

**ENHANCING COMMUNICATION SKILLS
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE THROUGH DRAMA
ACTIVITIES AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL**

A

SYNOPSIS SUBMITTED

To

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Language is the basic universal tool of communication. Human beings are social animals, who always have curiosity and the thirst to know the things around them. Thus, to fulfil this purpose, language becomes an important tool in the eyes of mankind. Without language the existence of human beings is unimaginable. Language promotes our thoughts, helps us to grow and maintain relations with people around us and even creeps in our dreams. It helps in unifying the vast and complex world around us. The overwhelming bulk of human knowledge is stored and translated into language.

National Policy on Education (1968) states that special need is to be paid in the study of English and other international languages. World knowledge is growing at a tremendous pace and thus India must not only keep the growth but should also make her own significant contribution to it. Learning a language does not mean learning rules, structure, vocabulary etc., but mainly being able to use the language which is communication. English language is considered as a vehicle of opportunities, better job and a step to higher education.

1.2 POLICY PERSPECTIVES

In **1964**, **The Education Commission** headed by Dr. S. Kothari reported that English should be continued as we need it as a library language in the field of higher education, so a strong foundation must be laid at the school level. **The NCF 2000** stressed the value of integrating students' lives into English language instruction and making it more interactive, context-based, and relevant.

According to **NEP 2020** At every level, experiential learning will be implemented, encompassing a variety of methods such as hands-on instruction, education that integrates the arts and sports, storytelling pedagogy, and conventional pedagogy within each subject, as well as investigations into the relationships between various subjects. In the classroom, interactions will change to focus more on competency-based learning and teaching in an effort to close the achievement gap. A class's learning outcomes, capacities, and attitudes will also be in line with the assessment instruments (which include assessments "as," "of," and "for" learning).

Art integration is a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilizes various aspects and forms of art and culture as the basis for learning concepts across subjects. As a part of the thrust on experiential learning, art-integrated education will be embedded in classroom transactions not only

for creating joyful classrooms, but also for imbibing the Indian ethos through integration of Indian art and culture in the teaching and learning process at every level. This art-integrated approach will strengthen the linkages between education and culture.

1.3 Theoretical Basis for using Drama in English language Teaching

Socio-cultural theory

The use of drama in language teaching has its theoretical basis in the socio-cultural theory proposed by a Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). Vygotsky believes that children construct their knowledge. In Vygotsky's view, knowledge is situated and collaborative. By this, he means that knowledge is distributed among people and the environment which includes: objects, artefacts, tools, books and the community in which people live. As a result, knowledge can be facilitated through interaction with other people in cooperative and collaborative activities. Vygotsky articulated some unique ideas about learning and development some of his concepts are a zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding, (Vygotsky, 1962; Santrock, 2001).

Regarding the use of drama in language teaching, Vygotsky proposed that play which is a form of activity is important in a child's cognitive development and that through the process of internalization, social activities become mental activities. He believes that children's play is based on their unrealized needs; when their needs are not met, they enter into an imaginary world through play (in which unrealizable desires can be realized). So, the field of play is a mediator between situations in thought and situations in reality. Vygotsky provided the theoretical foundation for teaching language through drama. He emphasized collaboration between the teacher and the students and among the students themselves. He also emphasized the kind of learning that occurs authentically, within a collaborative environment. This means that the learning environment should be such that enables students to play active roles. The teacher and the students should collaborate to create meaningful learning.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory was developed by Albert Bandura. Social learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modelling, and individuals learn by observing the behaviours of others and the consequences of those behaviours (Berge and County, 2012). As Berge and County (2012) argue, this theory highlights the significance of modelling and reinforcement in the learning process. Therefore, according to Catania and Laties (1999) and Grusec (1992), in social learning

theory, people learn new behaviours through imitating and observing others. According to van de Water (2021), drama provides students with the opportunity to watch and imitate the language and actions of others in a secure and supportive environment and develops students' speaking skills in a pleasant and interesting way by using drama in the classroom.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

The foundations of experiential learning were set by John Dewey in his work *Experience and Education*, and his ideas were further developed by David Kolb. His famous model of the experiential learning cycle is widely applied in education, including adult development. It is extensively applied in the field of education and adult development. His model emphasizes the use of drama techniques in language teaching. Children are exposed to concrete experiences which show their active engagement which is crucial for experiential learning.

The Flow Theory

Csikszentmihalyi developed a model that illustrates the key elements and circumstances that impact experience quality. Flow happens "when a person's skills are fully involved in overcoming a challenge that is just about manageable," as one model puts it.

The flow experience can serve as a strong intrinsic motivation for life-long learning as well. By using drama techniques in language classes, teachers have the opportunity to create circumstances in which students can learn by doing, through here-and-now experience. Learners are offered the possibility to stretch and push their limits further and develop their skills – a possibility to experience flow.

Goleman (1995) claims that students who are in a state of flow are typically more productive because learning new material or developing a skill at a higher level happens naturally to them—they devote themselves freely and impulsively to the subjects they find interesting. They come to understand that learning is a source of flow—a source of fulfillment and joy for them. They must continuously push their boundaries in order to preserve flow, which results in great accomplishments.

Constructivist Learning Theory and Constructive Drama

The fundamental ideas of drama in education and constructivist learning theory have a significant area of overlap. Developed from the use of "as if" games, drama in education is a process- and personality-centered approach founded on pedagogical and psychological concepts. It is frequently linked to reform pedagogy, which strives to foster students' creativity, spontaneity, and communicative ability to better equip them to handle real-world circumstances.

One of the main goals of using drama techniques in education is to form and develop social skills, therefore enhancing the awareness of the art of impression-making and the art of playing different roles. In everyday social life the impression we make can be very important. The way other people see us is mainly the result of our interactions and communication skills. Drama techniques have the potential power to help us practice different ways of presenting ourselves in everyday life, offering the possibility to develop and polish the necessary skills.

1.4 Drama-Meaning and Concept

Drama is the most significant model of learning and is a basic activity for learning. It is a way of helping children to think about their individual or social problems.

Holden (1981) defined 'Drama' as "any activity which asks the students to portray himself in an imaginary situation or another person in an imaginary situation." He further says that 'Drama' is about the world of "Let's pretend". It requires students to put themselves into someone else's shoes.

Dougill (1987) explained it as an educational tool; he further says that drama fosters the linguistic, intellectual and social development of the learner.

According to **Booth (1994)** Drama covers a wide range of techniques which incorporates interaction, movement, vocal action and mental concentration.

Drama activities

Jim Scrivener (1994) mentions the six most commonly used drama activities in English language teaching classes, stating that "by bringing the outside world into the classroom, we can provide a lot of useful practice and there may also be a freeing from the constraints of culture and expected behaviour, which can be personally and linguistically very liberating."

1. Role play – Role plays enable students to step outside themselves, to accept and change into a different character. Students either improvise or create their character or they are given role cards. In either case, it has a stimulating effect and students feel freer to engage themselves in learning.

- 3. Drama games** - Wessels points out that 'drama games' should "involve action, exercise the imagination, involve both 'learning' and 'acquisition' and permit the expression of emotion." (1987) All the elements mentioned help students to become actively engaged in learning and experience the dynamics of the learning experience. There are many forms of games with various functions i.e. ice-breakers, warm-ups, fillers, concentration games etc.
- 4. Guided improvisation** – This kind of practice requires the teacher to guide students through the initial stage of an activity. When students join in and become part of the evolving activity, they use their imagination and improvisation, and then the teacher steps out and becomes more like an observer who helps if there is a need. This help might be in a form of suggestions or even joining back in the story if the progress of the students is slow or if they are finding the work too difficult. The following are examples of activities for guided improvisation: a scene of a crime; a company meeting; a summer camp at night etc.
- 5. Acting play scripts** – Cockett and Fox say that "it is important to remember that a script is not a drama so much as a 'proposal for drama'." (1999). The script becomes a starting point that provides great space for each individual to utilize his or her talents and bring personal aspects into the learning experience. Students are presented with the script by the teacher or even prepare their own. All the stages of preparation, practice, performance or even the afterwards analyses and evaluation can be very effective tools in learning and reinforcing the use of a foreign language.
- 6. Prepared improvised drama** – Students themselves work and perform a story, a situation or several situations. They can also work within a given framework that is set by the teacher. It is students who are in charge of their work. The aspect of ownership provides further motivation to succeed in the activity. The whole class can be involved in a more complex drama, although for practical reasons and affectivity, it might be more beneficial to have the students work in smaller groups.

1.5 Drama Activities in the present study

- **Hot-seating** - questions are posed to a character in a role. One person takes a seat in the middle of the room as a particular character, and the other participants sit around and ask

direct questions about this character's present life, past experiences, wishes for the future etc. The activity helps learners get deeper into the character in question and makes the situation of this character more transparent to others. It requires spontaneous invention on the part of the person in the hot seat, who answers 'in role' and has to make decisions on the spot. The people asking questions are much less in the limelight, but they too play an important role in co-constructing the character; they have to listen closely and develop further questions that take into account the information that has been received so far.

- **Freeze frames or tableaux** - moments captured and frozen. The students in role froze at a certain moment to present their thoughts on the characters. Freeze frames can be used to explore many emotional situations. They are moments captured and frozen. It can help the children understand the difference between emotions commonly used (happy and sad) to more powerful ones. For example, children can freeze-frame the disappointed/disgusted/angry reactions of zoo visitors when they see a sick animal. The teacher could take around an imaginary camera and click the best ones, then show the photographs (the children still in a freeze frame) to the rest of the class. Sometimes it is profitable to have a sequence of freeze frames to show an event occurring e.g. children arrive at the zoo (excited) children see polar bears (adoration) polar bears fight (shock). Freeze-frames can also be used as the basis for thought tracking.
- **Thought tracking** – speaking aloud the character's inner thoughts, sometimes contrasting with what is spoken.
- **Alley of opinions-** A useful technique for exploring any kind of dilemma faced by a character, providing an opportunity to analyse a decisive moment in greater detail. The class forms two lines facing each other. One person (the teacher or a participant) walks between the lines as each member of the group speaks their advice. It can be organised so that those on one side give opposing advice to those on the other. When the character reaches the end of the alley, she makes her decision.
- **Poetry Brought Alive** -Lines of poetry are brought to life with clear recitation and accompanying gestures and movements. Students will be divided into groups of five and each group will **enact** the poem. They will have to create stories related to the core themes of the poem and present them in front of the class. Students will also be asked to find out poems on trees or on similar themes and to dramatize them.

- **Poetry in Motion** Participants in this activity are instructed to use short poems or break a long poem into separate verses. This is followed by giving print-outs to groups of four to six participants and asking them to read through the poem and devise freeze frames representing significant phrases. Students are tasked with finding a way to perform a poem by incorporating still images and sharing the lines between them, experimenting with speaking while still and moving. This approach can lead to effective work. The groups have the option to perform their pieces in sequence if a long poem is chosen, and they can also utilize short stories, raps, or texts for their performance.
- **Bringing a picture to life** - Pupils collaborate in pairs. Give each couple a different photo. Couples must talk about their relationship, decide what is happening, and determine the identities and characteristics of the two individuals. (This will take five minutes.) Students create a brief exchange between the two individuals in their picture using the knowledge they have learned. What are they exchanging with one another? What is the subject? What is the result? They practice and get ready to act out their exchange.
- **Character profiles** – Students explore characters using rapid hot seating techniques and questions that involve the whole class.
- **Improvised Drama** - Students work and execute a story, a situation, or several situations in improvised drama. They might also operate inside the parameters that the instructor has established. Students are responsible for their work. The feeling of ownership adds even more incentive to complete the task successfully. A more intricate scenario can incorporate the entire class, but working in smaller groups may be more advantageous for affectivity and practical considerations.

IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA ACTIVITIES IN DEVELOPING SPEAKING AND LISTENING SKILLS

Drama provides a framework for the language to be used. It generally contributes to the nature of communication as a means of reinforcement and stimulation. Students can take an active role in their English language education by participating in drama. Using the classroom as a little stage for learning in everyday life can help students become more engaged for the bigger stage that is life.

The presence of drama and its techniques is an ideal tool to stimulate and carry on different speaking activities with a focus on fluency, pronunciation, stress, intonation etc. It provides a field for sufficient practice in acquiring language skills.

As students using drama become immersed in the activities, they no longer perceive the activity and the language they are learning as artificial, but they experience its use in a situation similar to real life. Rather than learning the foreign language consciously, the language is unconsciously acquired. Furthermore, students who practice the language in meaningful contexts and situations similar to reality will more likely find it easier to use the language in real-life situations.

Drama encourages concentrated listening. Students have to listen very carefully when they act so that they can react as the situation requires it. Drama provides context for listening. Listening exercises include listening to music, news, TV programmes, movies, telephone calls, small talks, directions, announcements and many more. All these can be easily linked with drama activities. Activities can either take place while or after listening to a text or listening can serve to be a source of follow-up drama activities.

The more often students are exposed to a variety of listening material in the lessons and practice listening in a meaningful context, the better they are equipped to become competent and confident communicators in the real world.

2.1. SUMMARY OF REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The investigator reviewed a total of 50 studies. There were seventeen studies related to developing strategies and designs for teaching English. fifteen studies were related to listening and speaking skills and thirteen studies were related to the area of using drama as a method of teaching English.

The reviews had different research designs i.e., qualitative, quantitative, experimental, mixed-method, survey and correlational. Questionnaires, interviews, observations, proficiency tests, and diagnostic tests were used for data collection.

Out of the literature reviewed the researcher could not find any study which focuses on developing speaking and listening skills through drama activities and is integrated with the English course book for class XI students to develop both the listening and speaking skills. It was clear that no

study has been conducted in developing a programme for enhancing Listening and Speaking skills through drama for the students of English medium schools.

2.2 Rationale of the study

Indian classrooms often follow a teacher-centred approach, where the teacher lectures and students passively receive information. This method does not encourage active participation or joyful learning. This leads to less development of speaking and listening skills. Usually, it is seen that the grammar translation method is largely used in Indian classrooms which is not effective in inculcating speaking and listening skills. Though the textbooks are based on a communicative approach the students do not get sufficient practice in these skills. Therefore, the drama activities would go a long way to facilitate student's active participation and joyful learning. Drama activities provide a natural and realistic environment to develop language skills. Thus it boosts the confidence of the students and helps in better retention of the concepts learned. It aligns with the research work of Kao and O'Neill (1998) stating that drama offers authentic communication opportunities, allowing learners to practice and internalize language in realistic settings. Maley and Duff (2005) assert that drama provides a safe environment for students to experiment with language, leading to increased fluency and confidence.

The researcher has conducted the study on students of the adolescent age group studying at the secondary level as it is the stage where the students have acquired a basic level of competency in language skills. So, at the next stage, they need further strengthening of these skills with more practice through various exercises. Aligning with this thought, Colombo and Furbush (2009) discuss that older students and adults can develop high levels of second language proficiency. Adolescents have a well-developed capacity for memory, pattern recognition, induction, categorisation, generalisation, and inference.

There is a need for more focus on the development of speaking and listening skills. There is a need to adopt an interesting method of teaching English. Out of the literature reviewed the researcher did not find many studies on the development of speaking and listening skills through drama activities in India. Therefore, the researcher has undertaken the present study with drama activities as a pedagogical tool to enhance listening and speaking skills in students of class XI.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were in the mind of the investigator which lead the investigator to undertake the present study.

- How will drama activities enhance communication skills in English?
- What are the reactions of students on teaching English communication skills through drama activities?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Enhancing Communication Skills in the English Language through Drama Activities at the Secondary level

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study will be conducted with the following objectives.

1. To develop drama activities for enhancing communication skills in the English language.
2. To implement drama activities to enhance communication skills in the English language.
3. To study the effectiveness of the drama activities in terms of achievement in (i) speaking skills and (ii) listening skills.
4. To study the reaction of the students towards the drama activities used for teaching English.

HYPOTHESIS

The following null hypotheses are formulated to achieve the stated objectives of the proposed study and those will be tested at a 0.01 level of significance.

- There will be no significant difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores of students of the experimental group of class XI in the overall enhancement of speaking and listening skills.
- There will be no significant difference between the mean post-test scores of students of the experimental and control group of class XI in the achievement of speaking skills.
- There will be no significant difference between the mean post-test scores of students of the experimental and control groups of class XI in the achievement of listening skills.
- There will be no significant difference in the mean post-test scores of students of the experimental and control groups of class XI in the overall achievement of speaking and listening skills.

EXPLANATION OF THE TERM

Drama activities: It could be defined as an umbrella term which includes “a wide range of oral activities that have an element of creativity. (Hubbard et al 1986)

Communication skills: In the study, it constitutes listening and speaking skills.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE TERM

- Listening skills achievement test – Scores obtained in the listening skills achievement test.
- Speaking skills achievement test – Scores obtained in the speaking skills achievement test.
- Reaction scale – Scores obtained in the reaction scale.

3.0 Methodology

The research design used in the study was quasi-experimental. The study's design is represented graphically as follows.

Experimental Group:	O1	X	O2
Control Group:	O3	C	O4
➤ O1 & O3 = Pre-test			
➤ O2 & O4 = Post-test			
❖ X= Treatment			
❖ C= No Treatment			

Population

The study's population comprised all class XI students enrolled in Gujarati secondary schools that had an affiliation with the Gujarat Secondary Education Board (GSEB) in the state of Gujarat during the academic year 2022–2023.

Sample

The sample for this study was chosen using the convenience sampling technique. Two sections of class XI from the A.G. High School in Ahmedabad were chosen. One section was the control group and another section was taken as the experimental group.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY The study was delimited to class XI students of the school affiliated with the Gujarat Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board. It was delimited to English medium where the medium of instruction is English.

Description of the tool

The following tools were constructed for the present study.

Listening Skills Achievement Test

The listening test was prepared to evaluate the students' listening abilities. Six listening tasks were formulated for the purpose. It was of 50 marks. The listening tasks were based on short extracts of the teacher's thoughts, audio track of poem, an audio track of a talk, an audio track based on a profession, an informational piece and a job interview.

Table: Listening Skills Test: Type of Questions, Allocation of Marks.

Que. No.	Type of question	Marks allotted
Task 1	Listen to the audio track and match the following	05
Task 2	Listen to the audio track of the poem and mark it as true or false.	10
Task 3	Listen to the recorded talk and fill in the gaps.	08
Task 4	Listen to the audio track and answer in a few words or phrases.	09
Task 5	Listen to the recorded conversation and write true or false.	09
Task 6	Listen to the interview	09
Total marks-		50
Time Given-		2 hrs

Speaking Skills Achievement Test

The Speaking test was prepared to evaluate the students' Speaking abilities. Six Speaking tasks were formulated for the purpose. It was of 50 marks. The Speaking tasks were based on giving self-introduction, talking on the topic given, pair activity of discussion on a problem scenario, describing two images, storytelling based on the set of images, observing the event details and answering the questions asked by the examiner.

Table: Speaking skills test: Type of questions, time given and question-wise mark allotment.

Que. No.	Type of question	Time given	Marks allotted
Task 1	Giving self-introduction	2 mins	05
Task 2	Talk on one topic	2 mins	10
Task 3	Discussing problem situation	3mins	05
Task 4	Describe the image (2 images)	4 mins (2 mins per image)	20
Task 5	Looking at a set of images and making a story out of it	2 mins	05
Task 6	Observe the program details and answer the question asked by the examiner	2mins	05
		Total marks-	50
		Time given-	15 mins

Reaction Scale

The researcher created a 5-point reaction scale for the experimental group pupils. The reaction scale was designed to gauge students' attitudes about the teaching of English prose and poetry lessons through drama activities.

The prepared tools were shown to the experts in the English language and in the field of education.

DATA COLLECTION

Phase I: Pre-Test

was conducted during July '2022. The permission was sought from the principal of the school to administer the pre-tests. During this phase, pre-tests were administered to both the control and the experimental group. The listening skills test and speaking skills test were administered to both control and experimental groups. The time allotted for the listening skills test was two hours and for the speaking skills test the time given to each student was 15 minutes. Most of the students finished answering the listening test within 2 hours. It was taken to match the groups and to see the enhancement in the communication skills of the experimental group.

Phase II: Experimentation Phase

This phase was conducted during the academic year July'2022 to April 2023. There were 234 working days during this academic session. There were two terms during this session following an annual term pattern. There were 5 periods of the subject English in a week of 40 minutes duration. The total hours of teaching English was calculated to be 32 hours out of which English teaching through drama activities for enhancement of listening and speaking skills was done in 32 hours. During this phase, the experiment was conducted. The experimental group consisted of students who were taught English using the Drama activities by the researcher. The researcher used lesson plans where English Prose and poetry lessons were integrated with drama activities.

There were a total of nine drama activities which were implemented they were hot-seating, freeze frames, thought tracking, alley of opinion, dramatic monologues, poetry brought alive, role play, poetry in motion and bringing a picture to life. The speaking and listening activities were based on the drama activities. The listening exercises were designed based on the implemented drama activities.

Phase III: Post-test Phase

Phase III was conducted in February 2022. The post-tests were administered to both the control and the experimental group. The listening and speaking tests in the English language were administered to both the experimental and control groups. It was administered in December 2022. The time allotted for the listening test was 2 hours. Students were able to answer tasks in the speaking test within the time limit of 15 minutes given to each student.

The reaction scale was administered to the experimental group in December 2022. The time allotted for this test was 1 period i.e. 40 minutes. The students finished the test within a given time.

The data from the post-tests comprised the scores achieved by students in listening and speaking tests and reaction scales were collected.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

The collected data were analysed quantitatively using non-parametric statistics of Mean, SD, Mann Whitney- U-test, Wilcoxon signed rank test and intensity index. Data related to the reaction scale was analysed as percentage and intensity index.

5.0 FINDINGS

- It was found that there was an enhancement in the communication skills of the experimental group due to drama activities.
- It was found that the drama activities used to teach English to class XI students were effective in terms of enhancing communication skills i.e. listening skills and speaking skills of the experimental group. The post-test scores of the experimental group were higher than the pre-test scores.
- It was found that there was a significant increase in listening skills in the experimental group of class XI.
- It was found that there was a significant increase in speaking skills in the experimental group of class XI.
- It was found that there was a significant increase in communication skills of listening and speaking skills as a whole in the experimental group of class XI.
- The reaction of the students towards the implemented drama activities was favourable. The overall intensity index was found to be 4.63.

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