THE ROLE OF ENGLISH DRAMA PERFORMANCE IN ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS: STUDENTS' INSIGHTS AND CHALLENGES

Pramitha Cahyana[1], M. Sahril[2], Enni Erawati Saragih[3]
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education
Universitas Ibn Khaldun
Pramithacahyana001@gmail.com

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi wawasan mahasiswa terhadap penggunaan penampilan drama berbahasa Inggris dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara mereka, serta mengidentifikasi tantangan yang mereka hadapi selama proses pembelajaran. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus deskriptif. Partisipan terdiri dari 15 mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di salah satu universitas di Bogor yang telah mengikuti kegiatan drama berbahasa Inggris. Data dikumpulkan melalui angket tertutup dan wawancara semi-terstruktur, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana (2014) yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penampilan drama berbahasa Inggris memberikan kontribusi positif terhadap lima aspek utama keterampilan berbicara: pengucapan, kefasihan, kosakata, tata bahasa, dan pemahaman. Namun, ditemukan pula beberapa tantangan, yaitu kecemasan tampil, keterbatasan kosakata, dan kesulitan pengucapan. Simpulan dari penelitian ini menyarankan bahwa drama merupakan strategi pembelajaran yang efektif jika didukung oleh perencanaan pedagogis yang tepat, latihan yang terstruktur, dan dukungan emosional dari lingkungan belajar. Implikasinya, guru perlu memberikan bimbingan yang memadai agar drama dapat diintegrasikan secara optimal dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: Drama, Keterampilan Berbicara, Mahasiswa, Kecemasan, Pembelajaran Bahasa

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore students' insights into the use of English drama performance in enhancing their speaking skills, as well as to identify the challenges they face during the learning process. A qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design was employed, involving 15 students from the English Education Study Program at a university in Bogor, Indonesia, who had participated in English drama activities. Data were gathered through close-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, then analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that English drama performance contributed positively to five core aspects of speaking: pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. However, challenges such as performance anxiety, limited vocabulary, and pronunciation difficulties were also identified. The study concludes that drama can be an effective language learning strategy when supported by proper pedagogical planning, structured practice, and emotional reinforcement. The implications suggest that educators should provide adequate guidance to ensure the meaningful integration of drama into English language instruction.

Keywords: Drama, Speaking Skills, Students, Anxiety, Language Learning

INTRODUCTION

The development of English language education, particularly in the area of speaking skills, has become a major focus in contemporary language pedagogy (Wang, 2018). In response to the need for more interactive and learner-centered methods, English drama performance has emerged as an innovative instructional approach. Drama provides learners with authentic communicative contexts, allowing them to use language in realistic situations while fostering emotional engagement and social interaction (Maglaya, 2020). As a result, drama not only supports the technical aspects of language acquisition but also encourages confidence, motivation, and creativity in learners.

Speaking skills, as noted by Saragih and Haryati (2015), consist of two fundamental components: linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. Linguistic elements include comprehension, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and overall fluency—skills necessary for effective verbal communication. Non-linguistic elements, on the other hand, involve psychological and personal traits such as self-confidence and extroversion, which significantly support learners in expressing themselves clearly and confidently during spoken interactions. Therefore, a successful speaking program should ideally address both dimensions to foster comprehensive development in learners.

Although previous research has highlighted the positive impact of drama on speaking proficiency—such as improved fluency, vocabulary, and self-confidence (Pasaribu, 2023; Mekathoti, 2021)—most studies have primarily focused on measurable learning outcomes. There remains a lack of in-depth exploration into how students personally perceive and experience the process of learning English through drama. Understanding students' perspectives is essential for educators to implement drama-based activities more meaningfully and effectively within language classrooms.

To address this gap, the present study aims to explore students' insights into the use of English drama performance as a tool for developing their speaking skills. Additionally, it seeks to identify the specific challenges students face while engaging in drama activities, particularly those that affect their speaking performance. By examining both the perceived benefits and obstacles from the learners' point of view, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the pedagogical potential of drama and offers practical guidance for its effective integration into English language instruction.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of students' insights into the use of English drama performance as a means to enhance speaking skills. The case study design was selected because it allows the researcher to explore a phenomenon thoroughly within its real-life context. The participants of this study consisted of 15 students from the English Education Study Program at a university in Bogor, Indonesia. These and context-specific analysis of how the AI tool influenced their writing development. students were purposefully selected based on their active involvement in English drama performances, which qualified them to provide relevant and insightful data for the research objectives.

Data collection was conducted using two primary instruments: close-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was constructed using a five-point Likert scale with options ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." It consisted of 20 statements divided into two main sections: 10 items exploring students' insights into the use of drama in speaking practice, and 10 items identifying the challenges they encountered during the performance activities. The semi-structured interviews were designed to further explore students' personal experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding their participation in English drama performances, particularly in relation to the development of pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension.

The data analysis technique adopted in this study followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which involves three concurrent stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction stage, information obtained from the questionnaires and interview transcripts was condensed and categorized based on thematic components such

as speaking skill improvement and learning challenges. In the data display stage, the categorized data were presented in descriptive narratives and thematic tables to facilitate interpretation and pattern recognition. The final stage involved drawing conclusions, where the researcher interpreted the findings by examining data consistency, relationships between categories, and the validity of information from multiple data sources. Verification was conducted through source triangulation and iterative data reading to ensure the accuracy, credibility, and trustworthiness of the results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated students' insights into the use of English drama performance to enhance their speaking skills and identified the challenges they encountered during the process. Data were obtained from close-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving 15 undergraduate students from an English education program. The findings indicated that English drama performance significantly contributed to improvements in five fundamental components of speaking skills: pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. However, despite the overall positive outcomes, students also reported several challenges, notably anxiety, limited vocabulary, and pronunciation-related difficulties.

Students' Insights Toward English Drama Performance Enhance Speaking Skills

Students' insights on their experiences with English drama performance revealed a range of perceived benefits in developing their speaking skills. Drawing from both questionnaire responses and in-depth interviews, it became evident that drama served as a meaningful and engaging platform for students to practice and internalize various aspects of spoken English. Participants highlighted several areas in which they experienced noticeable improvement, including pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. These insights underscore the potential of drama as a comprehensive instructional approach that not only enhances linguistic competence but also promotes learner confidence and motivation. The following subsections elaborate on the specific aspects of

speaking that student identified as positively influenced by their involvement in drama activities.

Pronunciation was among the most positively affected aspects. Participants reported that regular practice through drama activities helped them pronounce English words more clearly and accurately. The repeated rehearsals, peer modelling, and focus on articulation played a key role in enhancing their phonetic awareness. These outcomes align with the findings of Bahadorfar and Omidvar (2014), who emphasize the importance of pronunciation in oral proficiency and suggest that repeated, context-based practice is effective in improving phonological accuracy. Students in this study also noted that drama required them to pay attention to stress, intonation, and rhythm—elements essential to intelligible speech (Feriz et al., 2017).

In addition to pronunciation, fluency was another area in which students showed noticeable improvement. Many students expressed that they felt more confident in speaking English after engaging in drama activities. Through the memorization and performance of dialogues, students developed greater ease in producing speech without frequent pauses. They reported that rehearsal sessions allowed them to practice language chunks naturally, which helped reduce hesitation and increased spontaneity. These findings are consistent with Thornbury's perspective (as cited in Ananto, 2018) that fluency is enhanced through authentic and repetitive communicative practice. Furthermore, the safe and collaborative environment provided by drama activities enabled students to take risks and speak without the fear of immediate correction, thus reinforcing their speaking confidence (Nguyen, 2023).

Moreover, vocabulary acquisition was also identified as a significant benefit of drama participation. Students encountered and used a variety of new words and expressions, especially those applicable to everyday situations. Because these vocabulary items were encountered in meaningful, contextualized scripts, students found it easier to remember and apply them in future communication. These results support Fleischer's (2021) view that vocabulary is better learned through narrative and thematic contexts than through isolated memorization. Moreover, many

students mentioned that the words and phrases they learned during rehearsals were later used in spontaneous conversations, suggesting real-world language transfer.

Similarly, grammar development was facilitated through students' engagement in drama performance. Students reported that performing grammatically accurate scripts helped them internalize proper sentence structures and usage. Although grammar instruction was not a primary focus of the drama activities, the implicit exposure to correct forms allowed students to improve their grammatical awareness and accuracy in speaking. This outcome supports Nguyen and Hoang's (2023) assertion that grammatical competence can be developed effectively through embedded language use within communicative activities, rather than through explicit instruction alone.

Finally, comprehension, the fifth core skill examined, also showed improvement among participants. Students indicated that their ability to understand spoken English and respond appropriately was enhanced through acting in drama. The dynamic and interactive nature of performance demanded that they listen actively to their peers, comprehend dialogue in real time, and deliver timely responses. These elements contributed to better listening comprehension and interpretive skills, corroborating the findings of Mega and Sugiarto (2020), who identified drama as an effective medium for improving learners' comprehension and interaction in real-life conversations. In conclusion, the findings highlight the effectiveness of English drama performance as a holistic instructional strategy for enhancing speaking skills in EFL contexts. It contributes to learners' development in pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension while also addressing affective factors such as confidence and motivation.

However, for drama to be optimally effective, it must be supported by structured pedagogical planning, including scaffolding techniques, focused pronunciation training, vocabulary reinforcement activities, and anxiety-reduction measures. When these elements are thoughtfully implemented, drama has the potential to foster well-rounded communicative competence and promote sustained learner engagement in English language learning.

Challenges Student's Face Based on Speaking Skills

Despite the numerous linguistic and affective benefits observed from engaging in English drama performance, students in this study also encountered several notable challenges that impacted their overall learning experience. These challenges, while not entirely unexpected in a performance-based context, present important considerations for educators aiming to implement drama as an effective language learning tool. The difficulties reported by participants primarily fell into three categories: performance anxiety, limited vocabulary, and pronunciation difficulties. Each of these areas presents both cognitive and emotional barriers that can hinder students' speaking development if not addressed through supportive pedagogical strategies.

One of the most prominent challenges identified was performance anxiety, which emerged as the most frequently reported issue among the participants. More than 80% of the students indicated that they experienced nervousness, fear of making mistakes, or discomfort when performing in front of others. These affective responses were particularly intense during the early stages of rehearsal and performance preparation. Students described feeling mentally blocked or physically tense, which significantly reduced their ability to speak fluently and with confidence. This finding aligns with Harmer's (2007) observation that anxiety can be a major hindrance to language production, especially in performance-based settings.

However, the study also revealed that students' anxiety could be gradually alleviated through repeated exposure to the performance environment, consistent practice, and the emotional support of peers and instructors. The process of rehearsing and receiving encouragement allowed many students to build their confidence over time, suggesting that a well-structured and emotionally safe learning space is essential in minimizing the psychological barriers to speaking performance.

Closely related to anxiety is the issue of limited vocabulary, particularly in situations that require spontaneous speaking beyond the scripted dialogues. Although students acknowledged acquiring new words and expressions through drama scripts, many reported difficulties when

trying to recall and use appropriate vocabulary in real-time interactions. This issue reflects a well-documented gap between receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge (Ismael, 2024). In practice, students often found themselves repeating the same familiar words or pausing excessively while searching for alternatives, which disrupted their fluency and diminished their confidence. The inability to access a diverse vocabulary set under time pressure indicates a need for explicit vocabulary-building interventions that focus not only on acquisition but also on retrieval fluency.

Strategies such as improvisation exercises, word-recall games, and thematic vocabulary clusters could help bridge this gap and support learners in transitioning vocabulary from passive knowledge to active use.

A third significant challenge involved pronunciation difficulties, especially when students encountered unfamiliar words or struggled to maintain appropriate intonation, stress, and rhythm during performances. While most students reported a general enhancement in pronunciation due to repeated practice and modelling during drama activities, a substantial number still expressed feelings of uncertainty and discomfort when articulating complex or unfamiliar terms. This hesitation was often intensified by performance pressure, which led to self-monitoring and disrupted speech flow. As a result, even students who had internalized pronunciation patterns during rehearsal found it challenging to deliver lines confidently during actual performances. These findings are in line with Rzayeva's (2024) recommendation that pronunciation instruction should be embedded more explicitly into drama-based pedagogy. Rather than assuming that pronunciation will improve naturally through performance, instructors should provide targeted support through guided articulation drills, phonological awareness activities, and feedback sessions focused on stress and intonation.

Taken together, these challenges highlight the importance of a balanced instructional approach that recognizes both the empowering and demanding aspects of English drama performance. While drama provides a rich and motivating context for developing speaking skills, it also requires careful scaffolding to ensure

that students do not become overwhelmed by its cognitive and emotional demands. Addressing performance anxiety, lexical limitations, and pronunciation difficulties through structured, supportive teaching practices can maximize the benefits of drama while minimizing its potential drawbacks. These findings underscore the need for drama to be implemented not only as an artistic tool but as a pedagogically informed strategy that considers the complex realities of language learners.

CONCLUSION

English drama performance has proven to be effective in enhancing students' speaking skills, particularly in the areas of pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. However, its implementation must be accompanied by careful pedagogical planning that considers students' emotional and cognitive needs. Challenges such as performance anxiety, limited vocabulary, and pronunciation difficulties may arise and should not be overlooked. English drama should function as a supportive learning strategy—not as a substitute for structured language instruction or active student engagement. Therefore, teachers must provide proper scaffolding, encouragement, and feedback to ensure that drama-based activities align with communicative learning goals. Students, in turn, should remain active participants in the process, building their confidence and competence through consistent practice. With thoughtful and balanced application, English drama performance can become a powerful and engaging medium for supporting the comprehensive development of speaking skills.

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