

Drama-based strategies for vocabulary development in young English learners in the western region of Saudi Arabia

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Article Info

Article history:

Received May 19, 2024

Revised Oct 28, 2024

Accepted Dec 2, 2024

Keywords:

Drama

EFL learning activities

Role-play

Vocabulary acquisition

Young learners

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the efficacy of drama-based methodologies in English vocabulary acquisition among young learners in Saudi Arabia, addressing a significant gap in the Saudi English as a foreign language (EFL) context. Employing a descriptive, quantitative research design, the study surveyed 137 English language instructors from the Jeddah Educational Directorate. The findings reveal that diverse dramatic activities yield substantial benefits in English language learning, particularly in vocabulary acquisition. Key advantages include enhanced motivation for contextual vocabulary usage, improved learner engagement, increased self-confidence, and enhanced communication skills. The study highlights the superiority of varied and engaging drama-based techniques, such as role-playing, over traditional methods in fostering a dynamic and conducive learning atmosphere. While acknowledging challenges like increased teacher preparation time and students' initial reluctance towards active participation, the research concludes that drama-based instruction represents an effective pedagogical approach for teaching English vocabulary to young learners. The study proposes significant implications for educational policy, recommending the integration of drama-based English textbooks into the curriculum and the incorporation of drama techniques in teacher training programs. This research contributes valuable insights to ongoing discourse on innovative EFL teaching methodologies in the Saudi Arabian context.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The traditional pedagogical methodologies employed by educators in the instruction of the English language frequently provide limited opportunities for learner engagement, as they are predominantly teacher-centered approaches, resulting in passive learners [1], [2]. Numerous enthusiastic English language instructors and curriculum designers are actively pursuing the development of more advantageous approaches to teaching English, incorporating techniques associated with literature to create a more dynamic environment for learners, particularly those in their formative years. Over the past few decades, the utilization of literature as a medium for teaching English has been proposed as a novel method, following a prolonged period during which literature remained excluded from formal curricula [3]–[5].

In light of these developments, this study aims to evaluate the efficacy of employing dramatic methodologies in the acquisition of English vocabulary, with a particular emphasis on young learners in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The primary objectives of this research are: i) to explore how drama can assist teachers in teaching vocabulary in the classroom; ii) to identify the advantages of using drama for both

teachers and students in the context of English language learning; and iii) to assess the perceived effectiveness of drama-based techniques in enhancing vocabulary retention and usage among young learners.

Numerous English textbooks have integrated literary texts spanning various genres, including songs, plays, and others. This aligns with the widely accepted notion that young learners acquire languages more readily through engaging activities such as games, songs, and short plays [6], [7]. In this context, drama emerges as a suitable approach for English language classes, as it fosters a sense of playfulness among students, deviating from the traditional, mundane classroom experience [8]–[10].

Drama is a process-oriented form of improvisation in which the facilitator encourages participants to reflect on their experiences while responding to a stimulus through the utilization of bodily movements and vocal expressions [11]. Consequently, drama-based activities can hold significant importance in teaching all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – thereby enhancing students' communication proficiency in the target language expeditiously. Winston and Tandy [12] asserted that the incorporation of dramatic activities in the realms of reading, listening, speaking, and writing aids students in achieving improved communication in the target language they are learning. Drama emerges as the most appropriate method for teaching English vocabulary, as elucidated in numerous studies [13]–[19]. Furthermore, it provides learners with valuable opportunities to employ the newly acquired vocabulary in more realistic situations, thereby fostering an increase in their self-confidence. Additionally, it contributes to the creation of a more pleasant and lively atmosphere for learners than traditional methods.

The English curriculum in Saudi Arabia places emphasis on the four language skills, with minimal attention given to literature within English language programs and textbooks. When it comes to vocabulary acquisition, most students encounter difficulties in learning new words, even struggling to pronounce them correctly due to the traditional teaching methods employed by educators. Many teachers continue to adhere to the 'outdated' grammar-translation method, which is predominantly teacher-centered [3], allowing for little interaction between teachers and their learners. Teachers typically follow a prescribed coursebook plan to deliver their lessons, and this routine teaching approach often results in low proficiency levels in English. Despite the recognition of literature as an acceptable method for teaching English, only a few teachers opt to incorporate drama into their teaching practices. This reluctance stems from the substantial preparation required, which many educators perceive as an additional burden in their already demanding schedules. The time and effort needed to plan and execute effective drama-based lessons can be daunting, especially for teachers accustomed to more traditional methodologies. Consequently, many educators persist with conventional teaching methods, such as rote memorization and grammar-focused instruction. This adherence to traditional approaches often results in learners losing motivation to engage with English for practical life activities. Instead, students come to view English solely as an academic subject, relevant only for examinations. This narrow focus not only limits students' language acquisition but also fails to prepare them for real-world communication scenarios, ultimately undermining the broader goals of language education [8].

Acknowledging the importance of vocabulary acquisition, Uchihara *et al.* [20] underscores that: "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and the acquisition of a second language." It highlights the critical role vocabulary plays in language learning and effective communication. The teaching of vocabulary is no less important than any other element in English language instruction, such as grammar or pronunciation. However, it presents a formidable challenge for both educators and learners. Effective vocabulary instruction requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond mere memorization of word lists. It necessitates significant effort from teachers to create engaging and meaningful learning experiences that facilitate the acquisition of new words and their appropriate usage. Moreover, teachers must guide learners in employing this newly acquired vocabulary in real-life situations, bridging the gap between classroom learning and practical application. This process demands creativity, persistence, and a deep understanding of language acquisition principles from educators, making vocabulary instruction a complex yet crucial aspect of language teaching. Currently, most teachers teach vocabulary by writing words on the board and having students repeat them chorally or by presenting flashcards with the new words, which can be perceived as tedious by learners. Some other teachers opt to provide direct Arabic translations. Soon after, students may struggle to recall the new words or lose grasp of their meanings and usages. Consequently, drama techniques can play a pivotal role in addressing this issue and enhancing learners' vocabulary acquisition.

It is against this backdrop that the idea for this research study emerged. Dawoud *et al.* [14] viewed drama as a powerful tool for learning: "because of its unique balance of thought and feeling, making learning exciting, challenging, relevant to real-life concerns, and enjoyable." The incorporation of drama activities on a regular basis arguably creates an enjoyable atmosphere for young learners to acquire new vocabulary with ease. This requires training in various types of drama to achieve desirable results in language proficiency. This study endeavors to familiarize teachers with drama activities that can be applied within the classroom setting, thereby encouraging them to adopt these techniques in teaching vocabulary items. It sheds light on drama activities as a teaching technique to facilitate learners' efficient engagement with the target language.

Furthermore, it investigates the effectiveness of drama activities on young learners' English vocabulary acquisition. Thus, the study addresses these research questions: how can drama help teachers to teach vocabulary in the classroom?; and what are the advantages of using drama for teachers and students?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nation [21] posited that language use and vocabulary knowledge exhibit a complementary relationship: language use facilitates the expansion of vocabulary knowledge, and a comprehensive grasp of vocabulary enables effective language use. Learners must acquire a vast repertoire of vocabulary in the target language to enhance their proficiency in other English language skills. Linse and Nunan [22] asserted that for English as a foreign language (EFL) students to attain mastery over English language skills, they must learn the vocabulary of the language (i.e., a repertoire of words and their corresponding meanings) to support the improvement of their other skills. Nevertheless, learners may encounter several obstacles when acquiring new words. Among these obstacles are the various meanings associated with words in the English language. Richards [23] has highlighted essential aspects of learning vocabulary, which entails: "a great deal about its general frequency of use, syntactic and situational limitations on its use, the underlying form and the forms that can be derived from it, and the network of its semantic features."

2.1. Drama in language education

Shu [24] posits that "drama" constitutes any action or situation in which participants actively engage, primarily concerned with attitudinal exploration rather than character portrayal. Further, Shin and Hickey [25] contend that when immersed in a dramatic circumstance, individuals employ their cumulative experiences and imaginative faculties to co-construct a dynamic representation of life, aimed at eliciting surprise and fostering discovery among the participants. Drama, a symbolic linguistic medium, serves as a representational conduit for the tangible world.

Throughout human history, drama has functioned as a pedagogical modality [26]. Its utility in teaching and learning the English language is evident. Drama in education, also termed creative drama, entails improvisation facilitated by a leader guiding participants to imagine and enact scenarios reflecting real-life experiences. According to Asagba [27], the elements underpinning drama-based instruction are imitation, imagination, role-playing, and interpretation, which account for a significant portion of a child's acquisition of language, kinesthetic expression, and social comportment. Combs [28] perceives drama as any activity wherein learners assume alternative personas within imaginary situations. Shin and Hickey [25] corroborate Combs [28], emphasizing that a teacher's primary objective is to craft dramatic scenarios that stimulate independent thought in students regarding themselves and their world.

Drama accommodates diverse learning styles, thereby facilitating the learning process. Integrating drama activities into English instruction enables learners to employ the language appropriately. Dodson [29] noted that drama augments students' motivation and self-esteem while achieving the goals of communicative language teaching (CLT) within the language classroom. Drama in language learning affords ample opportunities for students to utilize newly acquired vocabulary in authentic communicative contexts. Chauhan [30] asserted that employing drama techniques to teach English furnishes learners with numerous prospects for authentic communication, which can bolster their confidence as they engage with the target language (English) beyond the classroom setting.

Learners partaking in dramatic activities are genuinely immersed in the drama rather than mere spectators. Consequently, it is evident that incorporating drama into teaching and learning fosters active involvement among young learners. Basaran [31] underscores that: "drama techniques are powerful and versatile tools for teaching and learning English language and literacy skills. They can enhance learners' language skills development, motivation and confidence, and intercultural communication by providing them with rich and meaningful learning experiences." Numerous researchers emphasize the importance of utilizing drama techniques in teaching, asserting that drama can familiarize students with the new language by rendering it an enjoyable experience.

Drama can facilitate the comprehension of personal and human experiences, enabling students to inhabit the realities of imaginary situations and characters [32]. Consequently, drama allows students to construct imaginary personas and imbue them with a sense of authenticity, thereby experiencing diverse emotions, relationships, and perspectives dramatically. Drama provides learners with a purpose for language exchange and an imaginary context in which they feel liberated to act and impersonate, experimenting with a broader range of language rather than rote drilling of decontextualized patterns [33]. Moreover, drama aids students in continuously reviewing and consolidating new vocabulary and its usage in their memory. It cultivates learners' empathy as they portray varied characters in diverse situations. The learners exhibit empathy, take turns, make decisions, and collaborate as a team. It encourages assuming responsibility and leadership roles [34]. Additionally, it enhances learners' self-confidence in acquiring the target language and

engaging in classroom activities [35]. Furthermore, drama enables students to communicate actively with one another, even with limited vocabulary proficiency. Most dramatic endeavors guide young individuals toward developing interpersonal skills and gaining insights into social life. Through drama, children share quality time with their peers and teachers, fostering more enjoyable and effective learning experiences [15]. Early childhood educators frequently incorporate games, play, and dramatic activities into their daily classroom instruction, enabling students to effectively utilize the language [36]. Teachers should consider that children derive enjoyment from learning through play, games, or enacting teacher-planned scenarios.

Several techniques can facilitate vocabulary acquisition through drama, including drama games [37], mime and role-play [38], [39], improvisation [40], and simulations [41]. Basaran [31] asserts that dramatic activities are not intended as performative plays before passive audiences; rather, the value of these activities lies in their intrinsic nature and immediate impact. In any of these dramatic activities, learners are typically expected to actively participate in drama-based lessons. Although most students in EFL countries are unaccustomed to the novel methodology of utilizing drama as a language learning tool, some diligent and enthusiastic students in each class actively engage in dramatic activities, inspiring teachers to prepare interactive tasks. Other learners with lower proficiency levels may find the activities tedious and futile, either due to indolence or shyness regarding participation in dramatic exercises. Briones *et al.* [35] suggests that some learners may remain reticent until they perceive their proficiency as acceptable.

Furthermore, learners should cultivate positive interpersonal relationships to foster a sense of security and mutual motivation. Learners should propose themes for the dramatic activities that align with their interests and discuss the subjects they find most compelling, such as family situations. According to Combs [28], challenges arising during drama-based instruction pertain to interpreting role-play texts and improvising scenes. These interpretations may overemphasize the provided words while neglecting to convey meaning through facial expressions, intonation, and gestures.

Likewise, teachers play a pivotal role in dramatic activities. They should exhibit enthusiasm while performing in front of students to inspire and motivate them. Moreover, the teacher should establish a reciprocal relationship with the students to alleviate their apprehension about performing before others. Teachers should cultivate a mutual rapport with learners to overcome risk-aversion, thereby ensuring instructional success [35]. Generally, teachers hold varying perspectives when confronted with novel teaching methodologies. Some are reluctant to adopt the drama approach due to their lack of experience. Other teachers, particularly those with traditional leanings, view the use of drama as superfluous and a waste of time. They adhere rigidly to traditional methods and reject any new teaching approach. Consequently, it is recommended to provide regular training for teachers. Sadia *et al.* [42] note the necessity of training teachers to structure their lessons such that learning occurs organically, rather than merely transmitting information to passive learners. Additionally, teachers should assist their students only when necessary and allow learners to collaborate and attempt to resolve their challenges independently. In drama-based instruction, teacher's role should be limited to facilitating learners when required, continuously challenging them to assume responsibility for their learning, engage their imaginations, and arrive at solutions [35].

2.2. Challenges of using drama in EFL classroom

Indubitably, the integration of drama into English vocabulary instruction confers myriad benefits upon learners, particularly young children. However, teachers may encounter certain challenges when employing this approach. Although these challenges are limited in scope, they warrant consideration and resolution. For instance, reticent students may find the experience arduous and vexing due to their trepidation regarding public speaking. To address this issue, teacher should endeavor to assist students in overcoming their fear and encourage them to actively participate in sharing their perspectives. Another challenge lies in the substantial time commitment required of the teacher to prepare for such lessons. Wessels [43] asserted that: “drama necessitates meticulous planning and structuring” in order to “create a learning situation which will ensure a constant supply of stimuli to the students, which will keep them active and alert.”

Moreover, teachers cannot readily correct students' errors during the enactment of dramatic activities, as doing so may prove disruptive and demoralizing for learners. To circumvent this obstacle, the teacher should vigilantly monitor the performance and document the mistakes, subsequently drawing the students' attention to their errors during the feedback stage. Lastly, the execution of dramatic activities within the classroom setting may engender a significant level of noise and potential chaos, with some students exhibiting exuberant or boisterous behavior. Consequently, the teacher should anticipate such interruptions and endeavor to maintain control by providing strict and unambiguous instructions at the outset of the lesson.

This literature review has elucidated the concept of drama in language education and its attendant benefits in teaching English vocabulary to young learners through various techniques. The review has expounded upon drama as a widely adopted strategy for vocabulary instruction. It has also highlighted some of the challenges encountered by teachers and learners in utilizing drama within EFL classrooms.

Furthermore, the roles of learners and teachers in drama-based activities have been explored. This review will inform the conduct of the current study and serve as a point of reference for contextualizing the findings within the existing body of research on the utilization of drama in teaching English vocabulary.

3. METHOD

The study employed a descriptive quantitative research, with the selection of this methodological approach being contingent upon the purpose and research questions delineated in the introductory section. This design was chosen to systematically describe and quantify the perceptions and attitudes of English language teachers towards using drama-based strategies for vocabulary instruction. The population under investigation comprised English language teachers from primary, intermediate, and secondary educational institutions within the city of Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during the 2022-2023 academic year.

3.1. Participants

The study employed a simple random sampling technique to select 137 participants, with the sample comprising 97.1% males and 2.9% females. The participants exhibited heterogeneity in their academic backgrounds. The majority (79.5%) held bachelor's degrees, while 19.0% possessed master's degrees, and a mere 1.5% were holders of doctoral degrees. Regarding their distribution across educational levels, 65% of the participants were secondary school teachers, 21.9% were intermediate schoolteachers, and 13.1% were primary school teachers. The sample size of 137 English language teachers in this study is considered adequate since it aligns with sample sizes used in similar studies within the field of EFL research, particularly those focusing on drama-based instruction and vocabulary development. Additionally, this sample size yields a margin of error of approximately 8.3% at a 95% confidence level, which is acceptable for educational research of this nature. The sample also represents a diverse cross-section of teachers from primary, intermediate, and secondary levels, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the target population. Furthermore, the sample size was sufficient to conduct meaningful statistical analyses, including t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA), with adequate power to detect significant effects. Given the specific context of Western Saudi Arabia and the focused nature of the research question, 137 participants provide a robust foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions about the efficacy of drama-based instructional strategies in fostering vocabulary development among young English language learners in this region.

3.2. Questionnaire

Data were collected through a researcher-developed questionnaire. The questionnaire underwent a review process by the supervisor and experts in the field from various Saudi universities. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section solicited demographic data, including participants' gender, educational level, and teaching level. The second section comprised 15 statements aimed at measuring the perceived benefits of utilizing drama to teach vocabulary to young students, particularly those in primary school. The responses to these statements were subject to a five-point Likert scale. The questions were formulated based on relevant references, scientific journals, articles, and previous studies within the field.

Prior to implementation, the questionnaire underwent validation, and its reliability was assessed. Validity refers to ensuring that a survey accurately measures its intended construct [44]. There are several approaches to testing validity. In this study, the researcher employed Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between each statement and the total score of the questionnaire. The results revealed that the coefficients ranged from 0.422 to 0.777, which are positive and statistically significant at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels. This indicates that the questionnaire exhibits high internal consistency (construct validity).

A reliability test was employed to ensure that the survey produces consistent results across repeated measures, either within the same population or with a similar population. A reliable survey may be generalized and is expected to reproduce similar results across repeated measures. The most common method is Cronbach's alpha [45]. The values of Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire, if any of the statements were deleted, ranged from 0.911 to 0.925, which are considered high values (>0.90) [45]. Consequently, the questionnaire is deemed reliable, and the researcher is satisfied with its reliability. The weights assigned to each level of agreement toward a statement are subject to a five-level Likert scale and are represented by weighted means. "Likert scaling is a bipolar scaling method used to measure either positive or negative responses toward a statement" [46].

3.3. Data analysis and ethical considerations

The data collected through the questionnaire were subjected to statistical analysis using the IBM statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) V.22. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was employed to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. The Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Frequencies and percentages were obtained to describe the demographic

characteristics of the sample. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed to study the sample's opinion toward each statement in the questionnaire. The independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were utilized to measure the difference between participants in their opinion toward the questionnaire according to their demographic characteristics. All ethical considerations were duly taken into account in conducting this research study. Prior to conducting this research, approval to administer the questionnaire was obtained from the Education Directorate of Jeddah. Furthermore, all participants were informed that their identities would remain undisclosed in the research and that the information they provided would be utilized solely for research purposes.

4. RESULTS

The participants' demographic characteristics and opinions toward the benefits of teaching English vocabulary through drama were analyzed, and the results are outlined in this section. To commence, Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of each statement in the questionnaire addressing the benefits of teaching English vocabulary through drama. It is discerned that the overall mean is 3.74, which falls within the range of 3.40–4.20 on the five-point Likert scale, indicating that most participants concur with the benefits of teaching English vocabulary through the utilization of drama.

The gathered data were arranged in accordance with the questionnaire items' responses which showed that the mean scores of each statement. The statements have been ranked in a manner that reflected the mean values including the highest and the lowest means. With reference to the highest-ranked mean, using drama in teaching vocabulary increases the communication skills of the students (mean score: 3.94), reflecting agreement among the participants' opinion responses. Subsequently, "using drama activities fosters a positive atmosphere among the students in the classroom" ranked second (mean=3.94). Following that, "using drama for learning vocabulary supports students in retaining the newly learned words easily" ranked third (mean=3.88). Likewise, the remaining statements are arranged according to the order of their mean scores, culminating with a mean score of 3.38, ranked 15th. This statement pertains to the difficulty of teaching vocabulary through drama and represents a neutral stance among the responses.

Differences in responses based on participants' gender were analyzed. To study the differences between participants in their opinion toward the statements addressing the benefits of teaching English vocabulary through drama according to their demographics, the researcher used independent samples t-test and ANOVA, as shown in Table 1. The results show that all t-tests for all statements came with p-values greater than 0.05 and the overall score with the test value ($t=-.408$) and p-value (.684). Since the values mentioned are greater than 0.05, there are no significant differences between participants in their opinion toward the benefits of teaching English vocabulary through drama according to gender.

Table 1. Responses based on the participants' gender

Variable	Mean		Std.		Test value	Sig.
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
1. Using drama activities in teaching English vocabulary is enjoyable.	3.74	4.25	1.15	0.96	-0.873	0.384
2. It is easy to teach vocabulary through the use of drama activities.	3.52	3.75	1.07	0.96	-0.427	0.670
3. There are several advantages of using drama-based activities in learning vocabulary.	3.84	4.50	1.03	0.58	-1.270	0.206
4. Learning English vocabulary via drama enriches the students' good command of language.	3.77	4.00	1.00	0.82	-0.461	0.645
5. Using various drama techniques motivate students to learn vocabulary easily.	3.86	3.50	1.02	0.58	0.709	0.479
6. Using drama activities widens the students' fantasy.	3.80	4.00	1.02	0.82	-0.394	0.695
7. Using drama activities to teach vocabulary requires a lot of preparation.	3.83	4.50	1.09	0.58	-1.226	0.222
8. Using drama to learn vocabulary supports students retain the new learned words easily.	3.90	3.25	0.95	0.96	1.349	0.179
9. Using drama in teaching vocabulary increases the communication skills of the students.	3.95	3.50	0.97	0.58	0.933	0.353
10. Using drama activities creates a good atmosphere amongst the students in the classroom.	3.89	4.25	0.91	0.96	-0.771	0.442
11. I believe that using drama to teach vocabulary creates the spirit of competitiveness amongst the learners.	3.63	3.25	0.93	0.96	0.805	0.422
12. Using drama in teaching vocabulary gives the teacher a good opportunity to get demotivated students involved in participation.	3.71	3.25	1.02	0.96	0.899	0.370
13. Using drama activities to teach vocabulary makes students discover their hidden abilities.	3.71	4.50	1.01	0.58	-1.566	0.120
14. It is not easy to teach vocabulary through drama.	3.37	4.00	1.15	0.82	-1.087	0.279
15. It is recommended to use drama in teaching vocabulary once a week as it requires a lot of efforts.	3.56	3.75	1.06	1.50	-0.355	0.723
Overall	3.74	3.88	0.71	0.60	-0.408	0.684

Likewise, the differences between participants' opinions toward the statements addressing the benefits of teaching English vocabulary through drama according to their education level using one-way ANOVA are displayed in Table 2. The results show that all F test values for all statements came with p-values greater than 0.05, in addition to the overall score, which came with a test value of $F=.23$ and a p-value of .797, which is also greater than 0.05. So, there are no significant differences between participants' opinions toward the benefits of teaching English vocabulary through drama according to education level.

Regarding the differences between participants' opinions toward the statements addressing the benefits of teaching English vocabulary through the use of drama according to teaching level using the ANOVA test, as outlined in Table 3. It was found that most F tests for almost all statements came with p-values less than 0.05, and the overall score with test value $F=7.402$ and p-value 0.001, which is also less than 0.05. So, there are statistically significant differences between participants in their opinion toward the benefits of teaching English vocabulary through drama according to their teaching levels. The results of post hoc pairwise comparisons- least significant difference (LSD)- showed that the differences were reported between primary and intermediate teaching levels, with intermediate-level teachers with the higher mean value. Between teaching primary and secondary level teachers, secondary level teachers resulted in a higher mean value.

Table 2. Responses based on the participants' education

Variable	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	Test value	Sig.
1. Using drama activities in teaching English vocabulary is enjoyable.	1.1 175.9 177.1	2 134 136	0.56 1.31	0.43	0.653
2. It is easy to teach vocabulary through the use of drama activities.	2.1 152.1 154.2	2 134 136	1.03 1.14	0.91	0.405
3. There are several advantages of using drama-based activities in learning vocabulary.	0.7 141.7 142.4	2 134 136	0.34 1.06	0.32	0.727
4. Learning English vocabulary via drama enriches the students' good command of language.	0.2 133.8 134.0	2 134 136	0.09 1.00	0.09	0.913
5. Using various drama techniques motivate students to learn vocabulary easily.	0.8 138.3 139.1	2 134 136	0.38 1.03	0.36	0.696
6. Using drama activities widens the students' fantasy.	0.1 139.6 139.7	2 134 136	0.04 1.04	0.04	0.962
7. Using drama activities to teach vocabulary requires a lot of preparation.	4.9 154.9 159.8	2 134 136	2.43 1.16	2.10	0.127
8. Using drama to learn vocabulary supports students retain the new learned words easily.	0.2 123.9 124.1	2 134 136	0.12 0.92	0.13	0.881
9. Using drama in teaching vocabulary increases the communication skills of the students.	1.0 124.5 125.5	2 134 136	0.49 0.93	0.53	0.589
10. Using drama activities creates a good atmosphere amongst the students in the classroom.	0.0 111.7 111.8	2 134 136	0.02 0.83	0.02	0.982
11. I believe that using drama to teach vocabulary creates the spirit of competitiveness amongst the learners.	1.0 117.2 118.3	2 134 136	0.52 0.87	0.60	0.551
12. Using drama in teaching vocabulary gives the teacher a good opportunity to get demotivated students involved in participation.	2.0 138.7 140.7	2 134 136	1.01 1.04	0.98	0.379
13. Using drama activities to teach vocabulary makes students discover their hidden abilities.	3.3 133.7 137.0	2 134 136	1.64 1.00	1.65	0.197
14. It is not easy to teach vocabulary through drama.	3.1 175.4 178.5	2 134 136	1.55 1.31	1.18	0.310
15. It is recommended to use drama in teaching vocabulary once a week as it requires a lot of efforts.	0.9 154.9 155.7	2 134 136	0.43 1.16	0.37	0.688
Overall	0.2 66.8 67.1	2 134 136	0.11 0.50	0.23	0.797

Table 3. Participants' responses based on their level

Variable	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	Test value	Sig.
1. Using drama activities in teaching English vocabulary is enjoyable.	5.5 171.5 177.1	2 134 136	2.765 1.280	2.160	0.119
2. It is easy to teach vocabulary through the use of drama activities.	2.8 151.4 154.2	2 134 136	1.378 1.130	1.219	0.299
3. There are several advantages of using drama-based activities in learning vocabulary.	10.4 132.0 142.4	2 134 136	5.199 0.985	5.279	0.006
4. Learning English vocabulary via drama enriches the students' good command of language.	11.0 123.0 134.0	2 134 136	5.480 0.918	5.969	0.003
5. Using various drama techniques motivate students to learn vocabulary easily.	5.7 133.4 139.1	2 134 136	2.832 0.996	2.844	0.062
6. Using drama activities widens the students' fantasy.	11.7 128.0 139.7	2 134 136	5.836 0.955	6.109	0.003
7. Using drama activities to teach vocabulary requires a lot of preparation.	17.9 141.9 159.8	2 134 136	8.943 1.059	8.445	0.000
8. Using drama to learn vocabulary supports students retain the new learned words easily.	7.7 116.5 124.1	2 134 136	3.832 0.869	4.409	0.014
9. Using drama in teaching vocabulary increases the communication skills of the students.	5.7 119.9 125.5	2 134 136	2.833 0.895	3.167	0.045
10. Using drama activities creates a good atmosphere amongst the students in the classroom.	6.8 104.9 111.8	2 134 136	3.422 0.783	4.371	0.014
11. I believe that using drama to teach vocabulary creates the spirit of competitiveness amongst the learners.	0.7 117.6 118.3	2 134 136	0.329 0.878	0.374	0.688
12. Using drama in teaching vocabulary gives the teacher a good opportunity to get demotivated students involved in participation.	7.3 133.5 140.7	2 134 136	3.640 0.996	3.655	0.028
13. Using drama activities to teach vocabulary makes students discover their hidden abilities.	4.3 132.7 137.0	2 134 136	2.138 0.991	3.159	0.039
14. It is not easy to teach vocabulary through drama.	13.6 164.9 178.5	2 134 136	6.821 1.230	5.544	0.005
15. It is recommended to use drama in teaching vocabulary once a week as it requires a lot of efforts.	4.9 150.8 155.7	2 134 136	2.447 0.126	3.174	0.038
Overall	6.7 60.4 67.1	2 134 136	3.336 0.451	7.402	0.001

5. DISCUSSION

The findings presented in the three tables elucidate the benefits of utilizing drama as a pedagogical approach for teaching vocabulary in the EFL classroom. Concerning the results obtained from the questionnaire in the present study, it was revealed that all participants underscored the effectiveness of employing drama in teaching vocabulary. The majority of these participants concurred that drama represents one of the viable methods for teaching vocabulary to young learners. This indication suggests that the incorporation of drama activities in teaching vocabulary constitutes an effective and enjoyable approach to learning English. While some participants' responses varied significantly according to their educational level, most favored the utilization of drama as a resource for English language teaching. They alleged that the use of drama is less effective in teaching secondary school students, as younger students exhibit less interest in engaging in dramatic sketches.

This finding aligns closely with previous findings reported in the literature. Maley and Duff [47] are ardent advocates of the benefits of employing drama techniques. They elaborate on how it aids language learners in acquiring new vocabulary and building confidence. It also motivates students and facilitates a shift in focus from the teacher to the students [6]. Several other studies have demonstrated a myriad of advantages associated with drama-based vocabulary teaching. It enables role-play that mimics real-life situations and boosts students' self-confidence [35]. Boudreault [34] revealed that drama activities encourage students to

assume responsibilities and leadership roles. One of the advantages mentioned by Whiteson [48] is discipline—drama represents a platform for exploring theoretical and practical aspects of English language. Drama captures students' attention more effectively than other traditional language techniques [18]. It alters the monotonous learning environment as each student is assigned a role to play.

Additionally, Charles and Kusanagi [8] stated that teaching language through the drama approach offers numerous benefits in language education because drama directs students' awareness of how people communicate in different modes and improves communicative behaviors to assist students in developing their English language abilities. Involvement in drama activities can contribute to increasing motivation [35]. There were no significant differences between the participants in their opinions regarding the benefits of using drama in teaching English vocabulary based on their gender or educational level.

Referring to the findings, the respondents' opinions support the use of drama in teaching English vocabulary. The main points derived from the questionnaire include learners' enjoyment, motivation, self-confidence, a positive atmosphere, imagination, and competitiveness. Most of the participants in this questionnaire agreed that using drama in teaching vocabulary is an enjoyable undertaking. This finding corroborates the results of Bora [49], who concluded that drama-based activities enhance L2 spontaneity and provide authentic speaking opportunities as the learners are equipped with adequate vocabulary and structures. Similarly, organizing extracurricular foreign language drama develops learners' autonomy [5].

This paper also indicates that utilizing drama as a medium for teaching vocabulary is effective for young learners to acquire English proficiency more effectively. The findings support prior studies conducted on teaching vocabulary through drama. For example, they corroborate the results of Cannon [50], who found that drama-based activities significantly enhance language learners' vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, the results of the research conducted by Yavuz and Arslan [51] confirm that language learning through drama facilitates language learners' emotional and social development. In line with the results of the current study, Kryeziu [7] argued that drama-based teaching pedagogies should be part of the syllabus, and the ministry can play a pivotal role in incorporating drama as a robust learning tool, especially in early school classes.

According to Korkut and Çelik [52], drama may assist learners in pronouncing and learning new vocabulary items when used in a well-structured environment. Moreover, the findings indicate that using drama-based activities helps improve learners' self-esteem. The findings also align with Kilinc *et al.* [53], who found that drama-enhanced literary practices significantly change learners' foreign language vocabulary learning compared to traditional teaching methods.

As explained, the findings lean towards the effectiveness of drama in vocabulary teaching and learning, with a few exceptions. Although most of the participants agreed on using drama, some respondents disagreed with some of the statements in the questionnaire. For instance, they disagreed with the second statement, which states that it is easy to teach vocabulary through drama activities. Therefore, according to the findings, using drama activities can be positive for some respondents and negative for others. Generally speaking, the results showed that most respondents exhibited a positive attitude towards using drama activities for teaching vocabulary, regardless of their gender and educational level.

5.1. Implications

Given the results and discussion, coupled with corroborating findings from the extant literature, the study offers some salient implications for refining teaching practices. The study provides implications for English language teachers and other stakeholders within the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia and other analogous EFL contexts. They are encouraged to capitalize on the findings regarding drama as an efficacious method for teaching vocabulary. The study underscores the role of drama in invigorating and revitalizing the spirit of competitiveness among learners. It also fosters efficient participation and collaboration among students as they engage in and derive enjoyment from drama activities. Consequently, drama-based vocabulary instruction would constitute a significant departure from traditional methods that appear to have become obsolete. ESL/EFL professionals are urged to embrace drama as a medium for teaching English, thereby transforming the artificial classroom environment into a quasi-real language situation and providing countless opportunities for learners' linguistic development and academic progress.

The diverse array of drama techniques captivates young learners and augments their motivation to learn. Hence, educators are recommended to consider integrating drama into the English curriculum and incorporate drama-enabled vocabulary teaching into teacher training programs in Saudi Arabia. Another implication pertains to the theoretical contribution, which serves as a catalyst for reflection among educational policymakers and curriculum designers. It provides a theoretical and research-based foundation for educators and curriculum developers to integrate drama into the English curriculum across all stages, following varied methodologies for teaching English vocabulary through learner-cantered approaches.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the underexplored area of teaching English vocabulary through drama in the Saudi EFL context. The research revealed that drama serves as an effective teaching technique that enhances learners' motivation and facilitates natural vocabulary acquisition. According to participating teachers, drama-based instruction makes lessons more engaging and encourages active student participation while building self-confidence. However, several challenges emerged in implementing this approach. Students often struggle with public speaking anxiety and show reluctance to participate actively, as they are accustomed to passive learning in the Saudi educational context. Teachers face additional hurdles, including lack of proper training in drama-based instruction and the need for extensive preparation time, as most are only trained in traditional teaching methods such as audiolingual and grammar translation approaches. The study's limitations and implications highlight crucial areas for future development in Saudi Arabia's EFL education. While the research focused solely on teacher perspectives without measuring student outcomes, it emphasizes the need for curriculum designers to incorporate more drama-based activities into English textbooks and for teacher training programs to include drama techniques. Future research should examine measurable student outcomes in vocabulary retention and usage, identify effective drama activities, and address implementation challenges within the Saudi cultural context. To maximize the potential benefits of drama-based instruction, long-term studies on overall language proficiency and practical guidelines tailored to Saudi Arabia's educational environment are essential. These findings suggest that while drama-based vocabulary instruction shows promise, continued research and development are necessary to improve English language instruction and student proficiency in Saudi Arabia.




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