

DRAMA ACTIVITIES: A USEFUL TOOL TO PROMOTE SPEAKING SKILL

Authors: Bui Thi Anh Duong, M.A & Hoang Thi Hong Hai, M.A
Faculty of English Language Teacher Education,
University of Languages and International Studies, VNU

Abstract

Over the recent years, there have been different teaching methods and approaches applied in the process of teaching speaking skill. Usually, the new method broke from the old one and took with it the positive aspects of the previous practices. Drama activities are considered a useful tool, vital for language development especially in promoting speaking skill (Heathcote, 1984). In language teaching, drama stimulates reality, develops self-expression and allows for experiments with language. This secondary research paper is conducted with three main objectives. First of all, it aims to review the core theories related to drama activities as well as their values in enhancing speaking skill. Secondly, the researchers focus on how drama activities are introduced and practically applied in speaking lessons. Lastly, not only significant pedagogical implications drawn from the application of drama activities into speaking lessons but also several suggestions to overcome teachers' reluctance to use drama activities are constructively discussed. It is hoped that this research will be of practical value to both teachers and learners of English as a second or foreign language.

Key words: drama activities, speaking skill

1. Introduction

Speaking or oral communication, in fact, has a relationship with drama activities. To be clearer, oral communication is a two-way process between the speaker (speakers) and the listener (or listeners), involving the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill or understanding and simultaneously drama activities perform the same function which is the speaker has to encode the message and the listener (listeners) has to decode the message.

It is now widely held that getting students to communicate orally in a foreign language is a goal of most language teachers, and besides that, having the ability to communicate orally with others is a target that every student strives to reach. Once the teacher has realized the real nature of oral communication, he or she can begin to use drama activities in classroom. These activities will usually fit most naturally into the production stage of the lesson, when the students are experimenting with the language they have learnt in a relatively controlled way.

The relationship between oral communication and drama is established to bridge the gaps between the classroom and the world outside. The students are asked to communicate totally, using and recognizing a range of facial expressions, gestures and movement as well as words. Also, they should gain confidence which will help them when they have to interact in English outside the classroom.

2. Literature review on related theories

2.1. The definitions of drama

“Drama”, as defined by Charlyn Wessels (1987:25), “is doing, is being and is such a normal thing. It is something that people all engage in daily when faced with difficult situations”. Heathcote (1984: 97) presents another way of defining “drama”, namely, “Drama is about filling the spaces between people with meaningful experiences”. With regards to educational aspects, drama is what happens when teachers allow pupils to explore the

foundations of the surface reality. In language teaching, drama is a marvelously flexible technique that can fit into any area of the timetable. Charlyn Wessels also points out “*Drama should be viewed as a technique of communicative language teaching. This is currently the dominant theory of language teaching*”. Susan Holden (1981:25) presents his ideas about drama as “*It is applied to any activity which asks students to portray himself in an imaginary situation. In other words, drama is concerned with the world of “Let’s pretend”, it asks the learners to project himself imaginatively into another situation, outside the classroom, or into the skin and persona of another person.*”

By and large, drama activities are the ones which give the learner an opportunity to use his or her own personality in creating the materials on which part of the language class is to be based. These activities draw on the natural ability of every person to imitate, mimic and express himself or herself through gestures. Drama activity is sometimes called acting, drama, drama games or “informal drama”. (John Dougill, 1987: 4).

2.2. Values of drama activities

2.2.1. Values of drama activities realized by teachers

Drama is not, like communicative language teaching, a new theory of language teaching but rather a technique which can be used to develop certain language skills. In language teaching, drama should be viewed as a technique of communicative language teaching. It emphasizes the role of the learner as an active participant rather than a passive receptor.

Moreover, drama activities are a useful tool, vital for language development (Heathcote, 1984). In language teaching, drama stimulates reality, develops self-expression and allows for experiments with language.

A further advantage of drama activities is that they can help overcome some of the difficulties of teaching mixed-ability classes. At the same time, they offer a solution to the problems of large classes, for the pair and group work involved can cater for any number of students.

What is more, teachers are given an opportunity to explore their own creativity through exercises in voice, movement, improvisation, mime and dramatic interpretation of poems, monologues and scenes from plays. More specifically, teachers are trained to be more effective communicators and more creative manipulators in the classroom.

Lastly, using drama activities in promoting speaking skills, teachers find no difficulty in establishing an interactive atmosphere for learners. In other words, when teachers place students in such an atmosphere, students’ interest and participation are aroused and they are inclined to attend the lessons actively. Teachers then achieve the goals they have set.

2.2.2. Values of drama activities realized by learners

To begin with, drama activities are an aid in helping learners become more confident in their use of foreign languages by allowing them to experience the language in operation since drama activities are used to develop not only speaking skill, but also other skills like reading (read the scripts), listening (listen to performances) and writing (create the scripts) and language practice such as grammar, pronunciation as well.

Furthermore, non-verbal communication ability is much improved. Specifically, learners are encouraged to use gestures, facial expressions and movements more frequently to convey ideas that require no words. They are not in the slightest talking machines but really natural speakers.

Besides, drama activities are one useful way to boost up interaction, cooperation and trust between learners. Obviously, as learners are always appointed to work in groups and it is of

great necessity that they must interact with other group members to discuss the scripts or cast the roles.

In addition, fantasy and imagination are the two more values given by drama activities. Students are advised rarely to act according to a readily written script but they themselves should write scripts with their own imagination because the exercises may be some pictures without captions or an outline of a story.

Last but far from least, drama activities, from John Dougill's point of view (1987:15), provide a means of improving students' fluency concentration, memorization and improvisation ability since while the situation is carried out, students must concentrate on their acts and in case they unfortunately forget the lines, improvisation really does them good.

2.3. Factors determining the success of a drama activity

2.3.1. The roles of the teachers

The roles of the teachers can never be denied and are always highly appreciated for their considerable contributions to the process of a drama activity. Normally, learners will work in pairs or groups during drama sessions. This does not mean, however, that there is no place for the teachers in the activity. Far from it, they must present the scenario or ideas and clearly organize any preliminary work, ensuring that each learner understands clearly what he has to do.

Admittedly, teachers act as classroom managers. In detail, they possess the ability to manage their class properly whether it is large or small and whether all the learners are at the same level or not.

In addition, teachers also have a role in the discussion which normally follows each scene. They can probe or direct this discussion by asking certain questions themselves. Then they can help group members allocate the roles in a more suitable way.

2.3.2. The roles of the learners

It can be said that all language learners share similar expectations but in terms of background and approaches to learning styles, they differ widely. Usually, a language learner approaches the learning situation with an open mind, prepared to contribute widely and enthusiastically to the teaching programme and to work independently of the teacher. Some bad learners are totally dependent on the teacher, unwilling to participate in anything that is not obviously important to their own learning, and hostile to methods that conflict with the ones that they are used to. These are the learners who are always asking for more grammar and more explicit rules. (Charlyn Wessels, 1987: 16).

On the whole, learners play the role of participants who implement what is given by the teacher. They are those who bring teachers' ideas into life. Their high participation and interest in the lessons are two elements leading to the success of any learning activity, especially drama activities.

2.3.3. Materials used for organizing drama activities

- **Using course-book dialogues**

Dialogues appear in any modern language course books. This is understandable since dialogues are obviously "*the type of text best suited to...teaching the spoken language*" (Byrne 1976: 21). Drama also pays much attention to the use of dialogues, often in extended forms. When "actors" rehearse the plays, it is common for the scripts to be broken down into manageable dialogues. This will consist of an examination and an analysis of the language and meaning followed by experiments with different interpretations of the scene. A dramatic interpretation of a dialogue can do much to enliven what might otherwise be uninteresting. Although there is a difference between dialogues and scripts not only in terms of length but also

in nature (dialogues are written primarily for language practice whereas scripts concentrate on dramatic elements).

- ***Using texts***

Working from a printed text is probably what most people think of when one mentions 'doing drama' for the many benefits that a text brings them. First, using texts helps increase awareness of the extent to which words and gestures are closely linked. Also, thanks to this, teachers can prepare learners for sudden shifts in subject and theme which occur in normal speech. Using texts in drama activities means accustoming learners to interpreting the meaning of written language which should be extended to their understanding of non-dialogue types.

- ***Using stories***

Stories, especially short stories or stories with picture illustration, provide another valuable material to organize a drama activity. Normally, teachers do not use the whole content of a story to create a drama activity but cut some parts from it to fit students' interest and ability and time allowance. The pictures used throughout the story help audience easily have the gist of the story without spending time reading the whole story. Also, the pictures themselves can describe the personality of the characters in the story, furnishing another advantage to organize a drama activity.

2.3.4. Aids to drama activities

The success of a drama activity partly depends on the aids which might include such things as simple outlines, pictures, sounds, and written or pictorial cue cards. Different aids can be used to provide varying degrees of controlled and relatively uncontrolled language practice.

- ***Picture cues***

It is proved that the use of photographs or pictures of people showing varieties of postures, facial expressions and clothing can be both motivating and instructive. The learners can discuss the ways in which details of characters, mood and relationship are expressed and communicated visually. Also, pictures can be used to suggest the environment in which a scene takes place. This is definitely useful where there are cultural differences which may be important. Besides, pictures are of great help for setting atmosphere, something which is difficult to convey and which often has a strong influence on language and behaviour. Pictures are an excellent way of establishing characters. Teachers may decide to give each learner a picture of the person he is going to portray, or may ask the class to find suitable ones themselves. Pictures can be used for "talking through" as well as scene setting. Learners can be shown a picture which immediately establishes character and place, and are asked to invent a suitable conversation without forgetting the appropriate gestures and changes of facial expression. It may sometimes be possible to find suitable sequences among newspaper or magazine cartoons.

- ***Sound cues***

Sound recordings are obvious aids to studying and discussing behaviour patterns and analyzing emotion and attitude. To be more detailed, sounds, like pictures, can be used effectively to suggest a location or atmosphere. Sequences of sound can be used to build up "sound pictures" which are, in effect, scenarios for which learners are asked to provide appropriate words and actions. Sound pictures can also provide motivating scenarios for learners to discuss and then enact. They may be simple or fairly complex, and can be used for direct interpretation or for inventing "what happened next". Some learners find working with sound very stimulating since they are encouraged to build up and record their own sound pictures. This type of activity will produce a lot of operational language if it is done in the classroom.

- **Written cues**

One more kind of aids already familiar to most teachers and learners is written cues. This kind of cues is often used for both group and individual cueing. The simplest type of group cue is a short description of a situation, which the learners then enact.

- **Non-verbal cues**

Drama activities are closely linked to the use of body language or non-verbal communication. In other words, the appropriate use of non-verbal language partly makes drama activities successful. Simply defined, *nonverbal communication* is everything that is communicated beyond what is expressed in words. At one time or another, everyone has heard a speech in which the communicator's words seem to mean one thing but the "actions" something else. Here are a number of features of non-verbal communication taken as non-verbal cues: static features (distance, orientation and posture) and dynamic features (facial expressions, eye contact, gestures and kinetics).

2.3.5. Physical environment

Unlike other activities used in a speaking lesson, namely pair work or discussion, drama activities require a special kind of physical environment. To be specific, the classroom should be arranged in such a way that it can facilitate students' movements and activities. A traditional classroom with desks, tables and blackboards should be rearranged into these five different ways (Maley, 1989):

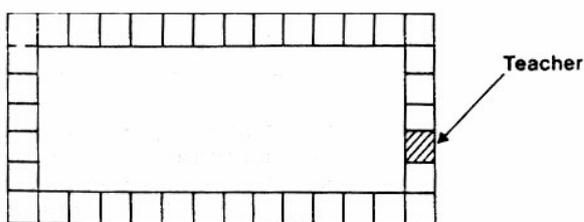


Figure 1

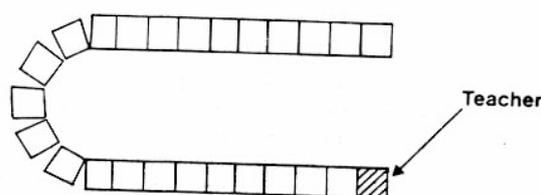


Figure 2

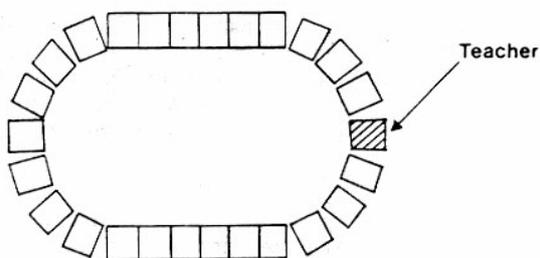


Figure 3

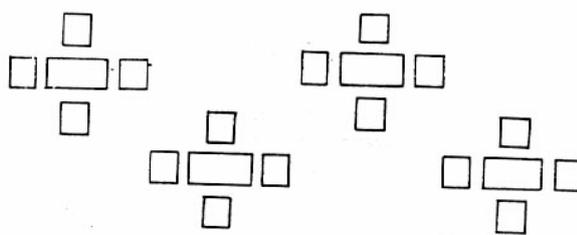


Figure 4

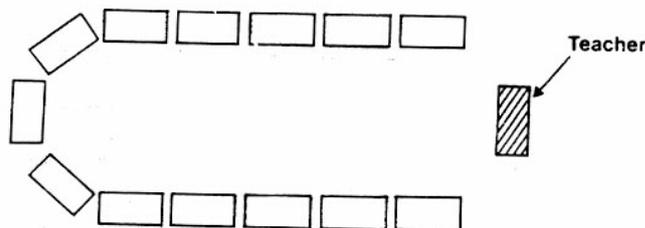


Figure 5

Figure 1: Tables/desks and chairs stacked against walls (ready for use) with a large space in the centre. Suitable for games, mimes and dramatized playreadings.

Figure 2: Horseshoe/semi-circular arrangement (chairs only). Suitable for discussions followed by/following actions, pair and group work, plenary discussions, individual performance, and certain role-plays.

Figure 3: *Full circle (chairs only). Suitable for many games, simulations, and role-play. Also good for seminar presentation.*

Figure 4: *The horseshoe arrangement again, but this time using desks. Suitable for most activities that also require reading and writing.*

Figure 5: *“Group seating” – for simulations and other group activities (teacher circulates from group to group).*

2.4. Types of drama activities

2.4.1. Masked drama

By masked drama, it means that the main props utilised in this type of drama activities are masks. Thanks to these props, participants feel less inhibited to perform and overact while taking part in this form of drama activity. Participants are given specific parts to play with a formal script. Using only their voices they must create the full picture for the rest of the class. This type of drama activity is suitable and in fact is commonly applied in teaching small children.

2.4.2. Mime

Mime is a non-verbal representation of an idea or a story through gestures, facial expressions, movement and non-verbal sound. Although mime does not involve language, it is one of the most useful activities for speaking skill practice. The purpose is not to replace verbal features of communication but to enrich them. While mime can be highly demanding at an artistic level, at the basic level (miming a stomach-ache), it is simple to do and can provide much enjoyment. Mime is often used in warm-up activities.

2.4.3. Role-play

Role-play is defined by the phrase (Ladousse, 1987): *“Let’s pretend”*, added by *“Role-play is a way of taking the students out of the classroom for a while and showing them how English can be useful to them in certain situations”*. In role-play activities, learners are not themselves anymore and they are put in either realistic or imaginative situations to act as a tourist, a customer in a shop, for example.

Ladouse (1987:5), the scholar who has paid much attention to role-play activities, explains *“When students assume a ‘role’, they play a part (either their own or somebody’s else’s) in a specific situation. ‘Play’ means that the role is taken on a safe environment in which students are creating their own reality and, by doing so, are experimenting with their knowledge of the real world and developing their ability to interact with other people.”* In a word, role-play is a communicative activity, which helps learners much in their oral communicative competence.

2.4.4. Simulation

Simulations are generally held to be a structured set of circumstances that mirror real life and in which participants act as instructed. Jones (1982:5) defines simulations as *“reality of function in simulated and structured environment.”* Because they require replication of the physical circumstances, as well as behaviour, they are more difficult to set up than role-plays and often require the use of published material. Simulations are complex, lengthy and relatively inflexible events.

2.4.5. Improvisation

Improvisation is one of those words that can mean very different things to different people. For some, it holds a feeling of dread because of its association with unrehearsed performance before an audience, a situation guaranteed to make most people feel highly uncomfortable. In fact, improvising is something that we all do in our daily lives. In Hodgson and Richards’s view (1974: 2), simulation is *“a spontaneous response to the unfolding of an unexpected situation”*.

This ability to improvise is a necessary ingredient for language use. Improvisation is a difficult activity for it requires participants to have a sufficient command of English.

2.4.6. *Drama games*

Drama games are defined as games that involve action, exercise the imagination, involve both “learning” and “acquisition” and permit the expression of emotion, linguistically and paralinguistically. A drama game that involves action can be interpreted as a rarely static game. It calls for movement and action around the whole classroom. Learners are invited to walk around the room, to investigate its physical features and each other, to communicate with as many people as possible, and even to touch each other.

3. Introducing drama activities into speaking practice lessons

3.1. Warm-up exercises in the form of drama activities

Warm-up exercises have been developed over a number of years in response to the realization that one cannot simply start “*doing drama*” from the beginning. Their aim is to foster a climate of trust, awareness and group cohesion in which collaboration can take place. In the language classroom, they have an important part to play in achieving an atmosphere in which genuine communication can take place. Warm-up exercises can be used at the beginning of a language lesson or before embarking on work demanding group creativity and co-operation. There are three different types of warm-up exercises most worth presenting: introductory warm-up exercises, verbal and vocal warm-up exercises and trust and sensibility exercises.

3.1.1. Introductory warm-up exercises

The purpose of these exercises is to act as ice-breakers in situations where group members may either be strangers or not know each other well. They are used to break down barriers and to bond participants in that everyone shares in the same undemanding but enjoyable experience. Activity 1 “*Handshakes*” can make a good example:

Activity 1: Handshakes

Purpose: Introduction; ice-breaker

Method:

1. The pupils stand up and move around the class in any direction they choose.
2. The teacher claps hands and the learners stop and introduce themselves to the nearest person.
3. The teacher tells the learners to move on after allowing 2-3 minutes.
4. The activity is repeated as often as seems desirable.
5. Afterwards the teacher sees how many names the learners can remember.

Duration: About 10 minutes

3.1.2. Verbal and vocal warm-up exercises

Communication is undoubtedly central to language learning. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that language warm-ups used in drama workshops to facilitate fluency and collaboration are easily transposed to the language classroom. They are particularly useful for keeping learners’ minds away from their native language towards the target language. The following activity named “*Sentence building*” is designed for language learners, for it is of special use for rhythm and pronunciation practice.

Activity 2:

Purpose: Focusing on the target language; group cohesion

Method:

1. The learners inhale to a count of 2 and exhale to a count of 2.
2. The learners inhale to a count of 4 and exhale to a count of 4.

3. The learners inhale to a count of 4 and on the out-breath say “I live in a house”.
4. The learners keep inhaling to the count of 4 but on each out-breath add another segment of the following sentence, “I live in a house/ with”.

Duration: About 5 minutes

3.2. Mime

Unlike other activities utilised in speaking practice lessons, mime requires students to use gestures, facial expressions and bodily movement to represent their ideas, emotion or attitudes. Mime is, in fact, a popular type of drama activities which provides students an enormous help in developing and improving their ability of communicating non-verbally. Techniques to apply mime activity into language teaching tend to vary according to teachers’ aims at using this activity. Simply speaking, teachers have to count for different techniques depending on what purposes mime may serve in speaking practice.

3.2.1. Using mime as a warm-up activity and for group cohesion

Mime activity can first be advocated as an aid to warm the class atmosphere up and to cohere group members to one another. With a view to attaining this goal, it is advisable to look at the following example:

Activity 3: Guess the situation

Method:

1. The learners are arranged in groups of between 3 and 7.
2. One person from each group goes to the teacher, who whispers a situation to them.
3. The learners return to their groups and mime the situation, which the others have to try and guess. (Those miming should not speak, only nod or shake their heads.)
4. As soon as someone has guessed correctly, he rushes to the teacher for another situation.
5. The game continues until one of the groups reaches the end of the list.

One thing to note when applying this activity is that teachers are to think of the situations suitable to the contents of the working lessons because this activity only functions as a lead-in activity. Therefore, teachers can take advantage of the same methods as those presented above to translate different situations into reality, each of which should best last in 10 minutes. Here are several possible situations:

- *You’re having coffee when a fly lands in it.*
- *You’re watching a tennis match.*
- *You’re stroking a cat.*
- *You’re reading a newspaper in the wind.*
- *You’re a postman putting letters through a letter-box when you get bitten by a dog.*
- *You’re having a shower when the phone rings.*

3.2.2. Using mime for vocabulary reinforcement and revision

The potency of mime stems from the fact that the visual elements play such a prominent part. It is suggested that memory is greatly reinforced by visual association and that recall of language items is helped when there is an associated image. In other words, mime can help fix language in the mind.

Activity 4: Vocabulary mime

Method:

1. The teacher gives each learner a slip of paper on which one of the vocabulary items is written or whispers to the learner whose turn it is.

2. Each learner in turn does a short mime to show what vocabulary item he has been given. The others discuss and then write down what they think it is.
3. After the group has completed the mimes, they compare notes on what they thought the mimes showed.

Duration: 5 to 10 minutes

3.2.3. Using mime for fluency practice

Although no words are used during mime, it can be a spur to language use where there is the need for explanation, both in terms of the teacher's instructions and learners' discussion, if the mime involves pair or group work. If the mime is then performed for others, the target language can be used for interpretation and evaluation of what has been seen.

Activity 5: Mimed scenes

Method:

1. Learners work in pairs or small groups. They are given a theme or a topic to work on and asked to prepare a short mime (not more than 3 minutes' length).
2. A time limit of 5 minutes is set for preparation and rehearsal.
3. Learners perform their mimes in turn.
4. After each performance the teacher asks the spectators to interpret what they have seen.

Suitable topics:

- *A burglary that goes wrong*
- *The strange doctor*
- *An incident at a bus-stop*
- *An argument at the cinema*

Duration: Up to 20 minutes, depending on the number of learners.

If only one group mimes one scene, as in the foregoing activity, then during the approximate ten-minute period there will only have been a few minutes' absence of language. For the rest of the time, there will have been a lot of intense and meaningful language, a higher ratio than for many other classroom activities.

3.3. Role-play

Role-play, as already defined, is surely another effective way to stimulate learners to speak. Role-play is organized in a great number of ways: through pictures, charts, games, cued dialogues, maps and so on. Role-plays controlled through cued dialogues are most frequently exploited. Role-plays of this type can be done with the following steps. In the first place, teachers deliver separate cards with printed cues to learners. These cues enable them to predict a large proportion of what the other will say and of course to prepare the general gist of their own responses. More importantly, being given written cue cards, learners have an idea of how their conversation will look like. Second, teachers ask learners to work in pairs or in groups and exchange the information which has been guided.

Activity 6: Requesting (Unit 5.3 – Speakout - intermediate)

Purpose: Practice making and responding to requests

Situation:

Student A	Student B
	You need to call your sister but you can't get any reception on your phone. Ask Student A if he/she knows where you can get reception.
Tell Student B that you have reception on your	

phone. Suggest that he/she tries standing outside.	
	You still can't get any reception. Ask Student A if you can borrow his/her phone to send a text message.
Tell Student B he/she can borrow your phone to make the phone call.	
	Tell Student A for his/her help.

3.4. Improvisation

It seems that improvisation is a completely new activity to students in secondary schools. Without doubt, improvisation is too hard a task to do; however, for those with the time of over 6 years of learning English, it turns out to be far from difficult.

Improvisation is used for fluency practice and memory reinforcement. To do this activity, first, teachers need to introduce situations as concrete as possible or picture cues as informative as possible to students so that they can understand or at least imagine in what situations they are placed. The second step is to invite volunteers to play the parts in the situations or in the pictures. In this drama activity, students are allowed little or normally no time to prepare for the script or what to say. Instead, they have to base on the information given in the situations or the cues demonstrated in the pictures to think of how to build up a logical and meaningful conversation. In the long run, teachers give comments and ask those volunteers to try again or asks others to participate in a different situation.

Activity 7: Progressive improvisation

Purpose: Fluency practice

Method:

1. The teacher introduces the situation (e.g. parents are having breakfast and taking anxiously about their child who has stayed out all night and not returned home).
2. The teacher invites volunteers to take the parts of the parents.
3. After a while, the teacher interrupts to introduce the brother/sister of the missing child who has just woken up. The parents engage him/her in conversation.
4. The teacher indicates that another pupil should join the group, this time taking the part of the missing child.
5. Depending on how things develop, the teacher might introduce other characters (e.g. a policeman looking for a person answering to the child's description).
6. Afterwards, the group discusses what happened and try again or use a different situation.

3.5. Drama games

There are three major stages in a lesson at which games can be used most effectively. It must be understood that the games referred to here are all short games, lasting from ten to fifteen minutes. Firstly, there are "icebreaker games"- games played at the beginning of a lesson as warm-ups or introductory activities. Such games tend to relax the learners, make them feel at ease with each other, and willing to work together. They are also used to introduce the topic of the lesson. Secondly, there are games used as part of a lesson, to revise or reinforce previously taught material. Such games will generally be played before the speaking lesson. Thirdly, there are games which end a lesson (if time permits). Such games can help to revise what content is taught during the lesson and to fix it in a relaxed and enjoyable manner.

❖ **Starters / icebreakers**

Find your partner

Preparation: Give each learner a folder in which there is a picture.

Method:

1. Ask learners to circulate, asking questions until each has found a “partner” - a picture of someone or something that can be matched with their picture.
2. Remind them not to say what they have in the folders, but through descriptions and questions they should lead each other to the right partnership.

What are we doing?

Method:

This game is played in groups of three. Two people mime an action together, while the third tries to guess what they are doing.

Here are some suggestions which could be written on slips of paper and handed to the performing pair (each pair could be given two or three suggestions):

- *A hairdresser cutting a difficult customer’s hair.*
- *A bored doctor listening to a hypochondriacal patient.*
- *A waiter trying to flirt with an attractive girl eating in a restaurant.*
- *Two rich men trying to out-bid each other at an auction.*
- *Someone walking a very frisky dog.*
- *Two people quarreling over which T.V channel to watch.*
- *Two people moving a piano.*
- *Haggling over the price of an item in a market.*

❖ *In-between games*

Feelings

Aim: Help learners practise structures relating to emotions.

Preparation: Prepare cards – four for each learner – with a feeling written on each card; for example, *love, hate, greed, envy, jealousy, grief, happiness, surprise, fear*, etc.

Method: This game is played in pairs. Each learner gets four cards and has to mime the feelings written on the cards. The partners have to guess what the feelings are.

❖ *End-games*

Thank you

Method: List a number of situations on the board, and ask the learners how they would say ‘thank you’ in each of these situations. The class can decide whether they agree with the way in which individual learners respond. Here are some suggestions:

- *You have been given a present which you had once given to a friend of the person from whom you now receive it.*
- *An elderly person gave up his/her seat to you on the bus upon seeing that you felt ill.*
- *The doctor told you that you would probably live to a ripe old age.*
- *You got the job you really wanted.*
- *A stranger pays you an unexpected compliment.*

4. Conclusion

In brief, a classroom devoid of drama might proceed in a calm and orderly manner but it will lack life. Simply put, if students are placed in an artificial or tense classroom atmosphere, it is likely that they will feel bored because of having no stimuli to study. Above all, it may leave students quite unprepared for the challenge of a foreign language situation full of self-doubt.

Although limitations are unavoidable, it is, ultimately, hoped that what is presented in this paper will be of some help to those who are really concerned about the ways to improve

speaking skills for learners of English since drama activities can be exploited in all seriousness and effectiveness.

4.1. Pedagogical implications

Drama activities are indeed very beneficial to teachers both experienced and inexperienced. Yet, applying them into teaching language is not always simple, if not to mention complex. Thus, there remain a number of pedagogical implications drawn from the application of drama activities into speaking lessons:

- Teachers should appear as confident as possible in front of students when they are performing in a drama activity, even when they are not really used to the technique.
- Due to the complexity of some drama activities, it is essential that teachers have firm knowledge of the activities, in other words, they need to understand those activities adequately and precisely. Specifically, it is a must for teachers to prepare the materials and techniques carefully before implementing any drama activity.
- Teachers are advised to work out the suitable warm-up exercises to stimulate the students' intensive attention besides giving clear instructions to the students.
- It is not always a good idea to organise drama activities. This implies that drama activities should be utilised depending on the theme of each unit in the course book, on the language items presented in each unit, and also on the time allowance for each speaking lesson.

4.2. Suggestions to overcome teachers' reluctance to use drama activities in speaking practice lessons

At times, teachers are reluctant to use drama activities in classroom for various reasons: they don't know how to use the activities, limited resources, time constraints, a fear of looking and feeling foolish and so on. The following suggestions are based on the four problems brought up by teachers when tackling using drama in English as a foreign language class for the first time.

In the first place, many teachers feel that they cannot approach drama activities without being a trained actor. It is advised that those who do not know what to do with drama or those who appear to be confused when using drama activities choose activities ranging from simple to complicated ones such as a few drama games or some role-play and step by step carry them out in their own style of teaching.

What is more, not few teachers say that they are unprepared for "performing" in front of a group and they would not want to risk looking and feeling silly in front of a class of students. If teachers have never tried using a drama activity before, they, of course, could be reluctant to take the risk. In order to overcome this problem, it is important to set up a close relationship between the teacher and students and establish a comfortable and free thought sharing environment in which everyone feels at ease to play their roles.

In addition, several language teachers think that using drama activities is synonymous with focusing on playing rather than serious study. As a result, they tend to hold to the idea that it is best to use what is there in the textbooks since they are afraid that drama activities will take them away from their position as the language role model. Moreover, for them, a class of 25 students who are working in groups on a drama activity can be a nightmare for a leader who wants to control the timing, language use and focus of the unit. Perhaps, they should have a chance to see "drama in action" in an ELT setting. For those who feel most comfortable using a textbook as the focus

for language learning could use drama in a limited way in order to make the text more authentic for the students.

The final problem that draws much concern from most teachers is that they are often frustrated with the materials needed for some games and the time it takes to understand a game and be able to organise it well. Actually, a lack of drama resources in a staff room, school or library can make the situation even more frustrating. At times, it can be very time consuming and fruitless in some cases to look for some kind of 'drama' to put into a class. Consequently, it is of great help for any teachers to acquire a basic knowledge of communication activities. A warm-up that leads into the lesson does not have to be a complicated drama lesson but just a way to get the class working together, awake and focused on the topic. Using the course material, teachers can find many drama techniques to make the course book more communicative and alive for the students.

All things considered, these suggestions can help teachers overcome the difficulties that they might encounter before they start to apply drama activities in the process of teaching and promoting speaking skill.

References

- Bailey, M. (1987). *Speaking*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Bygate, M.K & Salvage, L. (1994). *New Ways of Teaching Speaking*. Illinois, USA.
- Byrne, D. (1998). *Step into the Role of Someone Else*. Department of Education, Queensland.
- Clare, A & Wilson, J. (2011). *Speak out Upper Intermediate*. Pearson Longman.
- Dennis, J, Griffin, S & Wills, R. 1981. *English Through Drama*. The Alemany Press.
- Dongill, J. (1989). *Drama Activities for Language Learning*. Modern English Publications.
- Holden, S. (1981). *Drama in Language Teaching*. Longman.
- Jones, K. (1982). *Simulations in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ladousse, G. (2000). *Role Play*. ELBS.
- Littlewood, W. (1991). *Communicative Language Teaching - An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Maley, A. (1992). *Roleplay*. Oxford University Press.
- Maley, Alan and Duff, Alan (1989). *Drama Techniques in Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Meiville, M, Langenheim, L, Rinvoluceri, M & Spaventa, L. (1980). *Towards the Creative Teaching of English*. Heinemann.
- Nunan, D. (1988). *The Learner-centred Curriculum*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.