A STUDY OF EFL STUDENTS ENGLISH SPEAKING PROFICIENCY USING DRAMA AS PEDAGOGY

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Received : September 19, 2024; **Revised** : March 21, 2025; **Accepted** :April 29, 2025

Abstract

This research examined the use of drama as pedagogy on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' English-speaking proficiency and engagement. The research addressed the main questions: How does drama as pedagogy develop EFL students' English-speaking proficiency? This research utilized a qualitative method, using 10 Burmese students from C University, Thailand. Data were collected through teaching logs, classroom observations, and participant interviews. The research showed that drama activities tend to improve students' speaking skills. Continuous practice increases students' self-confidence, improves pronunciation, and makes learning enjoyable. This research provides valuable considerations for teachers who seek to incorporate drama into language teaching programs to improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

Keywords：Drama as Pedagogy, EFL (English as a Foreign Language), English Speaking Proficiency, Language Learning

Introduction

1. Research Background and Significance

In the era of globalization, English has become the dominant language for cross-cultural and cross-border communication. However, learning English can be challenging for non-native speakers. English as a foreign language (EFL) students face many challenges in gaining proficiency, especially speaking. According to the British Council (2020), more than 1.5 billion people worldwide are learning English, but many need help with speaking skills. Studies have shown that 60% of EFL learners experience anxiety and lack confidence when speaking English (Horwitz, 2010). In addition, the EF English Proficiency Index (2021) shows that many countries, especially those in Asia and Latin America, have low proficiency levels, and students often find it difficult to practice speaking outside of the classroom due to limited exposure to the language in their daily lives.

For EFL learners, the ability to express oneself orally is essential. One of the prerequisites for learning a language is the ability to express one's thoughts and ideas accurately and fluently in that language. Therefore, one of the primary purposes of language teaching is to help students develop oral talent (Glover, 2011; Boylu & Cangal, 2015; Ajmal & Kumar, 2020). Cultural factors can also impact language learning. This can lead to students

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having a theoretical understanding of English without the ability to use it fluently in conversation.

If a learner cannot use English correctly and fluently daily, he may face problems. Unlike the classroom environment, he needs to reach an average speaking speed in everyday life to express himself effectively to the people he communicates with (Bacha et al., 2021). The ability to express thoughts in an appropriate oral manner at a certain speed, without pausing, is crucial (Amma, 2005; Juvova et al., 2015). Traditional methods can develop students' grammatical abilities but need more practical skills. Achieving this goal requires practice. With practice opportunities, students will find it easier to express their thoughts accurately and fluently.

To address this, English teachers should teach spoken English differently through drama, involving teachers and students in the teaching process. Drama has been recognized as particularly effective for language learning due to its interactive and immersive nature. Drama provides an engaging and motivating context for language use, helping students overcome their fear of speaking and encouraging them to practice in a supportive environment. Drama involves active participation, which enhances engagement and retention. Through role-playing, improvisation, and storytelling, students are encouraged to use language creatively and spontaneously, which aids in developing speaking skills (Smith, 2018). Drama activities often require students to express emotions and perspectives different from their own, making the language-learning process more meaningful and memorable (Wagner, 2013). Drama situates language learning in meaningful contexts, helping students understand the practical use of language and improving their ability to use English in real-life situations (Taylor, 2020).

Several studies have highlighted the success of using drama in EFL classrooms. Bulova (2019) advocated role-playing in EFL teaching using a communicative approach, highlighting its role in promoting communication and creating a supportive psycholinguistic environment conducive to language acquisition. Seimon (2020) argued that incorporating drama into language learning can alleviate learners' anxieties. Chen (2020) conducted a case study in China to improve the multicultural literacy of primary school EFL students through drama, addressing the challenges teachers face in developing students' multicultural skills. Wongsa et al. (2020) studied the effects of drama activities and social media on English speaking skills, attitudes, and motivation among Thai secondary school students, revealing the positive outcomes of incorporating drama into the EFL learning environment. Nanda et al. (2021) reported on using drama to deepen EFL students' knowledge and learning, demonstrating the improvement of student engagement and comprehension when drama was incorporated into language education. Rojabi et al. (2021) highlighted the positive effects of drama on confidence, creativity, and motivation in EFL teaching. In a systematic review, Luo et al. (2024) investigated the relationship between process drama and EFL education, highlighting its positive impact on language skills, learning outcomes, and EFL teacher development.

Incorporating drama into language teaching offers a practical and engaging approach that addresses the limitations of traditional methods. Drama enhances students' speaking proficiency and fosters personal and social development. Engaging in drama activities helps students naturally learn and apply English, improving their ability to express themselves effectively. Drama is a valuable teaching tool in EFL teaching that can improve language skills, reduce anxiety, foster creativity, confidence, and motivation, and enrich students' overall learning experience.

2. Research Questions

The research questions guide the research process: How does drama as pedagogy develop EFL students' English-speaking proficiency?

3. Research Objectives

This thesis aims to evaluate how drama as a pedagogy improves EFL students' English-speaking proficiency.

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the influence of sociocultural factors on cognitive development (Hughes, 2021). Central to this theory are mediation, zone of proximal development (ZPD), internalization, and activity theory, which elucidate how social interaction shapes individuals' higher psychological functions.

Mediation explains how tools like language and symbols facilitate interaction between individuals and their environment, influencing cognitive development (Xi, 2020). These tools bridge the gap between what individuals can achieve independently and with support. ZPD highlights the range between a learner's current abilities and potential with guidance, emphasizing the role of knowledgeable individuals in scaffolding learning (Xi, 2020). Internalization posits that social interactions mediated by tools and cultural artifacts are internalized into cognitive processes, shaping development (Vygotsky, 1987).

Drama provides an ideal setting for language learning and applying Vygotsky's theory. Engaging in collaborative activities like theme establishment, script adaptation, rehearsal, and performance allows students to negotiate meanings and roles, supporting each other (Symington et al., 2021). This mirrors the scaffolding mechanism in the ZPD, enabling less proficient learners to achieve higher language proficiency. This research explores drama as a pedagogy to develop EFL students' speaking proficiency, aiming to provide insights into effective teaching strategies aligned with Vygotsky's theory.

Methodology

In this research, action research is closely related to the dynamic and reflective nature of English language teaching (ELT) teaching in the context of drama as a teaching method.

In this research, the researcher developed a drama summer camp curriculum plan - participants performed drama activities - the researcher (who is also a teacher) observed the participants' behavior in the drama summer camp, and the participants observed each other's behavior - group discussion and evaluation (participants reflected) - researcher reflection and adjustment (teaching log) - suggestions for future research. This research aims to solve the practical problem of how to develop EFL students' English-speaking proficiency. It studies and solves this problem through small-scale practical activities. It is a new method of English oral teaching implemented by the researcher as a teacher to the Burmese group of students, which conforms to the characteristics of action research.

Population and sample group

This research involved Myanmar undergraduate students at C University in Thailand, which offers a diverse academic environment conducive to practicing English, particularly oral skills. The study focused on first-year Myanmar students in the Basic English Program. During the 2/2023 academic year, over 100 Myanmar students were enrolled in this program.

Initially, the researcher aimed to integrate the study into classroom activities, but pre-set teaching plans posed challenges. Thus, the research was shifted to the school break as an extracurricular activity. Despite lower-than-expected participation, convenience sampling secured ten female students aged 17-20, all new to drama. The activity spanned seven days with two-hour sessions twice daily.

This research explores how drama can enhance English-speaking proficiency, offering insights into teaching strategies aligned with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. However, the study's homogeneity limits the generalizability of its findings.

Research Instrument

Teaching Log

Richards and Farrell (2005) emphasized, "A teaching journal is an ongoing written account of observations, reflections, and other thoughts about teaching, usually in a notebook, book, or electronic mode, which serves as a source of discussion, reflection, or evaluation. The journal may record incidents, problems, and insights that occurred during lessons" (Richards & Farrel, 2005, pp. 68–84).

In line with this perspective, this research utilized seven teaching logs to document the researcher's detailed teaching process during the seven-day drama summer camp. These logs included close observations of the participants during the activities, such as their performance in various drama activities, interaction with peers, and every word and sentence in the one-word and one-sentence story activities. Additionally, the logs recorded interactions between participants and the teacher, participants' body language and language performance during classroom presentations, daily changes in participants, and verbal reflections after each class, including the researcher's feelings, experiences, and reflections. The teaching logs dynamically recorded the participants' performance and changes in different drama activities daily, documented them in written form after each activity, and organized them into text after all the courses were completed each day.

Classroom Observation

This research used the observation method to systematically and purposefully observe the behavior of 10 Myanmar students who participated in a seven-day drama summer camp. The method aims to capture the process and results of the activity, focusing on students' performance in drama activities. The researcher used direct observation to observe and record phenomena and behaviors in a natural state using sensory and auxiliary instruments. The researcher was also the activity instructor, who actively participated in the activities and interacted with the students.

This research used a standardized observation checklist to ensure the consistency and reliability of observations. The checklist focused on the same vital behaviors and indicators from beginning to end. The observation data were triangulated with other methods, such as semi-structured interviews, student reflections, and teaching logs, to validate the findings and gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of drama activities on language learning.

Table 1 The Observation Checklist

Engagement	Active participation in drama activities
	Interaction with peers
	Enthusiasm and interest in activities
Language proficiency	Frequency of English use
	Speaking fluently and coherently
	Using newly acquired vocabulary and expressions
	Striving to communicate effectively
Confidence and anxiety	Willingness to speak in front of classmates
	Pauses or interruptions in speech
	Signs of anxiety or nervousness
	Confidence when performing
Creativity and Problem-solving	Ability to improvise and improvise
	Engagement in role-playing and script creation
	Problem-solving during activities
	Adaptability to new situations
Cooperation and Interaction	Working with others
	Quality of group discussions
	Ability to give and receive feedback
	Support for others
Reflection and Self-assessment	Participating in reflective analysis

Data Analysis

The researcher employed qualitative methods to analyze the data collected for each research question, maximizing the diverse data sources available. Here is the detailed analysis plan for the research question:

Teaching logs and participants' reflections: The researcher used thematic analysis to analyze the teaching logs to identify the patterns, themes, and insights into participants' experiences and reflections throughout the implementation process. Initial coding involved reading the teaching logs and reflections to identify recurring words, phrases, and ideas related to speaking proficiency. The codes were then grouped into themes such as "self-confidence," "vocabulary and grammar," "pronunciation," "authentic learning application," "critical thinking and problem-solving skills," and "cultural understanding." If multiple logs and reflections mentioned that students felt more confident speaking English during drama activities, these instances were coded as "self-confidence."

Classroom observations: Through observations, the researcher recorded students' vocabulary acquisition, grammar correction, and pronunciation changes. By analyzing the recorded observation data, changes in students' speaking proficiency over time were determined, and changes in students' speaking proficiency over time were determined by focusing on students' ability to express themselves effectively in English in a collaborative learning environment. In the moon-themed body sculpture activity, students' language acquisition was observed and categorized as "Vocabulary and grammar," in the group rehearsal session, students' tacit cooperation was observed and categorized as "Engaging communication and learning cooperatively."

Research Finding

The qualitative data collected through Teaching logs, classroom observations, and participants' oral reflections shed light on the role of drama as pedagogy in developing EFL students' English-speaking proficiency.

Based on the observations and feedback collected during the drama camp, drama as a pedagogy can significantly develop EFL students' English-speaking skills. The drama activities created an immersive, interactive, and supportive environment that encouraged students to practice and improve their English-speaking skills.

The following themes found from the data collected using the Teaching log and participant feedback as instruments indicated that drama as pedagogy develops EFL students' English-speaking proficiency through the following:

1.Self- confidence

One of the noticeable improvements was in the student's confidence and fluency, especially when speaking in front of others.

On the first day of the drama camp, it was observed that the participants needed to be familiar with each other despite being from the same country. This unfamiliarity contributed to shyness and lack of confidence when speaking English. However, it was found that participants developed their self-confidence after a few meetings.

Based on the researcher's observation using the Teaching log:

"During the name game, only three out of ten participants said their names confidently and loudly, while the remaining seven spoke softly and avoided eye contact" (Teaching Log 1).

This initial hesitation highlights the participants' baseline proficiency and confidence levels, indicating interventions needed to boost their speaking skills. The name game and body language exercises were instrumental in breaking the ice among participants. Incorporating physical movements and encouraging louder, more confident speech helped participants become more comfortable speaking English with each other.

For example,

"Although initially shy, participants gradually became more expressive and confident as they repeated their names and actions. Notably, participants like Hla and Aye who performed more confidently inspired others to increase their volume and boldness in their movements" (Teaching Log 1).

The object-sharing activity further developed participants' speaking skills by requiring them to describe their chosen objects in English. This exercise improved their vocabulary and descriptive skills, encouraging them to speak in complete sentences and correct grammatical structures.

For instance, participants provided descriptions such as,

"This is a pen. I bought it at the bookstore. It can be used for writing."

Moreover, "This is a coat. I bought it from Zara. It keeps me warm because it's very cold indoors in Thailand" (Teaching Log 1).

Through repeated practice and immediate feedback, participants corrected their mistakes and gained confidence in using English more accurately. Role-playing and body language exercises gradually helped students overcome their initial shyness. For example, when participants had to say their names and favorite things while performing the corresponding actions, it forced them to participate more actively. Over time, participants began to express themselves more confidently, as when they repeated the actions and names of their peers.

Object-sharing activities further built confidence. Initially, participants were nervous, but the structured interaction—introducing the objects and explaining their significance—gave them a clear framework to practice speaking. By the end of the course, even the initially shy participants could express themselves more clearly and confidently.

"Through today's event, I found that everyone is very friendly, and no one will laugh at me, which makes me more confident." (Teaching Log 1)

During the third day of emotional training, it was observed that each group expressed their assigned emotions through facial expressions and body language. The different responses highlighted the participants' increasing ability to *"Express complex emotions and their growing comfort in being in front of their peers."* (Teaching Log 3)

Students became more comfortable speaking English spontaneously and continuously through improvisation and role-playing. For instance, during the "Gibberish" and "Yes, and" activities, students initially struggled but gradually became more confident in contributing to the storyline. As observed:

"Thiri and Khin received the command 'surprise'. I observed that Thiri started talking nonsense as soon as she received the command. She jumped up happily, while Khin looked serious as if asking her why she was so happy. Aye and Yamin received the command' anxiety'. Aye kept scratching her hair with her hands, showing a very anxious look. When she talked nonsense, her tone was full of irritability. Yamin kept shaking his hands and his tone was also very irritable. Hla and Myat received the command' sadness'. Hla talked nonsense for a while, then squatted on the ground with her hands covering her face, and Myat also squatted down to comfort her." (Teaching Log 4).

Through corrections and encouragement, students became more engaged. As the activity progressed, "I noticed an increase in the enthusiasm and engagement of the participants. They seemed to enjoy the challenge of keeping the conversation flowing and were eager to contribute to the storyline" (Teaching log 5).

Yamin also reflected on this improvement in her feedback: *"Today's improvisation was so much fun! I enjoyed playing the customer in the barbershop scene. I think I expressed my anger well, but sometimes, I spoke too fast."*

Repeated practice and the supportive environment of the drama camp helped participants improve their language proficiency and gain confidence in their speaking abilities.

"Despite mistakes or difficulties, the participants remained engaged and willing to learn. Although some students initially struggled with grammar or vocabulary, they improved during the activity" (Teaching log 5).

Activities such as imitating film and television clips required precise pronunciation and intonation, contributing to their overall language development.

Myat: "I had a lot of fun practicing my lines with my friends. I chose 'well well', and I think I did well. However, I need to practice my facial expressions to match the emotions of the characters."

Khin: "I found that playing different roles made me more empathetic, and everyone is actually working hard."

These excerpts illustrate how participants' confidence and language proficiency improved through engaging and repeated practice. The drama activities, especially the cold reading exercises, required participants to perform in front of their peers, boosting their confidence. Yamin and Wai, for example, initially showed nervousness but gradually became more confident in their delivery through continuous practice. The supportive environment and feedback during these sessions helped students build their public speaking skills.

"Yamin: In the final sharing session, she was a little nervous when reading the lines at first, her speed was fast, and her pronunciation was not very clear, but her emotions were full. Through repeated practice, she learned to slow down her speed and express every sentence clearly." (Teaching Log 6)

"Wai: Although Wai could accurately judge the personality of the character B in the script, she lacked practice in how to accurately express emotions. Through continuous practice, her facial expressions and emotions eventually became more natural." (Teaching Log 6)

Rehearsing and performing in front of peers allowed students to overcome their fear of public speaking and build self-assurance.

"After training the lines, the participants were divided into groups according to the scenarios and rehearsed. They needed to arrange actions for the roles they played, shape their roles according to their own understanding, such as what kind of actions the role would do, etc., and find some props." (Teaching Log 7)

The active involvement in rehearsals and the final presentation provided a safe and supportive environment for students to practice speaking in front of an audience, contributing to their overall confidence.

Hla*: "Drama Camp has benefited me a lot. I feel more confident, especially when communicating with others, and I am not afraid of people looking at me when I speak in public."*

May*: "Attending Drama Camp has been a journey of self-discovery for me. I have learned to step out of my comfort zone and communicate more effectively. The final presentation was a testament to our growth as a team and I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of it."*

Throughout the drama camp, participants markedly improved their confidence and speaking abilities. For instance, Yamin expressed pride in the progress made during the camp, highlighting improved speaking skills and a more remarkable ability to express oneself. Thiri echoed This, noting significant enhancement in speaking skills and increased confidence in public speaking.

"During this process, the participants were very interested in the script. After receiving the script, they quickly read it carefully, and kept underlining and taking notes with pens. When they encountered words that they were not sure of the pronunciation, they could also use the mobile phone dictionary to confirm the pronunciation." (Teaching Log 7)

Thiri said: "*I am amazed at how much I have learned in Drama Camp. My speaking skills have improved significantly, and I am more confident in expressing myself in front of others."*

The findings reveal that drama as pedagogy significantly enhances EFL students' English-speaking proficiency. Observations and feedback from a drama camp indicate improved self-confidence, fluency, and vocabulary. Initially, shy students became more expressive and confident through interactive activities like the name game, object-sharing, and role-playing. Emotional training and improvisation exercises helped students convey complex emotions and speak spontaneously. Continuous practice in a supportive environment, including rehearsing lines and performing, allowed students to overcome public speaking fears. The participants' reflections highlight increased confidence and language proficiency, emphasizing the effectiveness of drama-based pedagogy in EFL learning.

2.Pronunciation

At first, participants needed help with pronunciation and clarity. Many spoke softly, making it difficult for others to hear and understand them. The researchers used activities to improve participants' pronunciation, using repetition and practicing critical elements. For example, during the name game, participants were encouraged several times to speak louder and more clearly. This repetition helped improve their pronunciation and volume.

The body language exercise required participants to describe their Interests with actions, which required them to speak clearly so their peers could understand and imitate their actions. This not only improved pronunciation but also encouraged them to speak more clearly.

The participants also undertook various exercises focused on clear pronunciation and voice control, which are crucial for effective communication in English. These included humming exercises, yawning to open the mouth widely, and practicing exaggerated vowel sounds.

"The exercises included yawning to open their mouths as widely as possible, making a loud sound, and humming a simple song through buzzed lips. Although it was the first time for the participants to do these exercises, they eventually took them very seriously by the third session." (Teaching log 2)

This consistent practice led to noticeable improvements in their ability to produce clear and distinct sounds, essential for spoken English intelligibility.

Hla: *"Voice training was challenging, but it helped me understand how to use my diaphragm better."*

May: *"The warm-up exercises helped me relax. I also realized that intonation is important when speaking, and I can see how it affects whether my speech sounds polite or natural."*

The imitation exercises with film and television clips allowed participants to focus on pronunciation and intonation. Students practiced the nuances of English speech by mimicking characters' lines and expressions. During the practice of classic lines like "Oh my god" from "Friends" and "well well" from "Maleficent," students exhibited significant improvements. For example, Myat and May's performance:

"When Myat and May said, 'well well,' their expressions were exactly the same as the characters. Khin used the same voice to reproduce the characters in 'The Devil Wears Prada'" (Teaching Log 5).

Myat's reflection supports this observation:

"I had a lot of fun practicing my lines with my friends. I chose 'well well,' and I think I did well. However, I need to practice my facial expressions to match the emotions of the characters."

By constantly practicing lines, clarity also developed. For example, on the sixth day of cold reading training, it was observed that.

"Yamin: .... In the final sharing session, she was a little nervous when reading the lines at first, her speed was fast, and her pronunciation was not very clear, but her emotions

were full. I gave her advice that full emotions are important, but it is more important to read the lines clearly, because the audience needs to hear every line of yours clearly. Through repeated practice, she learned to slow down her speed and express every sentence clearly." (Teaching Log 5)

During the drama camp, students were introduced to new vocabulary and had multiple opportunities to practice pronunciation. For instance, Yamin, in Group 1, meticulously noted down the pronunciation of challenging words like "vegetarian," "lactose," and "intolerant" and actively sought clarification during discussions. This conscious effort to understand and practice new vocabulary improved her pronunciation skills. Similarly, Wai asked questions about word pronunciations, indicating active engagement with new vocabulary and its correct usage.

"Yamin: When reading the script quietly, A focused on the lines and took notes from time to time. Her notes also recorded the pronunciation of some words, such as 'vegetarian', 'lactose', and 'intolerant'." (Teaching log 7)

"Wai: She frowned while reading the script, obviously thinking about the emotions in the script, and asked me about the pronunciation of some words in the script from time to time." (Teaching log 7)

Another critical aspect that helped students enhance their English-speaking proficiency was focusing on pronunciation and intonation during cold readings and line rehearsals. Repeated practice of lines with attention to stress, rhythm, and emotional expression led to noticeable improvements.

Cold reading exercises were instrumental in helping participants understand and convey emotions through their speech. May and Thiri, in Group 2, successfully identified and expressed the emotional nuances of their characters. This activity required them to vary their intonation to match the emotions in the script, enhancing their ability to use tone effectively in English conversations.

"May: When sharing, she successfully conveyed A's emotions through changes in facial expressions and intonation." (Teaching Log 6)

"Thiri: When sharing, he accurately grasped B's emotional changes and acted very naturally." (Teaching Log 6)

"The script contains some complex dialogues and idioms, such as 'Patience is a virtue' or 'Progress is an illusion.' Therefore, I discussed unfamiliar vocabulary and idioms with the participants and provided pronunciation practice. This script is full of dialogues, and the dialogues require nuanced emotional expressions, which can be challenging for non-professional actors, especially if they are not familiar with English intonation patterns. Fortunately, although we cannot express ourselves like native speakers, after just a few training sessions, the participants' lines can accurately convey the emotions of the characters." (Teaching Log 7)

Drama activities necessitated careful attention to pronunciation and understanding of complex vocabulary. Participants independently addressed pronunciation issues using tools like mobile phone dictionaries, and collaborative discussions during line reading sessions further reinforced their learning.

"I discussed unfamiliar vocabulary and idioms with the participants and provided pronunciation practice. This script is full of dialogues, and the dialogues require nuanced emotional expressions, which can be challenging for non-professional actors, especially if they are not familiar with English intonation patterns." (Teaching Log 7)

Hla said: "Beyond improving my speaking proficiency, I've also learned valuable lessons in empathy and understanding. The drama camp has helped me see things from different perspectives and appreciate the importance of effective communication in all aspects of life."

The findings demonstrate that drama as pedagogy significantly enhances EFL students' pronunciation and clarity. Initial difficulties with pronunciation and volume were addressed through repetitive exercises, body language activities, and voice training. Mimicking film and

television clips improved intonation and expression, while cold reading and line rehearsals focused on stress, rhythm, and emotional conveyance. Participants practiced new vocabulary and pronunciation using mobile dictionaries and collaborative discussions. This consistent practice led to notable improvements in clear, distinct speech and effective communication, fostering increased student confidence and language proficiency.

3.Vocabulary and grammar

Participants initially used limited vocabulary and simple sentences. Their descriptions were often basic and needed more variety. Development through activities: Object-sharing activities were particularly effective in expanding vocabulary. Participants had to describe objects in detail, including where they bought them and what they were used for, which encouraged them to use a wider vocabulary and more complex sentences.

Correction and prompting from the instructor helped improve their language. For example, when a participant described water as making a person "very wet," the instructor prompted her to say, "quench thirst," expanding her vocabulary.

> *"This is water, I bought it from the store, it can make people very wet, I think everyone needs water." (I think she might want to say, 'It can quench thirst,' so I prompted her, and she corrected her previous one)" (Teaching Log 1)*

The third day of the camp activities, the "go, stop, jump, and clap" game, followed by the addition of instructions like "electricity" and "water," required participants to respond quickly and creatively. This not only improved their physical expressiveness but also enhanced their ability to follow complex instructions in English, thereby improving their comprehension and reaction times in a second language.

> *"After three times, everyone responded very well to the instruction of 'electricity.' They swayed their bodies and twitched their arms crazily. Then, I added a new instruction, 'water.' After hearing this instruction, the body should flow like water, very soft and slow. This time, the participating groups were able to respond quickly after hearing the instructions, and they all focused on their own bodies." (Teaching Log 3)*

This demonstrates how the participants improved their ability to understand and execute instructions in English, which is a crucial aspect of language proficiency. Another effective activity was walking to a rhythm and freezing in different shapes, such as various moon phases. This activity combined physical movement with learning new vocabulary, enhancing their physical coordination and language skills.

> *"I shared the nouns representing the different states of the moon: Crescent Moon, First Quarter Moon, Full Moon, Last Quarter Moon, and Waning Moon, and explained to the participants what time these states of the moon corresponded to. After asking, there was a ten-minute break. During the break, I observed that the participants were still using their hands to gesture the shape of the moon to each other." (Teaching Log 3)*

The continued use of gestures to reinforce new vocabulary highlights how integrating physical movement with language learning can lead to better retention and understanding.

> Thiri: *"Today's body language training was fun. I realized that I could express more without words. The warm-up games were fun and relaxed me. I enjoyed trying to interpret the different moon phases with my body and it was fun to learn new vocabulary about the different moon phases from the activities."*

During the fourth day of the drama camp, storytelling activities were pivotal in improving participants' language development. According to the Teaching log, "StorytellingStorytelling and narrative in drama training can greatly improve language development. Through situational learning, new words and phrases are learned in the context of the story, making it easier for participants to remember and use them correctly" (Teaching Log 4).

Retelling and creating new stories provided ample opportunities for oral practice, helping students become more fluent. This was evident in the participants' increased confidence and proficiency in using new vocabulary and grammatical structures within the narrative context.

The "One-Word Story" exercise provided insights into the participants' grammatical proficiency and vocabulary usage. Initially, the participants needed help with verb tense agreement and limited vocabulary. However, with guidance and practice, they showed improvement in constructing more coherent and grammatically accurate sentences. For example, in the second round of the exercise, participants consistently used past tense and articles correctly, resulting in a more cohesive narrative. The collaborative nature of this activity encouraged participants to think quickly and work together to build a story, enhancing their engagement and speaking skills.

Role-playing activities required students to use and understand a variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures in context. The improvisational performances provided a platform for practical application and immediate correction of language use. For example, during the restaurant scene, students used complex sentences to resolve conflicts:

> *"Throughout the performance, I observed that the customer displayed clear anger, repeatedly touching her hair and expressing dissatisfaction. This emotional expression highlighted her grasp of the character's feelings" (Teaching Log 5).*

The immediate grammatical corrections to ensure clarity and natural language use, which reinforced their learning:

> *Customer: Instead of "I look so ugly now!" try saying, "I look terrible now!"*
> *Hairdresser: The sentence "I thought this is the length you wanted" should be "I thought this was the length you wanted."*
> *Salon Manager: "We will do our best to solve this problem" is good, but "We will do everything we can to fix this" sounds more natural.*
> *Assistant: "Here are some snacks and water. Do you need anything else?" is fine, but "Would you like some snacks and water?" is more polite and natural.*
> *Waiter: "Here are your dishes. Enjoy your meal" is correct, but "Here is your meal. Enjoy!" sounds more natural.*
> *Customer 1: Instead of "That's disgusting!" try saying "This is disgusting!"*
> *Customer 2: "Yeah, luckily I didn't eat it yet" should be "Yeah, luckily I haven't eaten it yet."*
> *Chef: "I apologize, this is our mistake" is correct, but "I'm very sorry, this is our mistake" sounds more apologetic. (Teaching Log 5).*

The findings show that drama as pedagogy significantly enhances EFL students' vocabulary and grammar. Initially limited in vocabulary and simple sentence structures, participants improved through activities like object-sharing, which encouraged detailed descriptions and complex sentences. Correction and prompting from the instructor further expanded their language use. Interactive games, such as "go, stop, jump, and clap" and storytelling exercises, improved comprehension, reaction times, and language development by contextualizing new vocabulary and grammar. Role-playing activities and improvisational performances provided practical application and immediate correction, enhancing grammatical accuracy and fluency. For instance, participants improved verb tense agreement and article usage in storytelling exercises and received real-time feedback to refine their language use in role-playing scenarios. Integrating physical movement with language learning, as seen in activities like mimicking moon phases, also contributed to better retention and understanding. Overall, drama-based pedagogy proved effective in developing both vocabulary and grammatical skills in EFL learners.

4.Engaging in communication and learning cooperatively

Participants were initially reluctant to interact with each other, preferring to interact with friends they already knew. On the first day, structured interactive activities promoted engagement and communication. The name game required participants to remember and repeat each other's names and actions, promoting active listening and interaction. The object exchange activity forced participants to interact with new people, increasing their comfort level in talking to different people. The fixed lines of conversation provided them with a safe structure to practice speaking. By the end of the course, participants were more willing to

interact with each other. They shared their feelings and experiences, and many expressed greater comfort and enjoyment in interacting in English.

The activity of exchanging objects and greeting each other with a fixed line, "Hello, nice to meet you, I want to be friends with you, I want to give you this," was crucial in enhancing social interaction and practical speaking proficiency. Initially, participants were hesitant and unsure how to approach others, but as the activity progressed, they became more comfortable and active in their interactions. This increased their willingness to converse and use English in a social context.

One participant noted,

"My favorite part was the item swapping. It was a little awkward at first, but when I swapped my bracelet with a new friend, I felt a connection and it was a great feeling" (Teaching Log 1).

Participants' feedback at the end of the first day corroborates the observational data, highlighting significant improvements in their speaking proficiency and overall confidence. For instance:

"I was a little nervous at first and didn't dare to say my name loudly. But when I saw that everyone else said it, I felt much better."

"Through today's event, I found that everyone is very friendly, and no one will laugh at me, which makes me more confident."

"I usually don't dare to show myself in front of others, but this event made me feel that there is actually nothing to be afraid of."

"To be honest, I am a little shy and don't dare to talk to people I don't know. But Today's event made me feel that everyone is actually very friendly, and we have a lot in common."

Group exercises, such as creating the shape of a public toilet and acting out scenes with specific emotions, required participants to collaborate and communicate effectively. These activities fostered a sense of teamwork and quick thinking, which are vital for language development.

"The next training was 'Body Shape,' which required the participants to use their imagination and use their bodies to build the image I gave. Each group had only three minutes to prepare, which required good cooperation and quick response between the members of each group." (Teaching Log 3)

Such activities necessitated the use of English for communication and coordination within the groups, thereby enhancing their speaking proficiency through practical application.

Aye: *"The warm-up activities were a great way to start the day. I also found the 'body posture' exercise challenging but rewarding. It made me see the importance of teamwork and communication."*

Hla: "*I liked the part where we had to interpret emotions in different scenarios. It was a little difficult at first, but as we practiced, it became easier to convey emotions through facial expressions and body language. I feel that body language is important in communication."*

Nandar: *"I think Today's training was very helpful to me. Especially for future presentations, I realized the importance of expressions and body language."*

Drama activities fostered a sense of cooperation and teamwork among participants. By working in groups, students learned to listen, support, and build on each other's contributions, which enhanced their communication skills. For example, during the "Yes, and" activity, students had to rely on each other's inputs to keep the story going:

"Groups require participants to work collaboratively, listen to each other, and build on each other's contributions. This teamwork spirit strengthens their interpersonal skills and promotes a supportive learning environment" (Teaching log 5).

Hla's feedback reflects the importance of cooperation:

Today's activities made me more connected with everyone. These activities are all about cooperation, and I also learned how to cooperate better with friends.

The role-playing and improvisation activities required participants to communicate effectively and collaborate, which enhanced their engagement and language skills. The need to maintain the flow of conversation and the collaborative nature of the exercises fostered a sense of teamwork and mutual support.

"Through this game, I observed that, initially, some participants seemed hesitant or made mistakes in understanding the rules of the game. However, through gentle corrections and encouragement, they gradually became more engaged" (Teaching Log 5).

Yamin: *"Today's improvisation was so much fun! I enjoyed playing the customer in the barbershop scene. I think I expressed my anger well, but sometimes, I spoke too fast."*
Hla: *"I think Today's activities made me more connected with everyone. These activities are all about cooperation, and I think I also learned how to cooperate better with friends."*

These reflections demonstrate that the drama activities engaged participants and helped them develop essential communication and collaboration skills. Drama activities promoted collaboration and teamwork, which are essential for language learning. Participants had to work together to interpret scripts and rehearse scenes, fostering mutual support and collective improvement. The collaborative efforts were crucial in helping them understand and perform their roles effectively, enhancing their speaking proficiency through peer learning and support.

"Yamin and Wai constantly adjusted their performance methods during rehearsals to better match each other's rhythm." (Teaching Log 6)
"May worked well with Thiri during rehearsal. The two found a natural way to interact through constant adjustments, and the rhythm of the two was also very natural, just like a daily conversation." (Teaching Log 6)
The feedback from the participants:
Yamin: "Body sculpture is a unique way to explore the theme of love. It allows us to express complex emotions through body movements and gestures. Collaboratively creating collective sculptures enhances our teamwork and communication skills."
May: "Cold reading exercises are a valuable opportunity to improve my language skills and acting abilities. Reading scripts aloud challenges me to pronounce clearly and convey emotions effectively. Collaborating with group members helped me understand subtle nuances."

The collaborative nature of drama activities also significantly enhanced students' communicative abilities. Working together to rehearse and perform required effective communication, negotiation, and mutual support, all of which contributed to the student's language development.

"In this rehearsal, I played the role of director and rehearsal leader. I guided the participants' scheduling and arranged the actors' movements and positions on the stage. The participants practiced their appearance, exit, and interaction with other characters to ensure smooth transitions and effective stage performances. However, during the rehearsal, the actors encountered challenges such as forgetting lines, missing cues, or stage conflicts. I suggested that they work together to find solutions, provide support, and encouragement to each other, and strive to achieve a coherent and refined performance." (Teaching Log 7)

The feedback from Participants:
Khin: "*Attending the drama camp was a rewarding experience for me. I learned to communicate more effectively and work with others to achieve common goals."*
Shwe: *"The drama camp has fostered a sense of community. I've formed meaningful connections and friendships that I hope will last long after the camp ends."*

Engaging in drama allowed students to explore different perspectives and develop empathy. Hla mentioned that the camp taught valuable lessons in empathy, understanding, and seeing things from different perspectives. This engagement with varied human experiences and emotions was a core component of the drama activities.

"The actors were able to actively participate in discussing the characters' backstories, motivations, and relationships, contributing ideas and insights to enrich their performances." (Teaching Log 7)

"*The drama camp has helped me see things from different perspectives and appreciate the importance of effective communication in all aspects of life."*

These findings illustrate how drama as pedagogy fosters a more engaging and enriching environment for EFL students, significantly boosting their communication skills. The findings show that drama as pedagogy significantly enhances EFL students' engagement, communication, and cooperative learning. Initially reluctant to interact, participants became more willing to engage through structured activities like the name game and object exchange, which promoted active listening and social interaction. Feedback highlights increased confidence and enjoyment in using English. Group exercises, such as creating body shapes and role-playing, fostered teamwork and quick thinking, essential for language development. Collaborative activities like the "Yes, and" exercise enhanced communication and mutual support, promoting a supportive learning environment. Participants learned to listen, support, and build on each other's contributions, improving their interpersonal skills and language proficiency. Role-playing and improvisation required effective communication and collaboration, enhancing engagement and language skills. Reflections and observational data confirm that drama activities significantly boost students' communication, teamwork, and empathy, creating a more enriching and effective EFL learning environment.

Pedagogical Implications

This research on drama as pedagogy for EFL students reveals several critical pedagogical implications. Drama activities significantly enhance speaking proficiency through continuous practice in dynamic scenarios. They foster teamwork and cooperation by necessitating collaboration in creating and performing scenes. Additionally, drama increases engagement and motivation through interactive and enjoyable learning experiences, helping students develop empathy and emotional understanding by stepping into different roles. However, challenges such as overcoming shyness and fear must be addressed. Teachers should create supportive environments, gradually introduce drama activities, and provide continuous encouragement and constructive feedback to maximize the benefits of this approach.

Conclusion

The research underscores the significant pedagogical benefits of integrating drama into EFL education. Drama activities enhance students' speaking proficiency by providing continuous, dynamic practice in various scenarios, boosting fluency and confidence. They foster teamwork and cooperation, essential for creating a supportive classroom environment and improving communication skills. Moreover, drama makes learning more engaging and enjoyable, sustaining student motivation through creative and interactive exercises.

However, challenges such as overcoming shyness and fear of making mistakes can hinder active participation. Educators play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by creating a non-judgmental, supportive classroom environment, gradually introducing drama activities, and providing continuous encouragement and constructive feedback. By incorporating drama into the EFL curriculum, educators can offer a holistic approach to language learning that improves linguistic skills, fosters personal growth, and prepares

students for real-world communication. The findings advocate for drama as a dynamic, effective tool in language education, capable of transforming the learning experience and enhancing overall student outcomes.

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