utilizing a set of cards, answering phone calls, or introducing themselves to each other to less activities that are structured on improvisation (Ortiz Cazorla, 2021). For example, circle of Fun is used as a warmup drama in the class. The students are divided into six or eight in groups, in a circle sitting down, holding hands, and straightening their legs in front. They get to their feet without bending their knees or letting go of each other's hands. How they accomplish this task is left to them. In general, language games typically revolve around observation, interpretation, engagement either by group or individual and most games are centered on warm up techniques or relaxation used in drama training (Çeliktürk, 2019).

Improvisation

As a drama technique, improvisation can be crucial in a language class, because it offers a level of uncertainty, in the sense that nothing is decided beforehand, and therefore it requires imagination on the parts of the students (Zondag, 2021). In educational procedures, improvisation can convey creative and interactive abilities both to instructors and learners (Toivanen, Komulainen, & Ruismäki,2011). Improvisation does not need any rehearsals or scripting but rather learner‘s spontaneity, allowing the improvement of communication skills and self-confidence. Students are able to express themselves to the fullest and create their own personalities (Trivedi, 2013). In addition, the majority of active hours are spent in the school by students, therefore it is crucial that they do not miss out on the chance to engage in spontaneous and imaginative play, alone and with other students (Toivanen, Komulainen, & Ruismäki,2011)

The use of puppet in acting

The use of puppets typically makes students feel less self-conscious (Yoon, 2018). As a result, shy students may become more confident. The activity is concentrated to the movements of the hands and the voice when acting with puppets. All that is required of the puppeteers is for them to speak the text at the right time during the movement of the puppet in respect to the puppets of others. Puppets are very useful for children that are younger but can also be utilized for older ones encouraged to develop or prepare a play to be performed for the younger ones (Bernier & O'Hare, 2005).

Story telling

Teachers can make use of mime or actions to express meaning before they begin storytelling. They can create suspense by using their voice for multiple characters, they can also pause to ask questions to motivate the students to demonstrate their comprehension or say what will take place next (Yoon, 2018). Teachers should make sure that all the students can see and hear them when telling a story. If a picture book is used, they should put up and exhibit slowly each illustration around the classroom. Maintaining constant eye contact with the students as he/she tells the story is an excellent approach to assist the students stay attentive and engaged (Yoon, 2018).

Tongue Twisters

Tongue twisters are a very entertaining way to introduce drama in the classroom because they can make the atmosphere more relaxed and fun (Sitoresmi, 2016). Besides, they are often used by real actors as a warm up exercise and as a way of improving pronounciation. In the beginning, they contain shorter and easier phrases which became progresivly longer and more difficult (Sitoresmi, 2016).

Monologues

A dramatic monologue represents a form of speech in which the character talks in an uninterrupted flow, either with or without audience. The role of the monologue is to reveal something about the character or about a situation, by offering a single vivid narration scene (Welsh, 2017). When introduced to the classroom, initially students can be asked to memorize certain parts of famous monologues (Heble, 2006), such as Shakespear. However, as students understand what a monologue entails, eventually students can be instructed to create their own monologues by using a draft as a support (Heble, 2006). Reagrdles of the approache,

monologues have the potential of improving vocabulary and speech and can be easily integrated in the classroom (Ainy, 2008).

The continuum of drama practice

Hitherto, the previous subchapters have discussed dramatic conventions and their role in the classroom. Besides, it has offered a short introduction about the status of drama education, and its importance in the academic literature. To offer more context, Kao & O'Neill (1998), has developed a continuum of drama practice on which he has arranged different dramatic conventions based on the teaching and type of learning experience they provide. Thus, several drama methods applied in a variety of foreign language classes will be shown in the figure below:

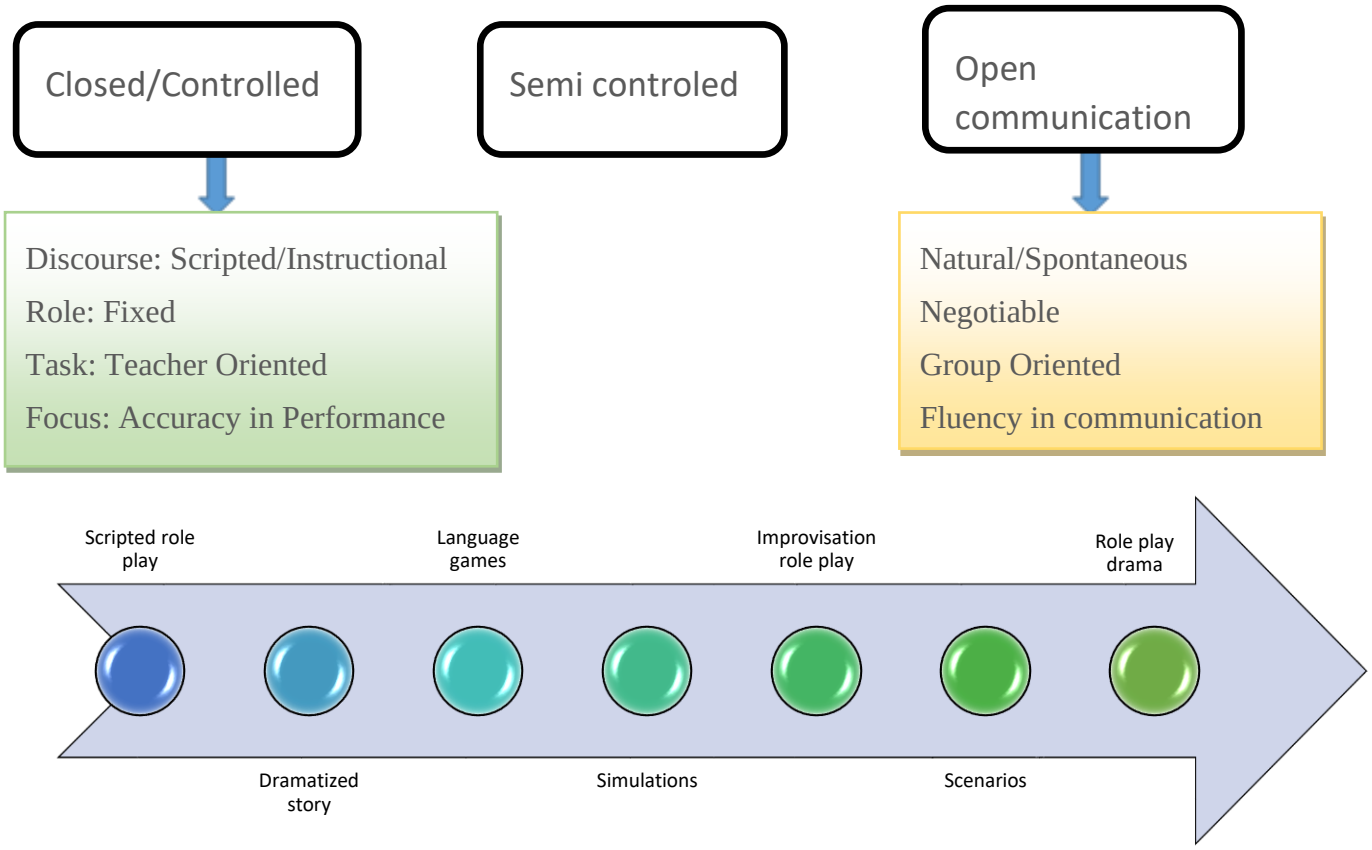


Figure 3: continuum of drama practice or approach (Kao&O`Neill, 1998)

By making a brief analysis, we notice that Kao & O'Neill (1998) has arranged the dramatic conventions on the continum, ranging from scripted and controlled to spontaneous activities that are more focused on developing fluency, than the accuracy of the performance. Moreover, while the closed activities are more teacher oriented, the open activities are group oriented. However, many teachers teaching languages choose the most regulated and closed drama activities, like language games, role play that are rehearsed and short written scripts, for example. The reason might be that they are more confortable with types of exercises that are standardized and easily coordinated. Language games are activities that are based on competitions, and language tasks are executed by participants, they must rehearse a phrase structure or predetermined structure (Eskelinen, 2017). In the scripted or rehearsed role playing as a casual performance that takes place without an audience, learners can acquire desirable linguistic forms after repetition (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). There is a need for special attention to the accuracy of the pattern used.

The issue with these activities is that they bear little similarity to real life interaction of language. Furthermore, this issue is particularly prevalent in brief performances of drama that do not require learners to engage in the type of communication challenge that takes place in real life (Eskelinen, 2017). Moreover, dramatic exercises that are scripted are more constrained than simulations and simple role plays (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). The participants in these activities can perform in roles that are predetermined with specific attitudes and beliefs (Eskelinen, 2017). Furthermore, something unforeseen may occur in the circumstances, but aspects like these are incorporated in simulations, role plays and social scenarios. The reason for these scenarios is to practice certain terminology, structures, or the reinforcement of the prior knowledge of students. In this category, the exercises are mainly on accuracy, transfer of information and the familiarity of social situations that are simple. Nevertheless, because they are activities that are structured, they are unlikely to involve the type of verbal engagement or interaction that takes place in the real world (Kao & O'Neill, 1998).

On Semi controlled drama approaches, improvised role play and scenarios are more creative drama approaches. Students are provided with a situation to communicate with one another with a high level of authenticity because authentic communication or interaction is supported by the social and linguistic environment. In its structure, the scenario is comparable to that of process drama, and it emphasizes authenticity and suspense. It is a meaningful event with real challenges that students are expected to overcome by developing dialogues of their own and decision making (Eskelinen, 2017).

4.5. Process drama

As previously shown, drama can be introduced in the classroom in different forms. However, compared to what was previously discussed, there are certain approaches that are more complex than short improvisation exercises or role play. Thus, in 1990, process drama was introduced as a teaching method that entails a colaboration between teacher and students, with a primary focus on exploration and reflection (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). By using problem resolution, process drama encourages the use of language in authentic situations and aims to change characters. The outcome is not the dramatic representation itself but the whole experience and what students can take out from it through discussions (Kao & O'Neill, 1998).

Process drama can be describe as a method of engaging or participating in education for self-direction (O'Sullivan & Karavoltsou, 2011) .In addition, Dorothy Heathcote emphasized that this teaching method as an entire class experience, allows the exploration of topics through spontaneity, integrating individual and group work, in which various scenarios are offered through drama conventions.

On the open communication approaches on the continuum represented above, process drama is regarded to be one of the most open when it comes to communication or interaction (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). In addition, Kao & O'Neill (1998) also claim that process drama focuses on the creation of discovery of a larger environment and the goals are to increase students` insight and assist their understanding about themselves and the real world around them. It is more complex than scenario drama in nature and in form it is very immediate and adaptable. In real life setting the target language is employed focusing on presenting and solving problems. The teachers are the "co-creators". Process drama major goals in an English as a foreign language (EFL) are for the students to improve their speaking skills and confidence, establishing communication that is authentic and foster new relationships in the classroom (Eskelinen, 2017). Thus, it could be presumed that drama might also facilitate the exploration of other cultures through language immersion.

Process drama was developed by Heathcote to support drama conventions like "teacher in role" and "Mantle of the expert" (McDonnell 2020). She states that by using drama conventions, the teacher sets a scene and assumes character in order to offer students a more vast perspective on the motivations of someone who may be different from them. The objective of the teacher's ability to improvise will inspire their students to do so as well. This will allow exploration in dramatic form in both real and imagined settings, resulting in complete role play learning. It is the role of the teacher to create tension, layers and complexity using these approaches, while the students need to develop diverse views by examining topics, events, or issues (O'Neill, 1995). Other drama conventions and practices

that expand knowledge and exploration are used when a "teacher role in role " is used by a teacher. In practice, this implies that improvisation is used by the teacher in a class where the students are both actors and audience members (McDonnell,2020). This might be expanded into the second convention of Heathcote known as "Mantle of expert", which entails the development of a world of fiction in which the role of experts is assumed by students (Farmer, 2010). The idea is that when children are treated as responsible experts or professionals their engagement and confidence is increased. McDonnell (2020) states that process drama helps students social, emotional and cognitive development. In addition, he states that during “real play” there are three parts which correspond to the objectives of process drama, the first one is that children develop an imaginary setting, the second one is that they take on and act out roles and the third is that they ultimately obey a set of rules the roles dictate.

Play should not remain at the same level, but instead should progress to reach its full potential, which is the goal of "teacher in role" (Heathcote,1991). This level of maturity relates to a child's ability to assume and maintain a specific role by engaging regularly in imitating activities, words, and interactions appropriate for their character. Plays that are matured like process drama pedagogy are known for producing play situations with high quality that incorporate multiple themes lasting several days or weeks(Bodrova et al., 2013)

In Process drama all the students are involved at all time, instead of being an experience of learning where only few students demonstrate or perform to other students. A co created text is made by the participants as a result of collaboration that draws on the lived experiences in the drama to add authenticity to the text (Piazzoli, 2018). It is described as a negotiated and improvised form in which an internal audience is required (Wang, 2020). All process drama starts with a pre text, a text that comes before the collaborative dramatic text which makes up the drama. A story, picture, image, advert, song lyrics artefact can be used as a pretext. A pretext in short must offer the possibility of encountering, developing, exploring the dramatic world (Stinson, 2005). When drama conventions are introduced, the students can explore the pretext and the opportunities of imaginary world they provide. The contract of the drama provides the student and the teacher support and limitations, this implies that they must be willing to take the acting seriously, also permitting the participants to maintain emotional space or distance (Stinson, 2005). Although, each process drama structure is meticulously prepared, there are numerous opportunities for the participants to negotiate and provide input.

In Rannveig Björk Thorkelsdóttir research (2016), she gave a practical illustration on how drama was introduced in the Icelandic school, as well as how process drama can captivate and engage students. Thus, the study is an ethnographic study that follows two teachers in an Icelandic school for the duration of a school year. Early in the school year, students were

introduced to a joint project called “The Settlement”, which is related to the way Iceland was initially inhabited. Starting from the main idea of the project, students were asked to collaborate and create a play, by making use of process drama. Thorkelsdóttir (2016) states that initially students, specifically boys, were reticent and considered the idea boring. However, eventually, in one of the lessons she examined, the boys walked into the classroom and remained attentive and quiet, all the boys sat down without the teacher requesting it. The students prepared for “The Settlement” and in preparation of the project they interviewed one another. After the interview, each group talked about their project to the other groups. During the next lesson, the boys slowly walked into the class and sat in a circle. They remained attentive, quiet, and listened to the teacher. The teacher asked the students if they had ever been to a museum before. The teacher then announced that now they would be making still images like in “Madame Tussaud’s museum”. The teacher engaged the students by being attentive to their interests. It is not all the students that have been to the “Madame Tussaud’s museum”. The teacher then decided to ask the boys if they have seen some statues in town and they said Yes, they have. The teacher further asked what they think Ronaldo would look like if he was a statue. The teacher then counted from one to three and instructed them to freeze. All the boys were engaged, and they showed their Ronaldo images.

The implementation of process drama in language classrooms can take different forms and it can depend on factors such as the language proficiency level of the learners, teaching content, time constraints. There are strategies or techniques believed by language teachers to be important to what drama process is and how it functions (Liu, 2002). These strategies are outlined below, according to the sequence in teaching:

- Themes and topics that suit the linguistic abilities of the learners should also be determined their sociocultural background as well and a "pretext" should be used as the starter.
- Identification and utilization of numerous roles for students and teacher
- Use various levels of tension to keep the dramatic actions going
- Make use of body and language in enhancing communicative competence, both verbal and nonverbal to explain what is beyond the learners` linguistic reach, so that they can maximize its output in an improvised and real context
- Introduce, reinforce, and discuss linguistic expressions and usage and reflect on the experiences that are required in the settings (Liu, 2002).

5. Research methodology

3.1 Study design

A mixed research approach was used for this study, which includes qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative approach (narrative) can be used to investigate and comprehend what people or groups attribute to human or social issues (Creswell, 2014). Its process includes developing questions, collection of data in the participants' environment and data analysis is experimentally developed from specific details to general theme, the researcher then interprets the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative approach (experimental) involves the use of empirical analysis of events or phenomena with statistical methods (Zahara, 2018). It is objective because it recognizes and symbolizes facts without regarding personal feelings or views. Mixed approach (explanatory) is a method of investigation that involves the gathering of data from quantitative and qualitative approaches, incorporating both data with a design that may include different theoretical perspectives and key concepts (Creswell, 2014).

The author chose to employ a mixed method approach because it can be useful in collecting and analyzing two kinds of data, which can build a more comprehensive picture (Creswell, 2014) and a better understanding of the results of the research. Moreover, the results obtained in the quantitative approach can be further explained through the qualitative approach.

Population of the study

According to Arikunto Suharsimi (2006), the whole subject of a study is considered a population, referred to as a group of individuals. The population in this study was graduate students at the department of Foreign Language Education, University of Iceland, who took part in a language speaking course that incorporated drama as a technique. To ensure reliability of the study, it is essential to mention that although students were selected from University of Iceland, the researcher does not have any prior connection to the population of the study.

Study Sample

A sample is a portion of a population investigated, analyzed, or studied, and these can be carried out if the characteristic of the population is relatively homogeneous (Zahara, 2018).

The sampling method used for this study was purposive because this technique method does not require taking samples with specific consideration, and it is based on the judgment of the researcher (Siregar, 2014). Since this is a small-scale study with limited time and resources, the number of individuals in the study is 12 and they were selected based on voluntary participation.

Data Collection

The data collection was carried out through questionnaires and interviews. Before designing the study, there were several practical decisions to make. One of the decisions involved the selection of variables. Thus, the question was if the study would focus on the satisfaction of the students with the course or it should go further and include different aspects that might influence the responses, such as age or level of education. In order to choose the essential variables, the researcher looked at the main purpose of the study to understand which approach would be more beneficial. However, the researcher had to consider the legnth and duration of the study, and out of practical reasons, other variables were not included.

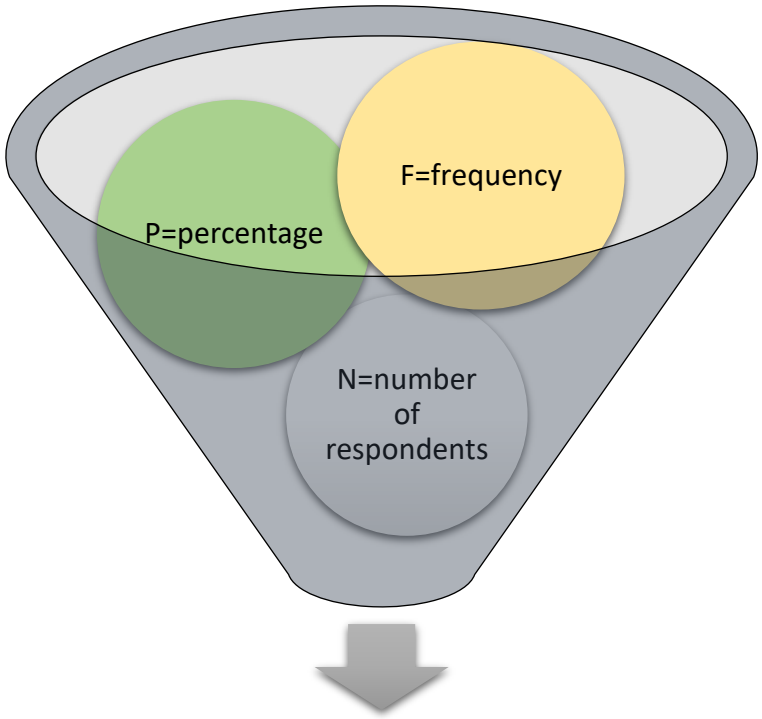
Another important decision was related to choosing the most appropriate data collection method. One more time, practical decisions had to made and for this reason, all the questionnaires were distributed through email. Besides, due to the current epidemiological situation, face-to-face interviews were not possible, and the interviews took place on Zoom.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire was designed by using a Likert scale, which is a psychometric scale that is commonly used in surveys. Likert scales are widely used not only becaue of their effectivness but also because the participants do not have to choose between agreeing or disagreeing to a statement. Instead, there is a whole range of options, which can provide more accurate results. The reason the researcher chose to use Likert scale througout the study is represented in the overarching objctive of the paper, which is to understand students‘ perception regarding the use of drama in class. Thus, the researcher considered Likert scale the most accurate method to measure the opinions and attitudes of the participants.

The questionnaire included twelve closed-ended questions and the results were analysed by using a statistical formula. The statistical method that was used in this case was frequency distribution. The data from the questionnaire would be expressed in percentages. The researcher used the formula of frequency percentage distribution to analyze the

questionnaire. To facilitate understanding of the equation, the researcher proposed and designed the diagrammatic representation of the formula, as shown below:



$$P = f / N \text{ X } 100\%$$

The results of the questionnaire were tabulated, which is a method of changing a data collection instrument such as a questionnaire into a table of numbers such as percentages (Zahara, 2018).

Interviews

Although the questionnaire is a useful and straightforward tool in measuring satisfaction, the study aimed to offer a more indepth understanding of students' perceptions and give them the opportunity to reflect on the use of drama and their feelings in class. For this reason, the researcher opted for a mixed method that included interviews.

As a result of Covid 19, it was very challenging finding students for the interview. The interested participants were contacted through emails. During the interview some of the students were not comfortable being on camera. Some students had network issues with their internet. Four students were intereviewed and it was done four times but an interview was rescheduled as a result of some technical issues, and each interview lasted for 40 to 50 minutes. An interview is a valuable data collection method that involves verbal interaction

with the researcher and participant, it can be used for surveys, descriptive and exploratory research (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn,1998). Interviews have different approaches ranging from unstructured to structured. In the unstructured interviews the participant is given an opportunity to speak freely, while structured interviews are organized in the form of predetermined question with clear assessment marks for each question. The accuracy of information gathered during an interview is determined by how the interview is designed and the interviewer`s knowledge. An interview that is poorly constructed or designed could consist of questions that the participant couldn't comprehend (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn,1998). In addition, when an interviewer is not properly prepared the responses of the participant can be involuntarily affected by the researcher, which subsequently negatively influences the final results.

In this case, the interview was conducted online with the students of the department of Foreign Language Education to finalize the data on how drama method can improve or develop the speaking skills and obstacles faced by students when learning speaking. The researcher used a semi structured interview consisting of a number of open-ended questions and the results were analyzed and narratively explained.

Initially, the data gathered from the interviews were transcribed and organized by using manual deductive coding, (See appendix, coding table) which implies sorting the data into connected and relevant categories, based on similarities (Saldaña, 2009). Subsequently, the researcher used a thematic analysis to analyze, identify and report patterns within datas (Alhojailan, 2012)

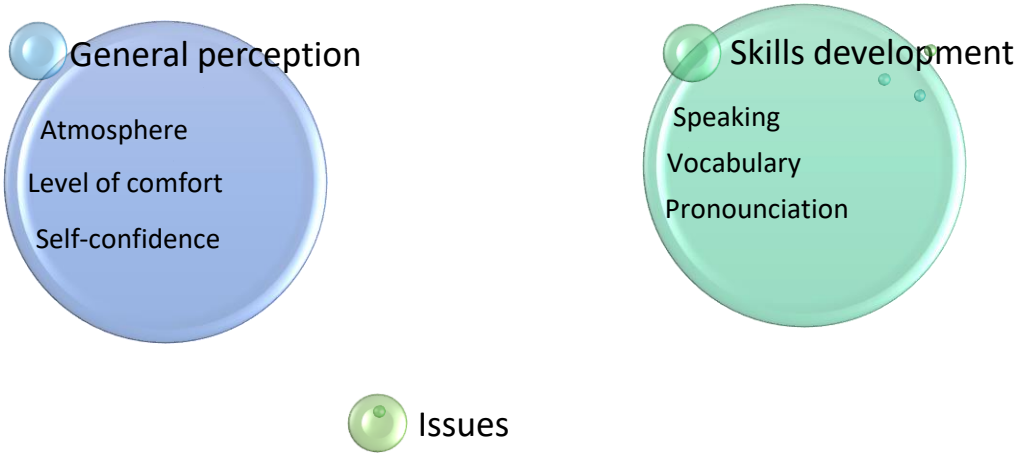
Confidentiality

It is important to mention that all the real names of the participants will not be used to maintain confidentiality. Prior to starting this phase, the participants were informed that all the data gathered will only be used for the purpose of this study and their anonymity is guaranteed.

6. Study results and analysis

Quantitative results

When designing the questionnaire, the researcher considered several concepts that are relevant for the objectives of the thesis. As a result, the questions encompassed the following notions, as envisaged by the researcher, and subsequently illustrated in the following visual representation designed by the researcher:



The first question is looking at the general perception of students on using drama in a speaking class. Thus, out of twelve participants, 8 of them strongly agreed that they would like to have drama in a language speaking class. 3 students agreed with the statement and only one disagreed (See Appendix table 4.1). Overall, it can be noticed that most students reacted positively to the idea of using drama in a speaking class. Expressed in percentages, over half of the participants were receptive, which indicates that in the future, it might be worth introducing more similar activities.

Further on, the questionnaire is looking at the way drama activities could help build self-confidence when speaking. This aspect is especially important because often lack of confidence is one of the main difficulties encountered when speaking. Thus, in the academic literature there are several studies discussing this aspect and how drama could have a positive impact on reducing feelings such as anxiety or fear (Demircioğlu, 2010; Yuniwati, Wijaya &

Rosnija, 2010). It is interesting to notice that although 10 students agreed to this statement, only 2 of them expressed strong agreement (See Appendix, Table 4.3) The aspect was further explored during the interviews phase because it was a recurrent theme.

When asked to express their opinions on the atmosphere in class during drama lessons, 4 students strongly agreed, 6 students agreed, and 2 students disagreed to this statement. Expressed in percentages, 50% believe that the atmosphere was relaxed and positive, but only 33% expressed strong agreement to this statement, while 16% expressed their disagreement (See Appendix, Table 4.4). Hypothetically, the negative feelings could be connected to performance anxiety and fear. However, by correlating the academic literature, it has been shown that the use of drama in classroom could reduce such feelings (Yuniwati, Wijaya &Rosnija, 2010). Moreover, drama helps in embracing the views of others and adopting a yes attitude (Eskelinen, 2017). The subject was further explored during the interviews to understand the reasoning behind it.

Related to the previous questions, students were asked to reflect on how the use of drama in English language lessons might have influenced their attitude, specifically their level of comfort and self-confidence. Thus, when asked if drama makes them feel relaxed during speaking lessons, 4 students strongly agreed, 7 students agreed, and 1 student disagreed (See Appendix, Table 4.8). The question was introduced because drama games are often used as warm up techniques and relaxation and have proven to be effective in this area (Gaudart,1990).

Moreover, when introduced to drama activities, students can explore and interpret the world they live in, and thus their world view and cultural understanding is broadened (Θεοδωροπουλου, 2021). For this reason, students were asked if their attitude towards the world might have been influenced by these activities. In this case, 2 students strongly agreed, 8 students agreed, and 2 students disagreed (See Appendix, Table 4.5).

The second part of the questionnaire is focused on skill development, particularly speaking, pronunciation and vocabulary. Hence, when asked about their opinion regarding speaking skills development through drama, 8 students (66.67%) strongly agreed to this statement, 3 students agreed and only one disagreed (See Appendix table 4.2). The results show that more than half of the participants felt they improved their speaking abilities due to the course. As expected, the results are subjective and further objective testing would be required to provide an accurate representation. However, positive opinions of the students could show a connection between drama education and speaking skills development. In regard to drama being a useful tool in improving pronunciation, 4 students strongly agreed, 6 agreed and 2 students disagreed (See Appendix, Table 4.9) The last question relates to drama

and vocabulary development, and in this case, 4 students strongly agreed, 7 students agreed but 1 student did not agree (See Appendix, Table 4.10)

The last part of the questionnaire is focused on understanding if students might find potential issues with the use of drama during lessons, and in this case none of the students strongly agreed, 2 students agreed, 6 students disagreed, and 4 students strongly disagreed (See Appendix, Table 4.12)

Interview result

A reflexive thematic analysis was used by the researcher to analyze, identify and report patterns within datas (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The method requires flexibility, as there are no preconceived notions, and the themes are decided and changed after collecting the data. After the interviews were transcripted, they were then coded through the method of inductive coding, which implies the selection of the codes at a later stage of the research (Terry & Hayfield, 2020).The codes were manually sorted into different groups, which facilitates the progression of the meaning-making process in an organized and clear way. (Williams & Moser, 2019). All preliminary themes and their connection to one another was sorted and are discussed below.

The first theme that was identified and mentioned several times is entertainment. For instance, one of the participants mentioned that the way the information is delivered is what sparks the interest of students. In this case, using drama games made the class more interesting.

I think I paid attention from the start because there was nothing boring or repetitive. If the teacher knows how to mix fun and education, you don‘t feel like in a regular class (...) oh and drama helped, especially the role play, you can always change and come up with something new (Jane).

Andra, the first participant, expressed her interest in drama methods in speaking classes, such as role playing, acting out a drama and drama games. For this reason, she mentioned she had a positive thought on the use of drama in speaking class. Moreover, Andra stated that she enjoys drama in learning to speak and she has no difficulty when it comes to using drama. She concluded by saying that drama can be used to enhance speaking because it makes an individual more relaxed and confident. She recommends drama in a language speaking class.

I really enjoyed this class, it helps with speaking which is always a big problem in English classes. There is never enough time or interest for speaking although it's so important (...) And it's also more relaxing, almost like a game. If I were a teacher I would do it more often (Andrea).

By comparison, when asked about any challenges that education drama might bring, Anne mentioned an interesting aspect she noticed when they speak in front of the class using role play and acting out drama. Anne believes that sometimes the difficulty in playing drama is memorizing the lines. For this reason, sometimes she might feel nervous and not perform as well as she would like to. However, overall, her perception was also positive, and she concluded by saying that the use of drama has enhanced her speaking skill because it makes her more confident to speak in front of the class

For me it's hard to remember everything when we do any kind of exercise like role play. And then if there is no script, I'm nervous. But it helps somehow…I feel a bit more confident when speaking (Anna).

Based on this statement, I asked Anne to give me a more detailed explanation by considering if she would prefer exercises where she could be spontaneous instead of having to memorize.

„Yes, I prefer to be spontaneous. I always had trouble learning by heart. I don't know if it's just me but it's more fun to come up with ideas and then I can be myself".

Anne's point of view offers us a very important insight into how certain students might feel towards drama. For this reason, it is important to consider personal differences and possibly adapt exercises based on what students prefer. As previously mentioned in the literature review, the educational field is constantly facing the dilemma of shifting from outdated methods that are teacher-centered and were focused on purely transmiting information, to a more student-centered approach. Thus, Anne's experience in the drama course can be correlated to the findings of Zineb (2021) who states that students will be more inclined to participate in spontaneous activities that allow them to express freely. Moreover, self expression is at the core of drama, making it an inetgral part of the learner-centered approach, and more in line with the modern requirements, and what students are expecting from a learning experience.However, this approach might require the teacher to limit the number of students participating in the class or dividing it in smaller groups.

Following this route and considering personal differences, Tony mentioned that some of his own interests are watching plays and recreating them by bringing his own input. Like Anne, Tony feels that the difficulty in acting is memorizing the script, which is why he would prefer to be spontaneous. In his perception, drama is useful because no matter the form or the type of exercise, it gives students the possibility to speak in class.

Since I was a kid, I liked watching movies and playing my favorite parts. I didn't know exactly the lines because I hate memorizing. So, I like this idea of using drama in classroom if it allows you to improvise. It helps because it brings the focus on speaking and makes you talk (Tony).

Tony also mentioned that his own interests are discussions, role play and storytelling. He used drama in a language speaking class once and in his own point of view it was not the best choice for that class. When asked to give more details, he further stated that when acting, he pays more attention to acting and cannot focus on grammar. However, his perception about using drama is that it enhances speaking skill which makes him more confident.

I enjoy partaking in role play activities, makes me active during the lesson I feel it is an authentic way of learning.

According to the outcome of the interviews, the majority of the participants' perception about the use of drama in speaking class is positive. In speaking class, participants have a number of interesting techniques, one of which is drama because it is an engaging method, relaxes the students and gives them the confidence to speak in class. On the other hand, the participants gave their views on drama difficulties such as script memorization and anxiety. The majority of the participants agreed that drama should be used in speaking classes and that it can enhance speaking skill.

Discussion

The main goal of this study is to find out students' perceptions about the use of drama to help develop their speaking skill. Data collection was done through the distribution of questionnaires and interviews. The research question of this study is, what are students` perception on the use of drama in improving speaking skill? According to the questionnaire result, the majority of the students agreed that drama should be used in speaking classes because it is an engaging method, relaxes the students and gives them the confidence to speak in class. But a small number of students held negative opinions about the use of drama in

speaking classes. A few of the participants believe that drama cannot develop speaking skill because it takes so long. However, the majority of respondents agreed that drama should be used in language speaking classes. In addition, Galiya Saraç (2007) states that the use of drama in an English class can enhace the speaking skills of the students and it enables them to use the target language in a communicative manner.

The positive attitudes of the students can be explained through Kolb‘s experential learning theory. Thus, drama offers an alternative in which students are encouraged to interact and engage with their environment. In this context, learning comes naturally as a result of experiences because according to the theory, proper learning cannot take place just through reading or looking. Instead, engaging method, relaxes the students and gives them the confidence to speak in class. Moreover, during the interviews, the participants had the opportunity to discuss their experiences and feelings through reflective observation, which is another important part of the learning process. According to Kolb, the last step is active experimentation, in which the learners can put into practice what they have learnt.

Although there are some clear benefits of experential learning, other theories claim that the quality of the experience and the emotional component of the learning process are more important. Hence, according to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi‘s flow theory, it can be argued that students enjoyed the drama class because they were completely immersed, engaged and focused in the activities. When students participate in a performance, they play with others and for other students in a theatrical setting, when they stop observing the work of each other and switch from performer to viewer, they observe their own work. In the theatrical setting of drama education, mutual trust and understanding is shared (Thorkelsdóttir,2016). However, such claim would need further testing, which could be done through direct observation.

7. Conclusion and recommendation

Some conclusions and recommendations were made after completing the research findings and data comparison.

Conclusion

Recognizing how the idea has been defined and used in general in the academic literature is an attempt to understand the possible benefits of drama activities in the classroom. Hence,when we look at it in a pedagogical way, drama is seen as a creative way of improving students' ability to speak freely and creating a spontaneous way of using the target language to interact with one another. Kao & O'Neill (1998) claim that drama in education was derived from the play of children and is justified by the concept of progressive child centered Education. According to Slade (1998), from the year 1950, the use of drama and improvisation began as a reaction to the limited and lack of creative methods of the time, in which children are acting out in a formal way instead of developing ideas on their own.In Iceland, drama has been recognised for its importance in promoting creativity, self expression and even societal progress mirrored through the reflection process that dramatic activities encourage (The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 2014). For this reason, it is important to promote more studies focused on the benefits of drama in education.

Nevertheless, as this thesis has proven, there is a lot of great potential in integrating drama in language teaching. According to the findings and discussion in the preceding chapters, the researcher would like to reach the following conclusions:

Firstly, it was ascertained that the majority of the participants agreed to use the drama method in speaking class. This was shown through the analysis of the questionnaires. Moreover, during the interviews, students generally showed a positive attitude towards educational drama. However, there have been students who expressed their concerns regarding feelings of anxiety related to performing in front of an audience or memorizing scripts. In this case,the question arises if such feelings could be combated through techniques such as process drama. As shown before, process drama includes all the participants and does not involve performing in front of others, which could be more benefical, especially when teaching languages. Besides, this method is highly appreciated in the academic literature for being more authentic and enhancing real communication (Kao & O'Neill, 1998).

Secondly, the participants have a good impression of incorporating drama in language speaking classes to encourage creativity in the speaking abilities of students. They believe that

drama is an effective speaking class strategy, while increasing their vocabulary, they can also practice their pronunciation and intonation.

Recommendation

According to the study's results, the author makes the following recommendations about the study results:

i. In the positive findings of this study given by the participants, it is suggested that drama should be used in the classroom to improve students` speaking skills, as well as encourage their participation in the classroom. Moreover, drama education could potentially give them opportunities to practice in an authentic but safe environment, in which they are allowed to practice speaking, and make mistakes.

ii. The students also encouraged the implementation of drama methods in their language speaking classes in order to improve their speaking skills. In addition, students will be able to improve their pronunciation and gain new vocabulary as a result of implementing the drama method.

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Appendix

TABLE 4.1. The perception of students` on using drama in a speaking class.		
ALTERNATIVE	**PARTICIPANTS**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
Strongly agree	8	66.67
Agree	3	25
Disagree	1	8.33
Strongly disagree	0	0
Sum Total	12	10

TABLE 4.2: Drama, in the perception of students, is an adequate method or technique for improving speaking skills		
ALTERNATIVE	**PARTICIPANTS**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
Strongly Agree	8	66.67
Agree	3	25
Disagree	1	8.33
Strongly Disagree	0	-
Sum Total	12	100

Table 4.3: Drama activities can help build self-confidence		
ALTERNATIVE	**PARTICIPANTS**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
Strongly Agree	2	16.67
Agree	10	83.33
Disagree	0	-
Strongly Disagree	0	-

Sum Total	**12**	**100**

Table 4.4: The perception of the students` about the atmosphere of the class when drama lessons are going on.

ALTERNATIVE	PARTICIPANTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	4	33.33
Agree	6	50
Disagree	2	16.67
Strongly Disagree	0	-
Sum Total	12	100

TABLE 4.5. The perception of students on how the use of drama in English language lessons influenced their attitude.

ALTERNATIVE	PARTICIPANTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	2	16.67
Agree	8	66.67
Disagree	2	16.67
Strongly Disagree	--	-
Sum Total	12	100%

TABLE 4.6. The perception of students` on level of comfort when partaking in drama activities

ALTERNATIVE	PARTICIPANTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	4	33.33
Agree	6	50
Disagree	2	16.67
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Sum Total	12	100

Table 4.7. The perception of students towards the activities of drama		
ALTERNATIVE	**PARTICIPANTS**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
Strongly Agree	6	50
Agree	6	50
Disagree	-	
Strongly Disagree	-	
Sum Total	12	100

Table 4.8. The perception of students on using drama to relax during speaking lessons.		
ALTERNATIVE	**PARTICIPANTS**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
Strongly Agree	4	33.33
Agree	7	58.34
Disagree	1	8.33
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Sum Total	12	100

Table 4.9. Perception of students on the use of drama techniques in enhancing the pronunciation of students.		
ALTERNATIVE	**PARTICIPANTS**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
Strongly Agree	4	33.33
Agree	6	50
Disagree	2	16.67
Strongly Disagree	-	
Sum Total	12	100

Table 4.10. Perception of students on the use of drama technique in enhancing the vocabulary of students.		
ALTERNATIVE	**PARTICIPANTS**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
Strongly Agree	4	33.33
Agree	7	58.34
Disagree	1	8.33

Strongly Disagree	**-**	
Sum Total	**12**	**100**

Table 4.11. The perception of students disagreeing on the use of drama during speaking lessons		
ALTERNATIVE	**PARTICIPANTS**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
Strongly Agree	**0**	
Agree	**0**	
Disagree	**6**	**50**
Strongly Disagree	**6**	**50**
Sun Total	**12**	**100**

Table 4.12. The perception of students on potential issues when teaching with drama technique in speaking class		
ALTERNATIVE	**PARTICIPANTS**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
Strongly Agree	**0**	
Agree	**2**	**16.67**
Disagree	**6**	**50**
Strongly Disagree	**4**	**33.33**
Sum Total	**12**	**100**

Coding	Theme	Transcript
Memorizing	Prefers improvisation	I hate memorizing. So, I like this idea of using drama in classroom if it allows you to improvise.
Memorizing	prefers spontaniety	„Yes, I prefer to be spontaneous. I always had trouble learning by heart. I don't know if it's just me but it's more fun to come up

		with ideas and then I can be myself“.
Speaking	Not enough focus on speaking	I really enjoyed this class, it helps with speaking which is always a big problem in English classes. There is never enough time or interest for speaking although it’s so important
Fun	Atmosphere in class	And it’s also more relaxing, almost like a game. If I were a teacher I would do it more often
Memorizing	Difficulties in drama class	For me it’s hard to remember everything when we do any kind of exercise like role play. And then if there is no script, I’m nervous. But it helps somehow…I feel a bit more confident when speaking
Speaking	drama develops speaking	It helps because it brings the focus on speaking and makes you talk (Andrea).