Using Drama to Enhance the Speaking Performance and Intelligibility of English Major Students at the University of Palestine

استخدام مدخل الدراما لتحسين أداء المحادثة والمفهومية لدي طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة فلسطين

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Major Students at the University of Palestine

Dr. Mohamed Ali Shaat

Abstract

Speaking activities are one of the most difficult tasks that many English foreign language learners (EFLLs) do not admire. These learners are not motivated enough to participate in such activities, and usually, they opt to withdraw. Most English language teachers adopt traditional methods in dealing with such activities, which negatively affects their students' speaking performance. The main purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of using the drama approach on enhancing speaking performance and intelligibility among English major students at the University of Palestine. The researcher adopted the quasi-experimental approach and selected a convenient sample of the University of Palestine's English majors, including 15 senior students, two males and 13 females. The selected students were enrolled in a drama course during the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019. To achieve the goals of the study, the researcher used drama as a teaching approach to enhance students' speaking performance and intelligibility. In the one-group experiment design of this study, the researcher conducted a speaking pre/posttest on the study participants. The participants' speaking performance and intelligibility were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. The results revealed that the drama approach positively enhanced the University of Palestine's English students' speaking performance and intelligibility.

Keywords: Drama approach, speaking performance and intelligibility

الملخص

تعد أنشطة المحادثة من أصعب المهمات التي لا يفضلها عدد كبير من طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية، والذين لا يشعرون بالتحفيز للمشاركة في هذه الفعاليات، لذا ينسحب منها معظم الطلاب، وبالتزامن نجد أنَّ معظم المدرسين يستخدمون طرقاً تقليدية لتنفيذ أنشطة المحادثة لطلبتهم، الأمر الذي ينعكس سلبا على أداء المحادثة والمفهومية لهؤلاء الطلبة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في أثر استخدام منهج الدراما لتحسين أداء المحادثة والمفهومية لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة فلسطين، وقام الباحث

باختيار عينة قصدية تشمل (15) طالب تخصص لغة إنجليزية من كلية التربية – جامعة فلسطين، موزعين إلى (2) من الذكورو (13) من الإناث والذين كانوا مسجلين لمقرر الدراما خلال الفصل الدراسي الثاني للعام الجامعي 2018/2019 م، حيث استخدم الباحث مدخل الدراما كاستراتيجية تدريس لتحسين أداء المحادثة والمفهومية لعينة الدراسة مستخدما في ذلك عينة تجريبية واحدة طبق عليها اختبار محادثة قبلياً وبعدياً والذي تم تحليل نتائجه كمياً وكيفياً، أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أثراً إيجابيا للدراما في تحسين أداء المحادثة والمفهومية لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة فلسطين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مدخل الدراما – اداء المحادثة والمفهومية

1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the four important skills of any language. People speak to express their thoughts and feelings. Chaney & Burk (1998, p.13) mentioned that speaking is a process that aims to convey meaningful messages through verbal and body language in different loquacious situations. It includes the speaker's ability to produce accurate and correct utterances, linguistic competence, and knowledge of the appropriate context for language use, enabling a speaker to use a suitable language in different speaking situations and socio-cultural competence. This was illustrated by Kailani and Muqattach (2017, p.43), who stated that enhancing English foreign language learners' (EFLLs') speaking abilities involves introducing the linguistic forms of English language for those learners and training them on when and how to use these forms.

From the aforementioned paragraph, which illustrates the importance of speaking skills and their components, one can conclude that handling speaking activities to EFLLs require well-planned teaching procedures that aim to enhance the communicative competence, strategic, linguistic, and socio-cultural competencies of these learners. However, effective teaching of speaking, which enables learners to use the target language naturally, is still neglected by teachers of English as a foreign language (Afana, 2012; Ashour,

2014; Zourob, 2014). It seems that most of those teachers are still adopting the traditional methods of teaching, which focus on grammar rules and the meaning of vocabulary that are isolated from their social context (Harmar, 2001; Richards & Renandyya, 2002). Kailani and Muqattach (2016) pointed out that classes that are demonstrated by the use of the grammar-translation method do not provide opportunities for EFLLs to communicate using the target language, and in such type of instruction, spoken language is neglected. The researcher believes that the utilization of merely one method of teaching, the grammar-translation method, is disadvantageous to EFLLs who will not be motivated to keep participating in the teaching activities which focus on teaching structure and neglect teaching oral skills.

Neglecting to teach speaking to EFLLs has devastating results. Shaat (2017) revealed that the oral proficiency of high and low achievers of English majors at al-Azhar University in Gaza is not up to the required level of English foreign language learners. Most of the participants' level of oral proficiency in Shaat's study falls under the slow and moderate slow levels. Moreover, Tuan and Mai (2015) indicated that a wide majority of language learners find it difficult to convey their thoughts and feelings using the target language orally. Results of the interview with a random sample of Palestinian EFLLs, which was conducted in a pilot study done by the researcher to reveal the reasons behind the aforementioned problem, indicated that those learners seldom experience natural and live speaking activities during the different stages of their education levels. Most of their teachers focus on teaching grammar and structure of the language, which is a teacher-centered instruction.

In contrast, the drama approach of teaching is a student-centered approach. Drama, in literature and applied linguistics, motivates interlocutors to produce improvisational fluent and natural speech. Bailey (2006) mentioned that when interlocutors communicate orally with each other, they tend to experience modified interaction which facilitates comprehension of the intended message. In addition, Laught (2019) claimed that engaging EFLLs in dramatic activities helps create real-life-like situations that provide chances

for those students to use the language and may positively affect their speaking performance and intelligibility.

2. Rationale of the Study

The literature review has shown that the speaking performance of EFLLs is not up to the required standard, and the speaking problems which encounter these learners stand as a serious barrier that hinders students' communication (AL-Hosni, 2014; Shaat, 2017). Hence, a resurgence has been emerged among local and foreign researchers to enhance the speaking ability of EFLLs. For example, Pishkar, Moinzadeh, and Dabghi (2017) revealed the effect of teaching modern English drama on the students' fluency and accuracy of speaking. Furthermore, Thomson (2016) investigated the effectiveness of drama as an instructional approach for the development of second language oral fluency and comprehensibility. Also, Sabah (2015) revealed the effectiveness of using debates in developing the speaking skills of English majors at the University of Palestine. In addition, Aljadili (2014) identified the effectiveness of using virtual classes in developing the tenth graders' speaking skills and reducing their speaking anxiety. Moreover, Zourob (2014) conducted an experiment to find out the effectiveness of using webinars in improving the speaking skills among Rafah UNRWA seventh graders. Also, Ashour (2014) tested the effect of using a video conferencing-based strategy on UNRWA ninth graders' English speaking skills. Furthermore, Sharbain (2009) explored the difficulties encountering ninth-grade English teachers in performing their roles in light of the communicative approach to teaching speaking in the Gaza Strip. Additionally, Borgde (2007) discussed how drama activities could be used in teaching German to various groups of students at Cork Institute of Technology.

Up to the researcher's best knowledge, none of the previous studies which have been conducted in the Gaza Strip investigated the effect of using the drama approach to enhance the speaking performance and intelligibility of the University of Palestine's English majors. The recent study addressed this unique aim.

3. Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following major question:

What is the effect of using the drama approach to enhance speaking performance and intelligibility among the University of Palestine's EFLLs?

To achieve the aims of the study, the researcher addressed the following sub-questions:

1. Are there statistically significant differences at (a< .05) between the speaking performance of the University of Palestine's English majors before and after attending drama classes?

2. Are there statistically significant differences at (a<0.05) between the level of intelligibility of the University of Palestine's English majors before and after attending drama classes?

4. Literature Review

4.1 Speaking Performance

Students' speaking performance should be evaluated throughout the teaching and learning process. Thornburg (2005, p.127) proposed four categories that can be used to assess speaking ability. The first category Thornburg suggested is grammar and vocabulary. On this scale, students get marks for the accurate and appropriate use of the syntactic forms and vocabulary, which help meet the required task. The second category is discourse management, where examiners look for evidence of the students' ability to express ideas and opinions in coherent and connected speech. This requires that learners must be able to construct sentences and produce utterances in order to convey information and to express or justify opinions. Pronunciation is the third category Thornburg suggested to assess the speaking ability of English learners. This term refers to students' ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfill the task requirements, such as the production of individual sounds, the appropriate linking of words, and the use of stress and intonation to convey the intended meaning. The last category of assessing speaking

ability is interactive communication, which refers to the students' ability to interact with interlocutor by initiating and responding appropriately and at the required speed and rhythm to fulfill the task requirement, including using functional language and strategies to perform the interaction.

From the four classification terms cited above, readers can conclude that speaking is an active interaction between a speaker and listener/s. An English language speaker must be able to produce fluent speech using appropriate and variant types of vocabulary and structures. In addition, good speakers have to use comprehensive pronunciation and accurate grammar rules to communicate their opinion effectively.

Also, researchers have shown that fluency, which refers to how smoothly and quickly a speaker can produce correct connected speech, is an important indicator of a good speaking performance. Scientific studies have shown that fluency has some predicators. These predicators are: The speaker's amount of talk, speech rate, and the mean length of run (Lennon, 1990; Riggenbach, 1991). On the one hand, the research results showed that a native speaker's speech rate ranges from 120-260 words per minute (wpm) (Gotz, 2013, p.15). In real-life situations, a foreign language speaker's rate of speech is lower than this level (Hincks, 2008 as cited in Gotz, 2013, p.16). It is ranged from 125-150 wpm (Koch, 1998 as cited in el-Hilaly, 2001). On the other hand, the mean length of run, which was computed by dividing the amount of talk by the number of the speaker's pauses, presents the extent to which learners are able to produce segments of a message without pausing while engaged in an oral narrative task (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p.156).

It is worth mentioning that the students' speaking performance is affected by the following main factors: (1) performance condition, which includes time pressure, planning, and amount of support; (2) effective factors such as motivation, confidence, and anxiety, and (3) listening ability and feedback during speaking activities (Tuan & Mai, 2015). Considering these factors when training students to speak naturally as in real-life situations, which is the main concern of the drama approach, helps learners produce accurate, fluent

utterances, which may positively affect the level of intelligibility a listener gains.

4.2 Intelligibility

Intelligibility indicates how a person's speech can be understood or comprehended. Derwing and Munro (2009) differentiated between two terms, namely comprehensibility and intelligibility. The former describes how easy or difficult people can comprehend speech, whereas the latter tackles how much listeners actually understand a speaker's produced utterance. Derwing and Munro also pointed out various ways to assess intelligibility, including giving listeners dictations and counting the percentage of words they transcribe correctly, asking listeners to indicate whether the sentences a speaker produces are true or false, answering comprehension questions, and writing summaries to determine how well a listener actually understand what is said. Kang, Thomson, and Moran (2018) revealed that the strongest way of measuring intelligibility is by counting the listeners' responses to nonsense sentences. On the other hand, Flipsen (2006) suggested that choosing the best words which help convey the meaning accurately, constructing correct syntax structure, using the correct sounds, including the appropriate prosody to ensure coherence and cohesion, and possessing the physical skills are various means which help make a speaker's speech comprehended. Flipsen added that if you want to measure the intelligibility of someone, you have to measure how much is being understood.

Motivating students to produce comprehensive utterances in a natural teaching environment affects their intelligibility. In traditional English classes, which are teacher-centered in most of the class time, students' role is passive and students are considered empty boxes that should be filled with information (Kailani, & Muqattach, 2016). Students do not experience any chance to find out about the language nor use it naturally in such classes. Hence, teachers are advised to use effective teaching methods that aim to motivate students, who should be active learners, to naturally use the target language. In addition, Diaz-Rico (2013, p.145) called for providing chances for learners to communicate their thoughts using the target language as in real-life situations. Drama used as a type of effective teaching approach may help achieve this aim. As Laught (2019, p.15) indicated, using drama in teaching is so effective and plays an important role, especially with lower-level English language learners.

4.3 The Drama Approach

In literature, drama describes a genre of writing, a play performed in a theater, radio, or television. Longley (2018) defined it as the portrayal of fictional or non-fictional events through the performance of written dialogue. In applied linguistics, drama-based teaching is a participants-oriented method that constructs a goal of learning about life through dramatic methods and involves a group of learners who cooperate to achieve that goal (Water, McAvoy & Hunt, 2015, p.50). Kao and O'Neill (1998, p.6) asserted that drama techniques include group oriented activities, which activate negotiation of meaning in a more natural and unpremeditated speech to motivate learners to communicate fluently.

The benefit of drama in enhancing EFLLs' speaking performance has recently emerged as a promising teaching technique. Thomson (2016) showed that drama based instruction could significantly increase L2 English oral fluency and comprehensibility. In addition, Afana (2012) indicated that educational drama intervention has a positive impact on enhancing ninth graders' speaking skills at UNRWA schools in Gaza. Also, Borgde (2007) found that drama activities are very useful in teaching German to various groups of students at the Cork Institute of Technology. However, Abu Rezeq and Abu Taha (2018) revealed that more than 73% of their study participants did not have chances to act the plays they learned dramatically.

5. Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at:

1. Exploring the effect of using the drama approach to enhance speaking performance and intelligibility among the University of Palestine's English majors.

2. Suggesting pedagogical steps which activate

the use of drama as an effective teaching strategy.

6. Hypotheses of the Study

1. There are statistically significant differences at a<0.05 level between the speaking performance of the University of Palestine's English majors before and after attending drama classes.

2. There are statistically significant differences at a<0.05 level between the speaking performance of the University of Palestine's high achiever English majors before and after attending drama classes.

3. There are statistically significant differences at a<0.05 level between the speaking performance of the University of Palestine's low achiever English majors before and after attending drama classes.

4. There are statistically significant differences at a<0.05 level between the intelligibility level of the University of Palestine's English majors before and after attending drama.

5. There are statistically significant differences at a<0.05 level between the intelligibility level of the University of Palestine's high achievers English majors before and after attending drama classes.

6. There are statistically significant differences at a<0.05 level between the intelligibility level of the University of Palestine's low achievers English majors before and after attending drama classes.

7. Significance of the Study

This study could be significant since it aimed to explore the effect of the drama approach on enhancing the speaking performance and intelligibility of the University of Palestine's EFLLs. In addition, the significance of the study was included in its purpose to recommend useful pedagogical steps that could activate the use of the drama approach in teaching speaking activities to EFLLs. Moreover, the researcher's hope to provide educationalists with a tool that could be used to assess EFLLs' speaking performance and

intelligibility made the significance of the study obvious to every linguist.

8. Delimitations of the Study

The present study was implemented during the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019 to measure the effect of the drama approach on enhancing the speaking performance and intelligibility among senior English majors at the Faculty of Education at the University of Palestine.

9. Methods & Procedures

9.1 Research Design

To achieve the aims of the study, the quasi-experimental approach was used, and pre-post speaking tests on a one-group experiment design were conducted. A purposeful sample from the Faculty of Education at the University of Palestine was chosen to represent the study participants. It included 15 students; 13 females and two males. They all studied English for Palestine from grade one to grade 12, and they have joined the University of Palestine to pursue their studies and receive a B.A. in Teaching English. All of those students are English major seniors who have been enrolled in a Drama Course during the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019. The whole group attended the drama classes, which lasted about nine weeks, and they all sat for the pre/post speaking test.

9.2 Instrumentation

The study instrument was a pre-post speaking test, which was used to assess the participants' speaking performance and their intelligibility. The test was designed to evaluate the English majors' ability at the University of Palestine in: (1) uttering fluent and accurate speech, (2) producing comprehensible speech which affects its intelligibility, (3) combining ideas in streamlined utterances about one topic, and (4) being critical when forming opinions about a specific issue.

The initial version of the pre-post speaking test was constructed based on oral narrative tasks that include two phases. The first phase invites the study participants to introduce themselves one at

a time by illustrating specific points, introducing themselves, saying whether they enjoy their study or not and why, and describing their future plans. The second phase of the test requires the participants to talk about one particular topic which was describing their hometown freely.

9.3 Validity of the Test

To achieve the content validity, the initial version of the speaking test was distributed to five faculty members from different universities in Gaza. These instructors have ample experience in teaching speaking, and they kindly reviewed the test and assured its validity.

9.4 Reliability of the Test

The researcher assured the reliability of the pre/post speaking test using the test-retest reliability. The test was conducted on a group of Palestinian EFLLs as a pilot study. The test was conducted for a second time after 15 days on the same group of students. The reliability of the coefficient of the speaking test was 0.85, which indicated acceptable reliability (George & Mallery, 2003, p. 231). In addition, two raters measured the participants' speech performance and intelligibility. The mean scores of these two raters were collected to ensure inter-rater reliability.

9.5 The Drama Approach

Using the drama teaching strategy involves sequential steps which aim at enhancing EFLLs' English proficiency. It involves training students to read a drama script, analyze it thoroughly, and perform it dramatically. These steps are conducted to enrich the participants' knowledge of English vocabulary, English structure and grammar, and train them to use the language naturally in an improvisational manner to enhance their speaking performance and intelligibility.

9.5.1 Description of the Strategy

The drama teaching approach, which was derived from Laught (2019, pp. 15-20), includes the following:

- The teacher provides students with scripts of dramatic scenes giving them the opportunity to rehearse and repeat the language aiming at enhancing their fluency and accuracy.

- The teacher provides opportunities for students to read the various scripts aloud, discuss and learn lexical phrases and deal with segmental texts.

- A line-by-line analysis of the scripts is conducted, followed by a detailed explanation of words' intonation and the use of body language.

- Vivid explanation of direct modeling words, phrases, and idiomatic expressions is accompanied by the script analysis, while the teacher's existence provides opportunities to respond effectively to the participants' inquiries about the scripts' language.

- Students are given opportunities to rehearse words and phrases and to build meaning together.

- Students then are engaged in higher-order thinking skill which requires them to analyze the characters' interactions.

- Students get themselves ready to perform their roles which are recorded for further analysis.

- To ensure stimulated recalls, students set together to watch segments of videotape that recorded their performance shortly after they perform any scene and are asked to comment on their experience as they remember.

- To employ double stimulated recall, students are motivated to watch native speakers' and colleagues' performance of the same script and compare it with their performance.

- Casual conversations between the instructor and the participants are daily ensured to enhance students' self-confidence and reduce their speaking anxiety.

- The teacher always provides useful feedback to students about their dramatic roles and speaking performance.

9.5.2 Validity of the Activities

The researcher distributed the first version of the designed activities to three TEFL professors from two Palestinian universities in Gaza, who kindly reviewed it and assured its validity.

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10. Implementation

The steps of implementing this study included:

- The researcher informed the University of Palestine's EFLLs about the aims of the experiment and administered the pretest on the study participants.

Following the drama teaching strategy principles, the study participants were trained on dramatic scenes while handling the various activities of the drama course conducted in the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019, and the training lasted for about nine weeks; two hours each.

- The researcher administered the posttest to the study participants.

- The participants' speaking performance on the pre/posttest was rated twice; by the researcher and another rater, and both of them agreed on an average speech analysis of each student. These raters analyzed the fluency and coherence, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation of the speaking performance of the study participants according to the criteria of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS; Marks, 2007, pp. 5-7).

- In addition, the qualitative analysis of fluency of the participants was assessed by measuring its temporal variables, namely amount of talk, speech rate, and the mean length of run, as the literature review has indicated that these variables are best predicators of fluency (Lennon, 1990; Riggenbach, 1991). The amount of talk is the total number of words produced by each student, while speech rate was computed by dividing the total number of syllables produced by a learner, the amount of talk, by the time it took to produce them by seconds and multiplied it by sixty. In addition, the third temporal variable of fluency was the mean length of run, which was calculated as an average number of syllables produced in utterances pauses lasting four seconds or more (Delaney, 2012; Kormos & Denes, 2004).

- The intelligibility of students' speech was measured by two raters who sat in different places opposing the students while carrying out the speaking test. These raters listened to each student one by one, concentrated on the correct sentences and nonsense a speaker produced, and rated how much comprehensive the student's speech was to get the mark, from 1-5, accordingly. Then, the two marks of the two raters were compared, and the means of the two scores were granted as a final score of the participants' intelligibility on the pre/posttests.

- The researcher computed the differences between students' speaking performance in the pre and posttests using the required statistical techniques.

- Results' discussion, conclusions, and recommendations were constructed.

11. Statistical Techniques

The researcher used quantitative data analysis techniques utilizing SPSS 26. The following describes these statistical techniques.

1. Descriptive analysis (Mean/Median, Range, Interquartile Range, and the Std. Deviation)

2. Shapiro-Wilk test

3. Independent Samples t-test

4. Paired Samples t-test

5. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

6. Effect Size (ES)

- The effect size for Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

$$ES = \frac{4T}{n(n+1)} - 1$$

where,

T: Sum ranks for positive signs.

- n: Number of matched pairs.

7. Test of Normality

The researcher tested the normal distribution of the data that the study's tool provided to find out which statistical technique, parametric or

non-parametric, should be used to perform the statistical data analysis. The results of Shapiro-Wilk test of normality, which was used to perform the aforementioned statistical technique, are stated in Table 1 below.

Table (1)
Result of Normality Test

Group		All data		Low achievers		High achievers	
		Test	Sig.	Test	Sig.	Test	Sig.
Speaking Performance	Pre	.932	.296	.810	.019	.552	.000*
	Post	.896	.082	.846	.051	.552	.000*
Intelligibility: Nonsense sentences	Pre	.910	.136	.807	.018	.961	.814
	Post	.837	.011*	.807	.018	.735	.021*
Intelligibility: overall grade	Pre	.805	.004*	.366	.000*	.684	.006*
	Post	.881	.049*	.752	.004*	.552	.000*
Fluency: Amount of Talk	Pre	.837	.012*	.953	.700	.791	.069
	Post	.978	.951	.965	.845	.946	.707
Fluency: Speech Rate	Pre	.933	.298	.851	.060	.643	.002*
	Post	.922	.205	.909	.273	.826	.129
Fluency: Speech Run	Pre	.842	.013*	.818	.024*	.939	.660
	Post	.935	.327	.953	.707	.926	.567

* The variable is not normally distributed at .05 level

Table 1 shows that the p-values for some of the variables; the nonsense sentences in the pretest, the amount of talk in the pre and posttest, the speech rate in the posttest, the speech run in the pre and posttest, are greater than .05 level of significance, therefore the distributions for these variables are normally distributed. Consequently, parametric tests should be used to perform the statistical data analysis. On the other hand, for the other variables, the p-values are less than .05 level of significance, then the distributions for these variables are not normally distributed. Consequently, non-parametric tests should be used to perform the statistical data analysis.

12. Results

The following shows the verification of the hypotheses of the study.

1. There are statistically significant differences at a<.05 level between the speaking performance of the University of Palestine's English majors before and after attending drama classes.

To verify this hypothesis, the researcher used T-test with data which is normally distributed and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test with data which is not normally distributed. Results of these tests are stated in Table 2 below.

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Table 2

Result of Paired Samples T-Test and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Pre and Posttests for Speaking Performance and Fluency of University of Palestine English Majors

			Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value	P-Value	Effect size
Speaking Performance	Overall Grade**	Pre tests	4.80	1.373	-5.493	<.0001*	-1.369
		Post tests	6.47	.915			
Fluency	Amount of Talk***	Pre tests	296.33	25.033	-3.409	.0003*	1.00
		Post tests	35.40	36.824			
	Speech Rate**	Pre tests	85.5227	1.80216	-5.485	.00004*	1.42
		Post tests	99.973	12.3499			
	Speech Run***	Pre tests	17.0580	4.95625	-3.408	.0003*	1.00
		Post tests	23.3227	5.12732			

* The mean difference is statistically significant at .05 level
** Paired Samples T-Test
*** Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Table 2 shows that the University of Palestine's English majors' speaking performance means equal 4.80 and 6.47 for pre and posttests, respectively. The value of the T-test equals -5.493, where p-value equals <.0001, which is smaller than .05 level of significance. This implies that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the mean is significantly different between pre and posttests. Since the sign of the T-test is negative, then the mean in the posttest is significantly greater than that for the pretest. The effect size equals -1.369, which indicates that the difference between pre and posttest is very large. This result means that the intervention of the drama approach has a very significant impact on the speaking performance of English majors at the University of Palestine.

Inspecting the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test shows that the University of Palestine English majors' fluency skill, the amount of talk, means equals 296.33 and 35.40 for pre and posttests, respectively. The value of the Z-test equals -3.409, where p-value equals .0003, which is smaller than .05 level of significance. This implies that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the mean is significantly different between pre and posttests. The sum of the negative and

positive rank equals 0 and 120, respectively. This means that the mean in the posttest is significantly greater than that for pretest. The effect size equals 1.00, which indicates that the difference between pre and posttest is very large. This result means that the intervention significantly impacts the fluency and amount of talk of English majors at the University of Palestine.

Following the aforementioned procedures to inspect the University of Palestine English majors' speech rate and speech run means, the results indicated that the intervention of the drama approach has a significant effect on enhancing these two variables.

2. To verify the second hypothesis, which states that there are statistically significant differences at a<.05 level between the speaking performance of the University of Palestine's high achiever English majors before and after attending drama classes, the researcher used T-Test and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test. The results of these tests are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Result of Paired Samples T-Test and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Pre and Posttests for Speaking Performance and Fluency of University of Palestine High Achiever English Majors

			Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value	P-Value	Effect size
Speaking Performance		Pre tests	6.20	.447			
Overall Grade***					-1.732	.042*	-.2
		Post tests	6.80	.447			
Fluency	Amount of Talk**	Pre tests	32.60	28.997	-8.053	.0006*	3.60
		Post tests	378.20	27.517			
	Speech Rate***	Pre tests	95.2600	8.28692	-1.753	.0398*	.867
		Post tests	104.440	4.3073			
	Speech Run**	Pre tests	22.6140	4.31817	-16.780	.00004*	7.5
		Post tests	28.7020	4.48317			

* The mean difference is statistically significant at .05 level
** Paired Samples T-Test
*** Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Table 3 shows that the University of Palestine's high achiever English majors benefited from the drama approach as their amount of talk, speech rate, and speech run in the posttest are better than those in the pretest. It is also clear that the effect size of the drama approach on enhancing the high achiever English majors' speaking performance and fluency is very large.

3. The Paired Samples T-Test and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test were used to verify the third hypothesis, which indicates that there are statistically significant differences at a<.05 level between the speaking performance of the University of Palestine's low achiever English majors before and after attending the drama classes, with great results which are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Result of Paired Samples T-Test and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Pre and Posttests for Speaking Performance and Fluency of University of Palestine Low Achiever English Majors

			Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value	P-Value	Effect size
Speaking Performance		Pre tests	4.10	1.101			
Overall Grade***					-2.724	.003*	.636
		Post tests	6.30	1.059			
Fluency	Amount of Talk**	Pre tests	284.20	1.507	-6.431	.0001*	2.03
		Post tests	336.50	33.596			
	Speech Rate**	Pre tests	8.6540	8.48399	-5.023	.0004*	-1.59
		Post tests	97.740	14.5734			
	Speech Run***	Pre tests	14.2800	2.04930	-2.803	.0025*	1.00
		Post tests	2.6330	2.80135			

* The mean difference is statistically significant at .05 level
** Paired Samples T-Test
*** Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

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The results presented in Table 4 reveal that the University of Palestine's low achiever English majors benefited from the drama approach to enhance their speaking performance and had a very high effect.

4. Results of verifying the fourth hypothesis, which says that there are statistically significant differences at a<.05 level between the intelligibility level of the University of Palestine English majors before and after attending the drama classes, are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Result of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for pre and posttests for intelligibility level of University of Palestine English majors

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value	P-Value	Effect size
Intelligibility	Pre tests	2.40	.828	-3.071	.0011*	.1
Overall Grade	Post tests	3.33	.816			
Intelligibility	Pre tests	1.33	3.063	-3.193	.0007*	.517
Nonsense Sentences	Post tests	6.47	2.200			

* The mean difference is statistically significant at .05 level

Table 5 shows that the University of Palestine's English majors 'means in intelligibility overall grade equals 2.40 and 3.33 for pre and posttests, respectively .The value of the Z-test equals,3.071- where p-value equals ,0011. which is smaller than 05.level of significance .This implies that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the mean is significantly different between pre and posttests. The sum of the negative and positive rank equals0 and ,66 respectively .This means that the mean in the posttest is significantly higher than that for the pretest .The effect size equals ,1. which indicates that the difference between pre and posttest is medium .This result means that the intervention has a medium impact on the intelligibility level in the overall grade of the University of Palestine's English majors.

In addition, Table 5 reveals that the University of Palestine's English majors' means in intelligibility variable; nonsense sentences, equal 1.33 and 6.47 for Pre and Posttests, respectively. The value of the Z-test equals -3.193, where p-value equals .0007, which is smaller than .05 level of significance. This implies that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the mean is significantly different between pre and posttests. The sum of the negative and positive rank equals 91 and 0, respectively. This means that the mean in the Posttest is significantly smaller than that for the pretest, which indicates that those students benefited from the drama approach to enhance their intelligibility level. The effect size equals .517, which indicates that the difference between pre and posttest is medium. This result means the intervention has a medium impact on the intelligibility level in nonsense sentences of the University of Palestine's English majors.

5. The result of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test that was used to verify the fifth hypothesis that states the there are statistically significant differences at a<.05) level between the intelligibility level of the University of Palestine's high achiever English majors before and after attending the drama classes is shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Result of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Pre and Posttests for Intelligibility Level of University of Palestine High Achiever English Majors

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value	P-Value	Effect size
Intelligibility	Pre tests	3.40	.548	-1.633	.051	-.2
Overall Grade	Post tests	4.20	.447			
Intelligibility	Pre tests	7.60	1.140	-1.841	.033*	.333
Nonsense Sentences	Post tests	5.20	1.304			

* The mean difference is statistically significant at .05 level

Table 6 shows that the University of Palestine's English majors' intelligibility level mean scores in the posttest are significantly greater than in the pretest. In addition, the participants' nonsense sentences mean number is smaller than in the pretest. The effect size of the drama approach on enhancing the University of Palestine's English majors' intelligibility level, nonsense sentences, equals .333, which indicates that the difference between pre and posttest is small.

6. To verify the sixth hypothesis, which states that there are statistically significant differences at a<.05 level between the intelligibility level of the University of Palestine's low achiever English majors before and after attending drama classes, the researcher used the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test. The result of this test is shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Result of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Pre and Posttests for Intelligibility Level of University of Palestine Low Achiever English Majors

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value	P-Value	Effect size
Intelligibility	Pre tests	1.90	.316	-2.640	.0041*	.309
Overall Grade	Post tests	2.90	.568			
Intelligibility	Pre tests	11.70	2.791	-2.680	.0037*	.636
Nonsense Sentences	Post tests	7.10	2.331			

* The mean difference is statistically significant at .05 level

With reference to the result stated in Table 7, a reader can conclude that the overall grade means equal 1.90 and 2.90 for pre and posttests, respectively. The value of the Z-test equals -2.640, where p-value equals .0041, which is smaller than .05 level of significance. This implies that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the mean is significantly different between pre and posttests. The sum of the negative and positive rank equals 0 and 36, respectively. This means the mean in the posttest is significantly higher than that in the pretest.

The effect size equals .309, which indicates that the difference between pre and posttest is

small. This result means that the intervention has a small impact on the intelligibility level in the overall grade of the University of Palestine's low achiever English majors. The nonsense sentence means equal 11.70 and 7.10 for pre and posttests, respectively. The value of the Z-test equals -2.680, where p-value equals .0037, which is smaller than .05 level of significance. This implies that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the mean is significantly different between pre and posttests. The sum of the negative and positive rank equals 45 and 0, respectively. This means that the mean in posttest is significantly smaller than in the pretest. The effect size equals .636, which indicates that the difference between the pre and posttest is

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medium. This result means the intervention has a medium impact on the intelligibility level in nonsense sentences of the University of Palestine's low achiever English majors.

13. Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the effect of using the drama approach to enhance speaking performance and intelligibility among the University of Palestine's English majors students. Results showed that both high and low achievers of the study participants positively benefited from the drama classes in enhancing their speaking performance and intelligibility. The result of the recent study is in agreement with Laught (2019), who indicated that lower-level English language learners benefit from the dramatic language teaching approach. It is also in agreement with Thomson (2016), who showed that drama based instruction could significantly increase L2 English oral fluency and comprehensibility. Moreover, it is in line with Afana (2012), who revealed that educational drama intervention positively impacts students' speaking skills. In addition, it is consistent with Kao and O'Neill (1998), who indicated that the drama approach activates negotiation of meaning in a more natural and unpremeditated speech and motivates learners to communicate fluently. The benefits learners gain from the drama approach may be due to:

1. The friendly live feedback that the instructor provided during the drama meeting, which motivated learners to communicate using the target language, positively affected the speaking performance of the participants of the study. In such a friendly teaching environment, which engaged learners in communicative learning situations that motivated them to work easily and effectively, the difficulty level of English was reduced, which provided opportunities for learners to benefit from the designed activities and improve their language skills. This interpretation is in agreement with Tuan & Mai (2015), who revealed the positive benefit of motivation and feedback in enhancing students' speaking performance.

2. Engaging students in dramatic activities functioned as meditational tools people use in everyday life. This reduced low achievers' anxiety and facilitated the comprehension of various useful structures from a semi-real life situation which positively expanded the students' linguistic and sociocultural competencies.

3. The opportunities which were allowed for learners to: (1) read the various scripts aloud, (2) discuss and learn lexical phrases, and (3) deal with segmental text gave them chances to increase their wealth of vocabulary and prepared their speech well. This positively affected their speaking performance as planning is a major factor in enhancing fluency of speech.

4. Motivating students to rehearse and repeat the language through giving them chances to evaluate peers' speaking performance allowed them to benefit from their colleagues' slips/mistakes and shifted the learning situation from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach. This improved the learners' discovered skills and positively enhanced their English language fluency and accuracy.

5. The oral communication of the study participants during drama classes allowed them to experience modified interaction that successfully improved their ability to produce various oral English messages that were easily comprehended.

6. The gradual steps adopted in sequencing the dramatic activities of the course encouraged the participants of the study to participate in the teaching/learning activities, which helped enhance their autonomy and provided a sense of fulfillment. The active participation of the participants of the study in the various activities of the course and the improvement of their autonomy helped them use the target language regularly, which positively affected their speaking performance and intelligibility.

14. Conclusions

Based on the limitations of the present study and its results, the following conclusions have

been revealed:

1. The drama approach greatly enhances the speaking performance and intelligibility among the University of Palestine's English majors.

2. The University of Palestine's high and low EFL achievers benefited from the drama approach in developing their speaking performance and intelligibility. So this strategy suits heterogeneous classes which include a diverse group of students.

3. The friendly environment of dramatic teaching creates a communicative teaching situation that motivates students to participate and benefit from peers' discussions.

4. The drama approach of teaching ensures learning transfer that helps students use learned skills in real-life situations.

15. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. EFLLs should experience various dramatic activities d uring school and tertiary levels of education.

2. EFLTs should be trained on how to implement the drama approach effectively. This training should focus on bridging the theory and practice gap of using the drama approach in teaching.

3. Further research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of the drama approach in enhancing the overall English proficiency of EFLLs.

4. EFLLs' autonomy should be enhanced through the effective use of gradual and well-designed teaching activities.

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