**Using Drama Approach to Enhance the Speaking Performance and Intelligibility among Palestine University English Majors**

**استخدام مدخل الدراما لتحسين اداء المحادثة والمفهومية لدي طلبة اللغة الانجليزية في جامعة فلسطين**

**By**

**Mohamed Ali Shaat**

**محمدعلي شعت**

**Assistant Professor of TEFL**

**استاذ مساعد لمناهج وطرق تدريس اللغة الانجليزية**

**University of Palestine**

**قطاع غزة\_ فلسطين**

**E-mail:** [**shaat1971@yahoo.com**](mailto:shaat1971@yahoo.com) **Mobile:00972-59999650**

**الملخص العربي**

**استخدام مدخل الدراما لتحسين اداء المحادثة والمفهومية لدي طلبة اللغة الانجليزية في جامعة فلسطين**

تعتبر انشطة المحادثة من احدى اصعب المهمات التي لا يفضلها عدد كبير من طلبة اللغة الانجليزية والذين لا يشعرون بالتحفيز للمشاركة في هذه الفعاليات لذا ينسحب منها معظم الطلاب, وبالتزامن نجد ان معظم المدرسين يستخدمون طرق تقليدية لتنفيذ انشطة المحادثة لطلبتهم, الامر الذي ينعكس سلبا على اداء المحادثة والمفهومية لهؤلاء الطلبة. تهدف هذه الدراسة الي تقص اثر استخدام منهج الدراما لتحسين اداء المحادثة والمفهومية لطلبة اللغة الانجليزية في جامعة فلسطين, وقام الباحث باختيار عينة قصدية تشمل (15) دارس لغة انجليزية من كلية التربية – جامعة فلسطين موزعين الي (2) ذكور و (13)اناث والذين كانوا مسجلين لمقرر الدراما خلال الفصل الدراسي الثاني للعام الجامعي 2018/2019 م, حيث استخدم الباحث مدخل الدراما كاستراتيجية تدريس لتحسين اداء المحادثة والمفهومية لعينة الدراسة مستخدما في ذلك عينة تجريبية واحدة طبق عليها اختبار محادثة قبلي وبعدي والذي تم تحليل نتائجه كميا وكيفيا, اظهرت النتائج ان هناك اثر ايجابي للدراما في تحسين اداء المحادثة والمفهومية لطلبة اللغة الانجليزية في جامعة فلسطين.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:**

مدخل الدراما – اداء المحادثة والمفهومية

**English Abstract**

Speaking activities are one of the most difficult tasks that a large number of English foreign language learners (EFLLs) do not admire. These learners are not motivated enough to participate in such activities and usually opt to withdraw from them. Moreover, most English language teachers adopt traditional methods in handling such activities to students, which negatively affects their students’ speaking performance. The main purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of using drama approach on enhancing the speaking performance and intelligibility among Palestine University English majors. The researcher adopted the quasi-experimental approach and selected a convenient sample of Palestine University English majors which included (15) senior students; (2) males and (13) female. Those students were enrolled in a drama course during the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019 and the researcher used drama as a teaching approach to enhance students’ speaking performance and intelligibility. In the experiment of this study, the researcher conducted a speaking pre/posttest on a one group experiment design, and the participants’ speaking performance and intelligibility were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. Results revealed that drama approach has a positive effect on enhancing Palestine University English majors’ speaking performance and intelligibility.

**Key Words**: drama approach, speaking performance and intelligibility

**1. Introduction**

Speaking is one of the four important skills of any language. People speak to express their thoughts and feelings. Chaney & Burk (1998) mentioned, “Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts," (p.13). It includes the speaker’s ability to produce accurate and correct utterances; linguistic competence, and knowledge of the appropriate context for language use which enables a speaker to use the suitable form of a language in different speaking situations; socio-cultural competence. This was illustrated by Kailani, & Muqattach (2017) who stated “Speaking involves the linguistic forms of a language as well as a knowledge of when and how to use these forms,”( p.43).

From the aforementioned paragraph, which illustrates the importance of speaking skill and its components, one can conclude that handling speaking activities to EFLLs requires well-planned teaching procedures which aim to enhance the communicative competence; strategic, linguistic and socio-cultural competences of these learners. However, effective teaching of speaking, which enables learners to use the target language naturally, is still neglected by EFL teachers (Afana, 2012; Ashour, 2014; Zourob, 2014). It seems that most of those teachers are still adopting the traditional methods of teaching which focus on teaching grammar rules and meaning of vocabulary which is isolated from its social context (Harmar, 2001; Richards & Renandyya, 2002). Kailani, & Muqattach (2016) pointed out “Students who are taught using the grammar-translation method do not experience how to actually use the language, and in this type of instruction spoken language takes no account,” (p.35). To my mind 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 teaching activities which focus on teaching structure and neglect teaching oral skills.

Neglecting teaching 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-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 & Mai (2015) indicated that a wide majority of language learners find it difficult to orally convey their thoughts and feelings using the target language. 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 indicate that those learners seldom experience natural and live speaking activities during the different stages of their education levels, and most of their teachers focus on teaching grammar and structure of the language which is; in most cases, a teacher-centered instruction.

In contrast, 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 facilitate comprehension of the intended message. In addition, Laught (2019) indicated “The process of engaging in dramatic activities gives us access to the same meditational tools that we use in everyday life,” (p. 6), then adopting drama in teaching English as a foreign language may positively affect EFLLs’ speaking performance and intelligibility.

**2. Rationale of the Study**

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 which 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. And 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 webinar in improving the speaking skills among Rafah UNRWA seventh graders. Also, Ashour (2014) tested the effect of using a video conferencing-based strategy on URWA 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 Gaza Strip. And Borgde (2007) discussed how drama activities can 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 Gaza Strip investigates the effect of using drama approach to enhance the speaking performance and intelligibility of Palestine University 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 drama approach on enhancing the speaking performance and intelligibility among Palestine University EFLLs?

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

1- Are there statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the speaking performance of Palestine University English majors before and after attending drama classes?

2- Are there statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the level of intelligibility of Palestine University 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 which 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 task required. And in the second category; discourse management, 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 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 the ability to use functional language and strategies to perform 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 comprehended pronunciation and accurate grammar rules to communicate his 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 predictors. 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, "There is consensus among researchers that the average speech rate of a native speaker lies between 120-260 wpm," (Gotz, 2013, p.15). In real life situations, a foreign language speaker’s rate of speech is lower than this level (Hincks, 2008 cited in Gotz, 2013, p.16). It is ranged from 125-150 wpm (Koch, 1998 cited in El-Hilaly, 2001). And on the other hand, the mean length of run 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 real life situations which is the main concern of 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 & 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 of a speaker's produced utterance. Derwing and Munro, also, pointed out various ways to asses intelligibility. 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 are among the accurate ways of assessing intelligibility Derwing and Munro suggested. Kang, Thomson & Moran (2018) revealed that the strongest way of measuring intelligibility is counting the listeners’ responses to non-sense sentences. And Flipsen (2010) suggested that choosing the best words which help convey the meaning accurately, constructing correct syntax structure, using the correct sounds, including the appropriate prosody, ensuring 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 intelligibility of someone, you have to measure how much is being understood.

Motivating students to produce comprehended utterances in a natural teaching environment affects their intelligibility. In traditional English classes, which are teacher-centered in most of the time of the class, students’ role is passive and students are considered as empty boxes which should be filled with information. In such classes, students do not experience any chance to find out about the language nor they use it naturally. Hence, teachers are advised to use effective methods of teaching that aim at motivating students, who should be active learners, to use the target language naturally. In addition, “The teacher should provide opportunities for students to express themselves in a wide range of language functions,” (Diaz-Rico, 2013, p.145). Drama which has been used as a type of effective teaching approach may help achieve this aim as Laught (2019, p.15) indicated that using drama in teaching is so effective and it plays an important role especially with lower level English language learners.

**4.3 Drama Approach**

Drama, in literature, is a word which describes a genre of writing; a play performed on a theater, a radio or a 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 which constructs a goal of learning about life through dramatic methods and involves a group of learners who cooperate together to achieve that goal (Water, McAvoy & Hunt, 2015, p.50). And Kao & O'Neill (1998) asserted that “Drama techniques include group‐oriented activities, which activate negotiation of meaning in a more natural and unpremeditated speech, to motivate learners communicate fluently,” (p. 6).

The benefit of drama in enhancing EFLLs’ speaking performance has recently emerged as a shining moon. Thomson (2016) showed that drama‐based instruction can lead to significantly larger gains in 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 Cork Institute of Technology.

**5. Purpose of the Study**

The study aimed at:

1- exploring the effect of using drama approach on enhancing the speaking performance and intelligibility among Palestine University English majors, and

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 (α < 0.05) level between the speaking performance of Palestine University English majors before and after attending drama classes in favor of their post speaking performance.

2- There are statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the speaking performance of Palestine University high achiever English majors before and after attending drama classes in favor of their post speaking performance.

3- There are statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the speaking performance of Palestine University low achiever English majors before and after attending drama classes in favor of their post speaking performance.

4- There are statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the intelligibility level of Palestine University English majors before and after attending drama classes in favor of their post intelligibility level.

5- There are statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the intelligibility level of Palestine University high achievers English majors before and after attending drama classes in favor of their post intelligibility level.

6- There are statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the intelligibility level of Palestine University low achievers English majors before and after attending drama classes in favor of their post intelligibility level.

**7. Significance of the Study**

This study could be significant since it:

1- reveals the effect of drama approach on enhancing the speaking performance and intelligibility of Palestine University EFLLs,

2- suggests useful pedagogical steps that could activate the use of dram approach in teaching speaking activities to EFLLs, and

3- provides educationalists with a tool that could be used to assess EFLLs’ speaking performance and intelligibility.

**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 drama approach on enhancing the speaking performance and intelligibility among senior English majors at the faculty of education, university of Palestine.

**9. Methods & Procedures**

**9.1 Research Design**

To achieve the aims of the study, the researcher used the quasi-experimental approach and conducted pre-post speaking tests on one group experiment design. A purposeful sample from the faculty of education-university of Palestine was chosen to represent the participants of the study. It included )15( students; )13( females and )2( 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 get a B.A. in teaching English. All of those students are senior English majors. And they 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 for about 9 weeks and they all did the pre/post speaking test.

**9.2 Instrumentation**

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

The construction of the initial version of the pre-post speaking test was based on oral narrative tasks which includes two phases. The first phase invites the participants of the study to introduce themselves one at a time through illustrating specific points; introducing him/herself, saying whether he/she enjoys his/her study or not and why, and describing his/her future plans. And the second phase requires the participants to talk about a topic; 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 a panel of faculty members from different universities in Gaza. These instructors have a plentiful experience in teaching speaking, and they kindly reviewed the test and assured its validity.

**9.4 Reliability of the Tests**

The researcher assured the reliability of the pre/post speaking test using the test-retest reliability. He conducted the test 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 measure the participants’ speech performance and intelligibility and the mean scores of these two raters was collected to ensure inter-rater reliability.

**9.5 Drama Approach**

Using 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 to train them use the language naturally in an improvisational manner in a hope to enhance their speaking performance and intelligibility.

**9.5.1 Description of the Strategy**

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

* The teacher hands students with scripts of dramatic scenes giving them 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 and to discuss and learn lexical phrases and to deal with segmental text.
* A line by line analysis of the scripts is conducted which is followed by detailed explanation of words’ intonation and the use of body language.
* Vivid explanation of direct modeling words, phrases and idiomatic expressions is accompanied with the script analysis, and the teacher responds effectively to any question of the participants 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 character’s interactions.
* Students get themselves ready to perform their roles which is recorded for further analysis.
* To ensure stimulated recalls, students set together to watch segments of videotape which recorded their performance shortly after they perform any scene, and are asked to give comments 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 just 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.

**10. Implementation**

The steps of implementing this study include:

* The researcher informed Palestine university EFLLs about the aims of the experiment and administered the pre-test on the participants of the study.
* Following the drama teaching strategy principles, the participants of the study were trained on dramatic scenes while handling the various activities of the drama course which was conducted in the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019 and the training lasted for about 9 weeks; two hours for each.
* The researcher administered the post-test on the participants of the study.
* The participants’ speaking performance on the pre/posttest was rated twice; by the researcher and another rater, and both of them agreed in 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 participants of the study according to the criteria of IELTS exam (Marks, 2007, pp.5-7).
* In addition, the qualitative analysis of fluency of the participants was assessed through measuring its temporal variables, namely amount of talk, speech rate and the mean length of run as 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. And speech rate was computed by dividing the total number of syllables produced by a learner; 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 for .4 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 doing his speaking test. These raters listen to each student one by one and concentrate on the correct sentences and nonsense ones a speaker produce, and rate how much his speech is comprehended and give the student a specific mark; from (0-5) 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 required statistical techniques.
* Results’ discussion, conclusions and recommendations were constructed.

**11. Statistical Techniques**

The researcher uses qualitative 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**

****

**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 which the tool of the study provides 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 | 0.932 | 0.296 | 0.810 | 0.019 | | 0.552 | 0.000\* |
| Post | 0.896 | 0.082 | 0.846 | 0.051 | | 0.552 | 0.000\* |
| Intelligibility: Nonsense sentences | Pre | 0.910 | 0.136 | 0.807 | 0.018 | | 0.961 | 0.814 |
| Post | 0.837 | 0.011\* | 0.807 | 0.018 | | 0.735 | 0.021\* |
| Intelligibility: overall grade | Pre | 0.805 | 0.004\* | 0.366 | 0.000\* | | 0.684 | 0.006\* |
| Post | 0.881 | 0.049\* | 0.752 | 0.004\* | | 0.552 | 0.000\* |
| Fluency: Amount of Talk | Pre | 0.837 | 0.012\* | 0.953 | 0.700 | | 0.791 | 0.069 |
| Post | 0.978 | 0.951 | 0.965 | 0.845 | | 0.946 | 0.707 |
| Fluency: Speech Rate | Pre | 0.933 | 0.298 | 0.851 | 0.060 | | 0.643 | 0.002\* |
| Post | 0.922 | 0.205 | 0.909 | 0.273 | | 0.826 | 0.129 |
| Fluency: Speech Run | Pre | 0.842 | 0.013\* | 0.818 | 0.024\* | | 0.939 | 0.660 |
| Post | 0.935 | 0.327 | 0.953 | 0.707 | | 0.926 | 0.567 |

\* The variable is not normally distributed at 0.05 level

Table (1) shows that the p-values for some of the variables are greater than 0.05 level of significance, then 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 other variables, the p-value are less than 0.05 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. Findings**

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

1- There are statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the speaking performance of Palestine University English majors before and after attending drama classes in favor of their post speaking performance.

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.

**Table (2)**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | |  | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** | **Test Value** | **P-Value** | **Effect size** |
| Speaking Performance  Overall Grade\*\* | | Pre tests | 4.80 | 1.373 | -5.493 | <0.0001\* | -1.369 |
| Post tests | 6.47 | 0.915 |
|  | Amount of Talk\*\*\* | Pre tests | 296.33 | 25.033 | -3.409 | 0.0003\* | 1.00 |
| Fluency | Post tests | 350.40 | 36.824 |
| Speech Rate\*\* | Pre tests | 85.5227 | 10.80216 | -5.485 | 0.00004\* | 1.42 |
| Post tests | 99.973 | 12.3499 |
| Speech Run\*\*\* | Pre tests | 17.0580 | 4.95625 | -3.408 | 0.0003\* | 1.00 |
|  | Post tests | 23.3227 | 5.12732 |

\* The mean difference is statistically significant at 0.05 level

\*\* Paired Samples T-Test

\*\*\* Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Table (2) shows that the Palestine University 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, with p-value equals <0.0001, which is smaller than 0.05 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 posttest is significantly greater than that for 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 drama approach has very great impact on the speaking performance of Palestine University English majors.

Inspecting the results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test shows that Palestine University English majors’ fluency skill; amount of talk, means equal 296.33 and 350.40 for Pre and Posttests respectively. The value of the Z-test equals -3.409, with p-value equals 0.0003, which is smaller than 0.05 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 equal 0 and 120 respectively. And 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 has great impact on the Fluency; Amount of Talk, of Palestine University English majors.

Following the aforementioned procedures to inspect Palestine University English majors’ speech rate and speech run means indicate that the intervention of drama approach has a very large effect on enhancing these two variables.

2- To verify the second hypothesis, which states there are statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the speaking performance of Palestine University high achiever English majors before and after attending drama classes in favor of their post speaking performance, the researcher uses T-Test and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test. Results of these tests are stated 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 Palestine University High Achiever English Majors**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | |  | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** | **Test Value** | **P-Value** | **Effect size** |
| Speaking Performance  Overall Grade\*\*\* | | Pre tests | 6.20 | 0.447 | -1.732 | 0.042\* | -0.2 |
| Post tests | 6.80 | 0.447 |
|  | Amount of Talk\*\* | Pre tests | 320.60 | 28.997 | -8.053 | 0.0006\* | 3.60 |
| Fluency | Post tests | 378.20 | 27.517 |
| Speech Rate\*\*\* | Pre tests | 95.2600 | 8.28692 | -1.753 | 0.0398\* | 0.867 |
| Post tests | 104.440 | 4.3073 |
| Speech Run\*\* | Pre tests | 22.6140 | 4.31817 | -16.780 | 0.00004\* | 7.5 |
|  | Post tests | 28.7020 | 4.48317 |

\* The mean difference is statistically significant at 0.05 level

\*\* Paired Samples T-Test

\*\*\* Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Going through the above table shows that Palestine University high achiever English majors benefited from drama approach and their amount of talk, speech rate and speech run in the post test are better than those in the pre-test. And the effect size is very large.

3- Using Paired Samples T-Test and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test to verify the third hypothesis, which indicates there are statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the speaking performance of Palestine University low achiever English majors before and after attending drama classes in favor of their post speaking performance, show great results which stated 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 Palestine University Low Achiever English Majors**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | |  | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** | **Test Value** | **P-Value** | **Effect size** |
| Speaking Performance  Overall Grade\*\*\* | | Pre tests | 4.10 | 1.101 | -2.724 | 0.003\* | 0.636 |
| Post tests | 6.30 | 1.059 |
|  | Amount of Talk\*\* | Pre tests | 284.20 | 10.507 | -6.431 | 0.0001\* | 2.03 |
| Fluency | Post tests | 336.50 | 33.596 |
| Speech Rate\*\* | Pre tests | 80.6540 | 8.48399 | -5.023 | 0.0004\* | -1.59 |
| Post tests | 97.740 | 14.5734 |
| Speech Run\*\*\* | Pre tests | 14.2800 | 2.04930 | -2.803 | 0.0025\* | 1.00 |
|  | Post tests | 20.6330 | 2.80135 |

\* The mean difference is statistically significant at 0.05 level

\*\* Paired Samples T-Test

\*\*\* Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

The results presented in table (4) reveal that Palestine University low achiever English majors benefited from drama approach to enhance their speaking performance and its effect is very high.

4- Results of verifying the fourth hypothesis, which says there are statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the intelligibility level of Palestine University English majors before and after attending drama classes in favor of their post intelligibility level, are stated in table (5) below.

**Table (5)**

**Result of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for pre and post tests for intelligibility level of Palestine University English majors**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** | **Test Value** | **P-Value** | **Effect size** |
| Intelligibility  Overall Grade | Pre tests | 2.40 | 0.828 | -3.071 | 0.0011\* | 0.1 |
| Post tests | 3.33 | 0.816 |
| Intelligibility  Nonsense Sentences | Pre tests | 10.33 | 3.063 | -3.193 | 0.0007\* | 0.517 |
| Post tests | 6.47 | 2.200 |

\* The mean difference is statistically significant at 0.05 level

From table (5) a reader can notice that Palestine University English majors’ means in intelligibility overall grade equal 2.40 and 3.33 for Pre and Posttests, respectively. The value of the Z-test equals -3.071, with p-value equals 0.0011, which is smaller than 0.05 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 equal 0 and 66, respectively. This means that the mean in Posttest is significantly higher than that for Pretest. The effect size equals 0.1, which indicates that the difference between pre and posttest is medium. This result means that the intervention has medium impact on the intelligibility level in overall grade of Palestine University English majors.

In addition, table (5) reveals that Palestine University English majors’ means in intelligibility variable; nonsense sentences, equal 10.33 and 6.47 for Pre and Posttests, respectively. The value of the Z-test equals -3.193, with p-value equals 0.0007, which is smaller than 0.05 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 equal 91 and 0, respectively. This means the mean in Posttest is significantly smaller than that for pretest which indicates that those students benefited from drama approach to enhance their intelligibility level. The effect size equals 0.517, which indicates that the difference between pre and posttest is medium. This result means the intervention has medium impact on the intelligibility level in nonsense sentences of Palestine University English majors

5- Result of verifying the fifth hypothesis; there are statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the intelligibility level of Palestine University high achiever English majors before and after attending drama classes in favor of their post intelligibility level, using Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test is stated in table (6).

**Table (6)**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** | **Test Value** | **P-Value** | **Effect size** |
| Intelligibility  Overall Grade | Pre tests | 3.40 | 0.548 | -1.633 | 0.051 | -0.2 |
| Post tests | 4.20 | 0.447 |
| Intelligibility  Nonsense Sentences | Pre tests | 7.60 | 1.140 | -1.841 | 0.033\* | 0.333 |
| Post tests | 5.20 | 1.304 |

\* The mean difference is statistically significant at 0.05 level

Table (6) shows that Palestine University English majors intelligibility level mean scores in the posttest is significantly greater than that in the pretest. In addition, the participants nonsense sentences mean number is smaller than that in the pretest. The effect size of drama approach on enhancing Palestine University English majors’ ineligibility level; nonsense sentences, equals 0.333, which indicates that the difference between pre and posttest is small.

6- To verify the sixth hypothesis; there are statistically significant differences at (α < 0.05) level between the intelligibility level of Palestine University low achiever English majors before and after attending drama classes in favor of their post intelligibility level, the researcher used Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test. Result of this test is stated in table (7) below.

**Table (7)**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** | **Test Value** | **P-Value** | **Effect size** |
| Intelligibility  Overall Grade | Pre tests | 1.90 | 0.316 | -2.640 | 0.0041\* | 0.309 |
| Post tests | 2.90 | 0.568 |
| Intelligibility  Nonsense Sentences | Pre tests | 11.70 | 2.791 | -2.680 | 0.0037\* | 0.636 |
| Post tests | 7.10 | 2.331 |

\* The mean difference is statistically significant at 0.05 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, with p-value equals 0.0041, which is smaller than 0.05 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 equal 0 and 36, respectively. This means the mean in Posttest is significantly higher than that for Pretest. The effect size equals 0.309, which indicates that the difference between pre and posttest is small. This result means the intervention has small impact on the intelligibility level in overall grade of Palestine University 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, with p-value equals 0.0037, which is smaller than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that mean is significantly different between Pre and Posttests. The sum of the negative and positive rank equal 45 and 0, respectively, this means the mean in Posttest is significantly SMALLER than that for Pretest. The effect size equals 0.636, 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 Palestine University low achiever English majors.

**13. Discussion**

This study aimed at investigating the effect of using drama approach on enhancing the speaking performance and intelligibility among Palestine University English majors. Results showed that both of the high and low achievers of the participants of the study 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 dramatic language teaching approach. It is; also, in agreement with Thomson (2016) who showed that drama‐based instruction can lead to significantly larger gains in L2 English oral fluency and comprehensibility. Moreover, it is in line with Afana (2012) who revealed that educational drama intervention has a positive impact on enhancing students’ speaking skills. In addition, it is consistent with Kao & O'Neill (1998) who indicated that drama approach activates negotiation of meaning in a more natural and unpremeditated speech and motivates learners communicate fluently. The benefits learners gain from drama approach may be due to:

1- The friendly live feedback that the instructor provides during drama meeting, which motivates learners to communicate using the target language, positively affects the speaking performance of the participants of the study. In such a friendly teaching environment, which engages learners in communicative learning situations that motivate them to work easily and effectively, the difficulty level of English language is reduced which provides 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 the speaking performance of students.

2- Engaging students in dramatic activities functions as meditational tools people use in everyday life. This reduces low achievers’ anxiety and facilitates comprehending various useful structures from a semi-real life situation which positively expand the students’ linguistic and sociocultural competences.

3- The opportunities which were allowed for learners to read the various scripts aloud and to discuss and learn lexical phrases and to deal with segmental text give them chances to increase their wealth of vocabulary and prepare their speech well. This positively affects their speaking performance as planning is a major factor of enhancing fluency of speech.

4- Motivating students to rehearse and repeat the language and giving them chances to evaluate peers’ speaking performance allow them to benefit from their colleagues’ slips/mistakes and shift the learning situation from teacher-centered to student-centered. This improve the learners’ discovery skill and positively enhance their English language fluency and accuracy.

5- The oral communication of the participants of the study during drama classes allows them to experience modified interaction which successfully improve their ability of producing various oral English messages which are easily comprehended.

6- The gradual steps that the teacher of drama classes adopted in sequencing the dramatic activities of the course helped enhance students’ autonomy and provided them a sense of fulfillment, which encouraged them to participate in the teaching/learning activities and positively affects 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- Drama approach has a large effect on enhancing the speaking performance and intelligibility among Palestine University English majors.

2- High and low Palestine University EFL achievers benefited from 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 which motivates students to participate and benefit from peers discussion.

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

**15. Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

1- EFLLs should experience various dramatic activities during school and tertiary levels of education.

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

3- Farther research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of 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.

**References**

|  |
| --- |
| Afana, S. (2012). *The impact of educational drama intervention on Palestine ninth graders’ English speaking skills at Gaza UNRWA schools*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Islamic University-Gaza. |
| *AL-Hosni, S (2014). The speaking difficulties encountered by EFLLR. Retrieved from:*<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270340628_Speaking_Difficulties_Encountered_by_Young_EFL_Learners> |
| Aljadili, M. (2014). *The effectiveness of using virtual classes on developing the tenth graders speaking skills and their speaking anxiety*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Islamic University-Gaza. |
| Ashour, J. (2014). *The effect of using a video conferencing-based strategy on URWA 9th graders English speaking skills and their attitudes towards speaking.* Unpublished M.A. thesis, Islamic University-Gaza. |
| Bailey, K. M.(2006). Issues in Teaching Speaking Skills to Adult ESOL Learners. Retrieved from: http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/ann\_rev/comings\_ch5.pdf |
| Borgde, S. (2007). The use of drama activities in teaching German in third-level classroom. Scenario: language, culture, literature. Volume 2007, Issue 1. Retrieved from: <http://research.ucc.ie/scenario/2007-01/01-borge-2007-01-en.pdf> |
| Chaney, A.L. & Burk, T.L.(1998). *Teaching oral communication in grade k-8*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. |
| Delaney, T. (2012). Quality and quantity of oral participation and English proficiency gains. Language Teaching Research, 16(4):467-482. |
| Derwing, T. M. & Munro, M. J. (2009). Putting accent in its place: Rethinking obstacles to communication. *Language Teach*, 42(4): 476-490. |
| Diaz-Rico, L.T. (2013). Strategies for Teaching English Learners. 3rd Edition, Pearson Education, Inc. |
| El-Hilaly, A. (2001). *The effect of communication strategies and risk taking on oral fluency*. Faculty of Education, Al Azhar University, Cairo. |
| Ellis, R. & Barkhuizen, G. (2005). *Analyzing Learner Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. |
| Flipsen, P. (2010). Measuring intelligibility in children: Why And How. Retrieved from: <https://www.asha.org/Events/convention/handouts/2010/2320-Flipsen-Peter-2/> |
| George, D. & Mallery, P. (2003). *SPSS for Windows Step by Step*. United States of America: Pearson Education, Inc. |
| Gotz, S. (2013). *Fluency in Native and Nonnative English Speech*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin’s Publishing Company. |
| Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching*. 3rd Edition. London: Longman. |
| Kailani, T. & Muqattach , L. (2016). ELT Methodology (1). Amman-Jordan: AL-Quds Open University Publication. |
| Kailani, T. & Muqattach , L. (2017). ELT Methodology (2). Amman-Jordan: AL-Quds Open University Publication. |
| Kang, O., Thomson, R. & Moran, M. (2018). Empirical approaches to measuring the intelligibility of different varieties of English in predicting listener comprehension. Language Learning, Volume 68, Issue 1, pp. 115-146. |
| Kao, S. & O'Neill, C. (1998). Learning a second language through process drama. U.K.: JAL Press Ltd. |
| Kormos, J. & Denes, M. (2004). Exploring measures and perceptions of fluency in the speech of second language learners. System, 32(2): 145-164. |
| Laught, J. R. (2019). Sociocultural theory and language learning as performance : Teaching and learning additional language through performing arts. London: Lexington Books. Retrieved from: https://books.google.ps/books?id=zuh3DwAAQBAJ&pg=PA15&lpg=PA15&dq=Moody,+2002+drama&source=bl&ots=EWxAOgyazv&sig=ACfU3U2ASa\_siY\_3S6kjDpIgej9UVkCBA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj1oZOdq6bgAhXMIlAKHdcoDPIQ6AEwAnoECAcQAQ#v=onepage&q=Moody%2C%202002%20drama&f=false |
| Lennon, P. (1990). Investigating fluency in EFL: A quantitative approach. *Language Learning*, 40(3): 387-412. |
| Longley, R. (2018). What is drama? Literary definitions and examples. Retrieved from: <https://www.thoughtco.com/drama-literary-definition-4171972> |
| Marks, J. (2007). IELTS resource pack. Delta Publishing. Quince Cottage: Hoe Lane Peaslake. |
| Pishkar, K.; Moinzadeh, A. & Dabghi, A. (2017). The effect of teaching modern English drama on the students’ fluency and accuracy of speaking. Research in English Language Pedagogy, 1 (8): 41-51. Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/33455639/Effect\_of\_Teaching\_Modern\_English\_Drama\_on\_the\_Students\_Fluency\_and\_Accuracy\_of\_Speaking\_RELP\_2017\_5\_1\_41-51?auto=download |
| Richards, J. & Renandyya, W. (2002). Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice. The First Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. |
| Riggenbach, H. (1991). Towards an understanding of fluency: A microanalysis of native speaker conversation. *Discourse Processes*, 14: 423-441. |
| Sabah, S. (2015) *The effectiveness of using debates in developing the speaking skills of English majors at university of Palestine*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Al-Azhar University-Gaza. |
| Shaat, M. (2017). The oral proficiency of English majors at AL-Azhar university-Gaza. *Journal of the University of Palestine for Research and Studies*, 7(3): 1-27. |
| Sharbain, I. (2009). *The difficulties encountering ninth grade teachers in performing their roles in light of the communicative approach to teaching speaking in Gaza Strip*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Islamic University-Gaza. |
| Thornbury, S. (2005). *How to Teach Speaking. London*: Pearson Education Limited. |
| Thomson, A. (2016). The effectiveness of drama as an instructional approach for the development of second language oral fluency, comprehensibility, and accentedness. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.290> |
| Tuan, N & Mai, T. (2015). Factors affecting students’ speaking performance at Le Thanh Hien High School. *Asian Journal of Education Research*, 3(2): 8-23. |
| Water, M., McAvoy, M. & Hunt, K. (2015). Drama and education: Performance methodologies for teaching and learning. London & New York: Routledge. Retrieved from: <https://books.google.ps/books?id=6XbABgAAQBAJ&pg=PA50&lpg=PA50&dq=drama-based+teaching+approach+is+a+part+of+a+process-oriented+approach&source=bl&ots=ykNYTijUhk&sig=ACfU3U3XOqH5EmeAlGt-EKDPXD5h_b5sOg&hl=ar&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj7xYqz8ezpAhUqVRUIHanTD8cQ6AEwCnoECAcQAQ#v=onepage&q=drama-based%20teaching%20approach%20is%20a%20part%20of%20a%20process-oriented%20approach&f=false> |
| Zourob, M. (2014). *The effectiveness of using webinar on improving the speaking skills for Rafah UNRWA seventh graders and their anxiety*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Islamic University-Gaza. |
|  |
|  |